

THE IMAGE OF “THE OTHER” IN POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES. INTRODUCTION

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The end of the “short 20th century” was not the end of the “age of extremes”—to recall famous Eric Hobsbawm’s metaphors (Hobsbawm 1995). The new reality that emerged after the disintegration of the Communist camp, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world, the emergence of new states, as well as the rise of ethnic conflicts and wars in these territories resulted from the resurrection of the old mindsets. In Europe, the re-unification of Germany coincided with the breakup of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. EU and NATO enlargement were represented not only the implementation of the noble idea of a transnational Europe, but also a response to the ethnic conflicts and wars in the Balkans. The rise of ethnic nationalism and populism followed the peak of European integration. Illiberal democracy emerged as a consequence of the hybridization of the “Western” and “Eastern” European political cultures. The informational, memory and culture wars that had become commonplace in the last decade were, to a great extent, a byproduct of multiculturalism and attempts to build transnational identity. Massive migrations and the immigration crisis in Europe of 2010s was, among other things, a result of the “Europe without borders” principle.

In this brave new world, the biblical story of the making of the Other repeats itself again and again under new conditions generated by the communication and information revolutions, spread of global capitalism, thinning of political borders, and the spread of cultural globalism. Paradoxically, the technological advances and social processes which one might think should unite humanity have, in fact, exacerbated the creation of the Other.

The intensive instrumental use and misuse of the image of “the Other” has proved a common feature of recent decades. The Other embodies a set of intertwined cultural, ethnic, gender, social, religious stereotypes born in 18–19th centuries. Its boundaries have been continuously redefined by the national revivals, revolutions, civil and world wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, deportations, genocides and other collective initiatives aimed at establishing or reestablishing “historical justice” and “historical truth.” These practices turn the neighbor into the Other, and then into the Alien, thus dehumanizing the individual and collectives.

The construction of the Other gains new significance and scale in the times of uncertainty. Global economic crises, increasing economic inequality, lack of trust in

established institutions, revolutions, terrorism, pandemics, wars, mass starvations, ethnic and racial conflicts—all these facilitate Othering in its most extreme forms.

New media—as well as political, social and cultural discourses—both awakens dormant conflicts, and provokes new ones. These developments have made the Other, and the process of Othering—whether based on ethnicity, culture, religion, or gender—ubiquitous in public discourse.

Under these circumstances, the scholarly community could and should confront the tendencies described above. The deconstruction of the Other and critical assessment of relevant public/policy practices demonstrates the need for an international scholarly community. Scholars of different disciplines addressed the problem in many occasions. In 2005, the Ukraine's National Academy of Sciences organized an international conference "The Image of the Other in the Neighbors" Histories (Kasianov 2008). In 2016, the International Association for Humanities (MAG) in cooperation with Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies held an international convention "Image of the Other" in Lviv, Ukraine (MAG 2016 Summer Convention; ASEEEES – MAG Convention) followed by a no less representative event in the same location in 2018 entitled "Image of the Self" (MAG 2018).

In 2017–2018, the Institute for Education Development (Kyiv, Ukraine) and the Kennan Institute (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC) co-organized a series of seminars in Odessa, Lviv, and Kharkiv on the "Image of the Other." The current issue of *Ideology and Politics* is partly a result of this project, with several articles based on reports presented by the participants. Other articles were selected through an open call.

This issue of the *Ideology and Politics Journal* consists of two parts. The first considers the conceptual issues of Othering as discussed from imagological (by Sergiy Posokhov), sociocultural (by Maxim Popov), philosophical (by Yevhen Bystrytsky) and sociological (by Olga Kutsenko, Ekaterina Bataeva and Svitlana Babenko) perspectives. The second section examines cases of othering within international (Southern Caucasus—by Karli-Jo Storm; Ukrainian-Polish relations—by Georgiy Kasianov), national (Ukraine—by Viktoriya Sereda, Mikhail Minakov, Olga Kyslova, Iryna Kuzina, Iryna Dyrda, and Svitlana Chunikhina; Russia—by Dmitry Gorin; Georgia—by Petra Colmorgen) or local (Chechnya—by Evgeniya Goryushina; Rivne—by Maksym Gon and Nataliia Ivchyk) contexts. The issue concludes with research by Illia Afanasiev, who analyzes post-Soviet renaming policies, a discussion between Alexander Chertenko and Marco Puleri on the Russophone culture outside Russia, and a book review by Sherzod Eraliev.

We hope that this issue will not only advance the scholarly study of Othering and alienation, but also enhance mutual understanding between the peoples of Eastern Europe.

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