



Anti-Americanism and Anti-Western Sentiments in Europe and Post-Soviet States

Ideology and Politics Journal

№ 2(26), 2024

Anti-Americanism and Anti-Western Sentiments in Europe and Post-Soviet States

— Issue 2(26), 2024

Editors of this issue: **Maryna Bessonova & Spasimir Domaradzki**

Ideology and Politics Journal

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ISSN 2227-6068

Address: via Giuseppe Compagnoni, 33, Milan 20129 Italy

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Contents

Maryna Bessonova & Spasimir Domaradzki	ANTI-AMERICANISM AND ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS IN EUROPE AND POST-SOVIET STATES: INTRODUCTION	4
ARTICLES		
Mariia Panasiuk	THE INTERPLAY OF ANTI-AMERICANISM AND AMERICAN (POST)MODERNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS BY BAUDRILLARD, ŽIŽEK, AND AGAMBEN	11
Ruslan Zaporozhchenko & Vyacheslav Nikulin	ANTI-AMERICANISM AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR: IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTA(LISA)TIONS OF MODERN RUSSIA	35
Viktoriia Mykhtunenko & Yuliya Podriez	EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN ANTI-AMERICANISM: ORIGIN, STAGES OF FORMATION AND CONSEQUENCES	55
Megan Hauser & Nataliia Kasianenko	TO BLAME OR NOT TO BLAME? THE PLACE OF THE WEST IN UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN WAR NARRATIVES	74
Olga Makliuk & Stanislav Cherkasov	THE IMAGE OF EUROPE AND ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES IN RUSSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL MODERN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS	95
Oleksandr Y. Vysotskyi	UKRAINIAN ANTI-AMERICANISM DURING FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: A DECONSTRUCTIVE ATTEMPT	112
Yevheniia Horiunova & Yana Horiunova	ANTI-AMERICANISM AND ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS IN CRIMEA: BEFORE AND AFTER THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION	130
Marin Gherman, Liubov Melnychuk & Antonina Shuliak	ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES IN UKRAINE AND ROMANIA (COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS)	150
Kateryna Kasatkina & Kateryna Shymkevych	REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN POST-COMMUNIST STATES: THE CASES OF SLOVAKIA AND SERBIA	175
Khemis Mohammed, Benouareth Charafeddine & Bara Samir	DOES THE ALGERIAN POLITICAL SCIENCES COMMUNITY HAVE ANTI-AMERICAN ATTITUDES?	203

Maryna Bessonova, Myroslava Lisovska & Olena Pistrakevych	ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S. IN THE BLACK SEA REGION: THE CASES OF TÜRKIYE, BULGARIA, AND ROMANIA	223
Bálint Madlovics & Bálint Magyar	THE FATAL COMBINATION: HOW DEMOCRACY DIED IN RUSSIA AND HOW IT MAY SURVIVE IN UKRAINE	247

REVIEWS

Victoria Vdovychenko	BOOK REVIEW: Merlo, Simona (2023). <i>Ucraina contemporanea. Una storia complessa</i> . il Mulino, Bologna	265
Maksym Yali	BOOK REVIEW: Josticova, Hana (2024). <i>Mariupol 2013–2022: stories of mobilization and resistance</i> . Budapest, New York: Central European University Press	271
Olexandr Starukh	BOOK REVIEW: Minakov, Mikhail (2024). <i>The Post-Soviet Human. Philosophical Reflections on Post-Soviet History</i> . Kyiv: Laurus – Milano: Koivè	278

ANTI-AMERICANISM AND ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS IN EUROPE AND POST-SOVIET STATES: INTRODUCTION

Maryna Bessonova

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0003-1533-775X

Spasimir Domaradzki

University of Warsaw, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0001-5794-6532

Since discovering new lands in the Western hemisphere, America has become a symbol of new life, new opportunities, and a new Eden. For hundreds of thousands of migrants, America turned into a new home with possibilities to change life for the better and to achieve the unimaginable. American Revolution and War for Independence made the USA a symbol of freedom, democracy, progress, and the American Dream: possibilities for everyone working hard. At the same time, America became an object of criticism, primarily from the European elites who saw American society as cruel, uncultured, and without good taste, manners, and education. Later on, when the USA became an active actor on the international stage, critiques spread on the American government and foreign policy. Thus, critical approaches towards the USA, American policy, society, and culture transformed into the phenomenon of anti-Americanism.

Nowadays, there is no single definition of anti-Americanism. Public interest in this paradox is mirrored in the rise of different text materials and statistics about negative attitudes toward anti-Americanism. On the pages of the world-famous Wikipedia (founded in 2001), the first variant of the article about anti-Americanism appeared in 2003 as an English-language one. The number of languages in which an article about this phenomenon is presented is constantly increasing: in 2011, the material was provided in 19 languages; in 2013, in 25 languages; in 2019, in 34 languages, and in 2024, in 42 languages (*Wikipedia*). Anti-Americanism became a specific subject for scholars, whose active interest in studying this “anomaly” started in the 1990s. Till the mid-2020s, there is an enormous amount of research papers and individual and collective monographs dedicated to the critiques of the USA. Anti-Americanism also was and still is a specific object for sociological studies. Since the beginning of the 2000s, several annual surveys are regularly conducted to collect data about worldwide attitudes toward the USA. One of example of a long-lasting project is the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which allows us to see periods of the rise and fall of anti-Americanism in the world since first polls in 2003 (*Pew Research Center* 2024).

Today, we can find anti-American sentiments both inside and outside the USA, as well as among American opponents and partners. Therefore, anti-Americanism has become a notable phenomenon of international socio-political life. Brendon O'Connor identifies four phases of anti-Americanism: (1) from the first European colonies in North

America to the end of World War II; (2) during the Cold War (1945–1989); (3) after the end of the Cold War till tragedy of 11/9 2001; (4) since terrorist attack 11/9 2001 till today (O'Connor 2004: 78).

The increased negative attitudes toward the USA in the late 20th and early 21st centuries influenced the interest in further studying anti-Americanism. If we try to make some generalizations, we can probably note that contemporary anti-Americanism can be qualified as *comprehensive* (is interpreted by different scholars as ideology, philosophy, attitudes, tendency, outlook, etc.), *large-scale* (covers all social levels, widespread due to mass media), *universal* (is present in rhetoric of right and left political forces), *global* (can be found all over the globe, both among American allies as well as opponents), *undulatory* (world public opinion polls determine periods of rise and fall of the negative attitudes towards the USA), and *manipulative* (is used by politicians and business to attract the attention of the public, to explain fails in foreign or domestic policy, to mobilize voters, to advertize goods) phenomenon (Бессонова 2019).

This special issue of *Ideology and Politics Journal* was designed to focus on the interpretations of the negative perception of the USA in today's European and post-Soviet societies. We chose this region of the world for a few reasons: Europe is the 'mother' of America and, at the same time, the first critic of it; the post-Soviet states are interesting in the fact that part of them is already integrated into the Western environment (the EU and NATO), but all post-Soviet societies have a common anti-American background, which was or still is greatly influenced by Russian perceptions.

We sought to address such aspects as the origins of anti-American/anti-Western sentiments in today's Europe and post-Soviet states; Westernization/Americanization as an explanation/excuse of the negative attitudes towards the West/the USA; anti-American/anti-Western narratives in social networks, academia, cinema, advertising, literature, popular culture, etc.; hostility towards the West/America as a means of self-identity; anti-Americanism as a tool of political manipulation; pro- and anti-Americanism in post-communist states as a reflection of choice between East and West; case studies of liberal, social, sovereign-nationalist, radical and other anti-Americanisms; anti-Americanism as an ideology; anti-American/anti-Western sentiment in politics; anti-Americanism and justice and equality narratives.

Our expectations came true only partially. Most submitted articles focused on anti-Americanism, while anti-Western dimensions have attracted less attention. In the papers composing this specific volume, the readers can find basic methodological approaches to studying anti-Americanism, the ideas of the leading theorists in the field, the analysis of the roots and description of the manifestations and varieties of anti-Americanism, etc. The mentioned achievements in the study of the negative perceptions of the USA go through the suggested texts, while the authors of every paper focused on their own research subject.

A few factors influenced the specifics of the papers in this volume. First of all, it was the final phase of the 2024 presidential election race in the United States and the Russian-Ukrainian war, the end of which everyone associates in one way or another with the position of the newly elected US president. Therefore, among the topics of the

articles, readers will see many materials in which anti-Americanism is considered precisely in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Probably, this armed conflict caused more interest in the societies of Eastern Europe, as Putin's approach toward this region aims to take advantage of any opportunity to weaken the USA and EU, and dissemination of anti-American sentiments is one of the tools of the Russian propaganda within the long-lasting hybrid war. The war in Ukraine had a profound impact on Eastern Europe as it contributed to the further Westernization of this part of Europe (e.g., it consolidated NATO and the EU and led to the modernization of the Eastern European NATO members who delivered their Russian military equipment to Ukraine, cutting another string of Russian influence (Domaradzki 2024: 15)).

The issue opens with Mariia Panasiuk's paper on the critical analysis of anti-Americanism and American (Post)Modernity by three prominent philosophers. In her article, she explores the essential perspectives of modern-day America offered by Jean Baudrillard, Slavoj Žižek, and Giorgio Agamben. Each provides unique insights into contemporary American society's cultural, political, and ideological fabric, seen through the lenses of media theory, psychoanalytic Marxism, and biopolitical theory, respectively. Mariia Panasiuk underlines that although these philosophers critique modernity more broadly; their work offers vital perspectives for understanding the particular role of American hegemony in shaping global culture and politics. This paper links these critiques to anti-Americanism and provides a critical framework for understanding how power, ideology, and governance operate within the context of the United States

Ruslan Zaporozhchenko and Vyacheslav Nikulin presented a paper that focuses on anti-Americanism in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian War. The authors note that anti-Americanism remains a subject of active academic debate, as its interpretations range from hostile actions and statements towards the United States to criticism of specific American policies. The article's primary goal is to identify the ideological features of the construction of the anti-American policy in modern Russia and its impact on ideological orientations in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Ruslan Zaporozhchenko and Vyacheslav Nikulin present their considerations of anti-Americanism through the prism of Orientalism and ideology based on the ideas of Edward Said and Louis Althusser. The article emphasizes that contemporary Russian anti-Americanism is an instrument of internal legitimization of power and a means of establishing new configurations at the regional and global levels.

The following article, by Viktoriia Mykhtunenko and Yuliya Podriez, addresses the evolution of Russian anti-Americanism. The authors attempted to provide an overview of its origin, stages of formation, and consequences. They take a closer look at the transformation of Russian anti-Americanism from an ideological confrontation during the Cold War to being a part of current state policy, adopting new forms that reflect the interests of the contemporary Russian political regime. The authors note that Russians' foreign policy views reflect the state's policy on the global stage. The paper generally shows both inside and outside consequences of Russian anti-American rhetoric aimed at consolidating Russian society and escalating tensions and conflicts internationally.

Megan Hauser and Nataliia Kasianenko propose their vision on the place of the West in Ukrainian and Russian war narratives to answer the question: “To blame or not to blame?”. Their paper explores the place of the West in the competing political narratives during the first months of the full-scale Russian war in Ukraine. The chronological frame of the research covers the period from December 2021 until May 2022. Within the mentioned period, the authors examine the portrayal of the West in the dominant narratives of each country, focusing on the origins of this war, the key groups in this war, and the possibility of compromise or ceasefire. Megan Hauser and Nataliia Kasianenko found out exactly how official state narratives regarding the West changed during the first months of this war and whether Ukrainian and Russian leaders adjusted their political narratives.

Another dimension of the official narratives towards the West Olga Makliuk and Stanislav Cherkasov investigated in their paper dedicated to the image of Europe in Russian secondary school modern history textbooks. The analysis is based on a direct examination of the structure and content of the textbooks and how historical content is framed and delivered to students. It includes a detailed review of the language, illustrations, and problem-based assignments used in the textbooks. This thorough analysis allowed for identifying the standardized historical framework and the specific strategies employed to shape students' perceptions of Europe and the West. It is shown that Russian textbooks actively promote the negative image of the West as an enemy, with anti-Western sentiments becoming more pronounced as the timeline approaches the 21st century. It is argued that Russian secondary school modern history textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of Europe and the West, fostering a state-approved narrative and justifying Russia's internal and external policies.

Oleksandr Y. Vysotskyi's paper analyzed Ukrainian anti-Americanism during full-scale Russian aggression through the lens of the president of Ukraine's public diplomacy. This study explores the dynamic relationship between Ukraine and the United States, providing insights into the geopolitical and cultural factors shaping Ukrainian anti-Americanism during critical periods of full-scale war. The study finds that Ukrainian anti-Americanism is not static but oscillates between pro-Americanism and anti-Americanism, influenced by historical context and current geopolitical realities. This attempt is based on the method of deconstruction, which allows the author to identify the specifics, sources, and influence of Ukrainian anti-Americanism. The author concludes that the disappointment in American support during critical moments has fostered a proactive form of anti-Americanism among Ukrainian leaders, particularly President Zelenskyy, who uses public diplomacy to pressure the US and other global actors to take a stronger stand against Russian aggression.

More cases of Ukrainian anti-Americanism are analyzed in the research of Yevheniia Horiunova and Yana Horiunova, who studied anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in Crimea. The authors explore how the formation and spread of anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in Crimea are related to the large-scale Russian influence on the peninsula, so they compare the period before and after the occupation. The article illustrates the influence of Russian propaganda since the first years after the

collapse of the USSR and its further increase after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Researchers show the impact of pro-Russian organizations and parties and informational support of Russian and pro-Russian Crimean media on the creation of stable anti-Western sentiments in Crimea before the occupation. The paper presents an overview of the persistence of the negative image of Western countries in Crimea as an existential enemy that must be destroyed. Yevheniia Horiunova and Yana Horiunova conclude that the escalation of anti-Western rhetoric has reached a new level following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The comparative analysis of specific features of the negative attitudes toward the West is the subject of the study of Marin Gherman, Liubov Melnychuk, and Antonina Shuliak. Their paper addresses the anti-Western narratives in Ukraine and Romania, using the example of anti-Western information campaigns that took place constantly between 24 February 2022 and 24 February 2024. The authors collected and analyzed narratives in politicians' speeches, media discourse, and messages in social media and Telegram channels and concluded that these narratives are toxic and dangerous for democracy and information security. In the paper, the authors describe both differences and similarities in anti-Western narratives in Ukraine and Romania and conclude their common origin.

Another article contains a comparative case study of the regional dimension of anti-Americanism in Slovakia and Serbia by Kateryna Kasatkina and Kateryna Shymkevych. The research aims to analyze the historical roots, government stances, and the impact of global geopolitical shifts on anti-American attitudes in these nations and to explore the multifaceted nature of critical sentiments toward the USA across two distinct post-communist contexts. The authors resumed that Slovakia and Serbia had unique features that colored their expressions of anti-Americanism during the Cold War era, find out the different regional variations in the forms and expressions of anti-Americanism in the post-Cold War period, evaluate the impact of the US interventions in the Balkans, specifically in the 1999 NATO bombings, on anti-American sentiment across both societies. The comparative method provides insight into broader patterns of anti-Americanism in these states, evaluates Russian influence, and examines the implications for regional security and stability. The paper is also interesting by comparing anti-American sentiment in Slovakia and Serbia within the context of Russian aggression.

While most of the papers in this special volume contain research about the European and post-Soviet states, we also propose to our readers the research results about anti-American attitudes in the Algerian political science environment. The paper's authors, Khemis Mohammed, Benouareth Charafeddine, and Bara Samir, present a brief intro to the specifics of the Middle East and North Africa region's anti-American sentiments. The main aim of their research is to get an answer to whether the higher education in political sciences within Algerian universities tends to be ideologically biased or academically neutral toward the USA. The researchers surveyed to examine the extent of bias and neutrality of the overall attitudes toward the US within the Algerian political sciences community. The study has shown remarkable disparities among the respondents' attitudes, which appeared biased in some situations and neutral when the questionnaire required clear answers. The sample displayed proportionally a tendency

toward anti-Americanism, either when they banished any moralism toward the US actions and policies or when they failed to recognize some of the well-established facts about the US, such as its long-standing democratic traditions.

Another paper in this volume presents a summary of the anti-American attitudes in Black Sea region societies. Maryna Bessonova, Myroslava Lisovska, and Olena Pistrakevych analyze the current sentiments toward the United States among Black Sea nations. They concentrate on discovering the types of feelings towards America that are prevalent among political representatives and within the communities of the Black Sea states. They also explore various anti-American narratives that persist, even though all countries in the region, except Russia, are regarded as American partners, and analyze the factors that have influenced these attitudes.

In this volume, we also propose additional materials that fit into the framework of the issues of Westernization and democratization, which are closely connected with the discussions about opposition to the West in general and to the USA in particular.

This issue ends with the stand-alone research by Bálint Madlovics and Bálint Magyar focusing on the comparative analysis of de-democratization and re-democratization processes in Russia and Ukraine. They utilize the concept of patronalism to differentiate between distinct regime types: patronal democracy and patronal autocracy, in contrast to Western-style liberal democracy. The authors highlight the critical factors contributing to the decline of democracy, particularly the monopolization of political power and the patronalization of social networks – a combination they describe as the “fatal combination.” Bálint Madlovics and Bálint Magyar assess the impact of these factors on both Russia and Ukraine, concluding with an exploration of the war’s structural consequences: “the good news” (potential anti-patronal transformation in Ukraine), “the bad news” (the emergence of dictatorship in Russia and the threat of autocracy under Volodymyr Zelenskyy), and “the hope” (the signs pointing to Ukraine’s long-term transition from patronal to liberal democracy.)

This volume also includes reviews of books by Victoria Vdovychenko on Simona Merlo’s *“Ucraina contemporanea: Una storia complessa”* (2023), by Maksym Yali on Hana Josticova’s *“Mariupol 2013-2022: Stories of Mobilization and Resistance”* (2024), and by Olexandr Starukh on Mikhail Minakov’s *“The Post-Soviet Human: Philosophical Reflections on Post-Soviet History”* (2024).

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