

ANTI-AMERICANISM AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR: IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTA(LISA)TIONS OF MODERN RUSSIA

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Abstract. *The present paper offers a comprehensive analysis of anti-Americanism as a multidimensional phenomenon with a focus on its manifestations in contemporary Russia, especially 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. Historically, anti-Americanism has manifested itself in various forms, including the French demarche under Charles de Gaulle and numerous protests against US foreign policy in Europe and the world. The article focuses special attention on the Cold War period when the confrontation between the US and the USSR was a prime example of creating an enemy image through ideological propaganda, economic policies, and cultural conflicts. The main goal of the article is to identify the ideological features of the construction of anti-American policy of modern Russia and its impact on ideological orientations in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. An important place in the analysis is occupied by the ideas of Edward Said and Louis Althusser, which allow us to consider anti-Americanism through the prism of orientalism and ideology. The authors offer the author's matrix of comparative analysis, which helps to identify the key features of the ideological interpretation of Russian anti-Americanism. The article emphasizes that contemporary Russian anti-Americanism is not only an instrument of internal legitimization of power, but also a means of establishing new configurations at the regional and global levels. Russia, positioning itself as an alternative to American hegemony, actively uses anti-Americanism to strengthen its position in the international arena, especially in its relations with the states of the "Global South".*

Keywords: *Anti-Americanism, Russian-Ukrainian war, ideology, orientalism, post-Soviet space, hegemony, power, Global South, empire*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anti-Americanism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon about which modern political science has not yet formed a unified opinion. Some researchers define anti-Americanism as

any hostile action or expression that becomes part and parcel of an undifferentiated attack on the foreign policy, society, culture, and values of the United States. (Rubinstein & Smith 1988: 36)

Other researchers tend to believe that anti-Americanism is an opposition to specific American policies, which is reflected in specific political actions (Berman 2004: 5). Others, on the contrary, suggest that anti-Americanism should be seen as

rather a series of criticisms and prejudices regarding the United States that have haphazardly been labelled anti-Americanism. (O'Connor & Griffiths 2005: 11)

The reason for this multiple interpretation can be attributed to the lack of a clear demarcation between the discursive nature of “anti-Americanism” and scholarship, which may include interpreting anti-Americanism through other categories such as politics, power, ideology, or conflict.

Perhaps the most famous example of anti-Americanism is the “démarche” of France under the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle, who in 1966 withdrew the country from the military-political organization NATO. The reason for this geopolitical “gesture” was quite simple: France was in favor of the independence of European politics from the USA, which, after the Second World War, successfully fixed the establishment of American hegemony in international politics. On the other hand, both in France and in the countries of continental Europe, one could observe anti-American movements that opposed the Vietnam War, US foreign policy, and those values of American liberal democracy that were actively (and, as a rule, quite aggressively) spreading in the world. Although, as some scholars have argued, such practices of anti-Americanism were based more on political discourse (Snyder 2012), such practices nevertheless became the basis for a long discussion about the role of American policies in Europe and European reactions to such policies. Nevertheless, the roots of such anti-American practices tended to start their “journey into big politics” in narrow intellectual circles that criticized both liberal democracy and Marxist interpretations of post-war Europe (Klautke 2011: 1131).

A much more important period in the history of anti-Americanism relates to the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union during the second half of the 20th century. During the postwar period, the United States and the USSR engaged in geopolitical, military-industrial, and ideological confrontations that included participation in military conflicts such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the war in Afghanistan. Encyclopedic examples of the construction of an “enemy image” were provided both in the United States vis-à-vis the USSR (the policy of McCarthyism) and in the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the United States (the policy of fighting capitalism). The key features of such confrontation are the constitution of ideological propaganda, which was aimed at creating an image of the enemy; economic policy, which, among other things, contributed to the expansion of the influence of both empires and

the construction of two blocs – socialist and liberal-democratic; cultural conflicts and globalization, which became an important component of the construction of American hegemony. In our view, Tony Judt illustrates quite accurately how the clash of geopolitical and regional interests between the US and the USSR contributed to an intensified aggressive discourse that resulted in the rise of anti-Americanism (Judt 2005). Frances Saunders, on the other hand, shows the cultural and ideological aspects of the rise of anti-Americanism in many parts of the world, for example, through the funding of cultural and educational projects, influencing public opinion, and cultural diplomacy. And it was such actions that tended to be the cause of the growth of anti-Americanism, in which, for example, Europeans looked for opposites and contradictions (Saunders 2013: 183), while the Soviet leadership looked for a well-defined orthodoxy necessary to maintain the legitimacy of global power (Shlapentokh 1988). That is, anti-Americanism is directly linked to antagonism from outside, which both complements it and constructs an alternative orthodoxy.

The two theses, which are related to *geopolitical clash* and *cultural-ideological construction*, strangely enough, continue to dominate in the post-Cold War period. A particularly relevant interpretation of anti-Americanism is the Russian-Ukrainian war, which gained a full-scale phase of confrontation after 24 February 2022. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia labelled itself as its successor in order to ensure security and reproduction of the regional order in the post-Soviet space and continued the function of ensuring the world order on an equal footing with the United States (Slobodchikoff 2017: 79-80). However, the unwillingness of the United States to perceive Russia as an “equal partner”, as well as the geopolitical situation, contributed to the fact that Russia was gradually pushed out of the global order. This, in turn, led to several geopolitical consequences (Zaporozhchenko 2024):

- (1) Russia focused on reproducing regional hegemony, realizing its inability to secure global dominance fast enough.
- (2) Russia has begun to use channels of communication with states of the Global South to propose an alternative agenda at the global level, realizing that most such states are either ignored by the US and its allies or are not allowed into the autonomous field of international politics.
- (3) Russia gradually constructed the role of an alternative force to the United States, which led to the strengthening of anti-Americanism, i.e. Russia was oriented towards civilizational and historical opposition.

In other words, Russia’s peripheral position suited it geographically, but it did not suit it geopolitically (and, much more importantly, geostrategically). Therefore, the ideological justification of its own geopolitical role in the world was both a tool for reproducing legitimacy within Russia itself and a mechanism for establishing new configurations at regional and global levels (Gill 1996). Ironically, anti-Americanism was chosen as the key factor for achieving this goal, as it fits perfectly into the historical-civilizational matrix of the confrontation between the “Russian World” and the “Western World”.

This article is aimed not so much at studying anti-Americanism as a socio-cultural and political phenomenon as at identifying the key features of Russian anti-Americanism through the prism of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The aim of this article is to identify the ideological features of the construction of the policy of anti-Americanism in contemporary Russia. The key research question we pose in this article is: *how does anti-Americanism influence the ideological orientations of contemporary Russia in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war?* We first focus on a brief history of anti-Americanism in contemporary Russia and the methodology of our study, which includes Edward Said's Orientalist approach and Louis Althusser's concept of ideology. After that, we proceed to a direct analysis of the manifestation of anti-Americanism in connection with the ideological apparatuses of the system of power in contemporary Russia. We offer the author's matrix of comparative analysis, which will help to identify the key features of the ideological interpretation of Russian anti-Americanism.

2. ANTI-AMERICANISM IN RUSSIA: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia tried to find its geopolitical destination. Perhaps the most obvious step towards achieving this goal was to assert the USSR-Russia continuity, which meant, at a minimum, ensuring regional order in the post-Soviet space (regional hegemony) and, at a maximum, regaining its strong geopolitical position from the Cold War (global counter-hegemony). Firstly, Russia sought to retain its influence in the Middle East under the dominance of the US and other Western powers (Kreutz 2002). Secondly, it was important for Russia to maintain its dominance in the Eurasian region, but it was in an antagonistic choice between Westernization and geo-economism (Tsygankov 2003). Thirdly, Russia began the process of shaping an alternative global order, which implied weakening the US and Europe, as well as rapprochement with the states of the Global South and China (Kollaros 2023). Fourth, the geopolitical movements that began with the collapse of the USSR (NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, the strengthening of US economic and political relations with the post-Soviet countries, the ignoring of Russia's ambitions in the global "agenda") became the ground for the radicalization of both the foreign policy of the Russian leadership and the return to the ideas of *Russian irredentism*. If we look at the history of relations between Russia and the US after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, we can identify four key stages, each of which was characterized by a radicalization of Russian foreign policy towards the US, as well as an increase in Russia's aggressiveness towards other states:

- (1) The collapse of the USSR and attempts at rapprochement with the West (1991–1999).
- (2) Gradual cooling of the relationship (2000–2012).
- (3) Aggressive foreign policy and the role of the Challenger (2013–2021).
- (4) A policy of direct "clash of civilizations" (2022–now).

The first stage can be characterized as an attempt to bring Russia closer to the countries of the "West", primarily the USA and Western Europe (Sakwa 2003: 208). At this

stage, Russian foreign policy was aimed at rapprochement with the West, which included political and economic reforms, including Yegor Gaidar's "shock therapy", which led to radical economic transformation, but at the same time increased social inequality, fostered the development of the Russian oligarchy (Shleifer 2009) and increased hyperinflation. This period was also characterized by political reforms, including the adoption of the 1993 constitution and the liberalization of the political system. However, attempts at both liberalization and democratization failed as the system was not ready for a quick break with the authoritarian past (McFaul 2021). In terms of foreign policy, Russia joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. In other words, this period is characterized by Russia's desire to integrate with the West, but economic and political difficulties and the lack of significant Western support led to disillusionment and a change in foreign policy vector. Perhaps it was the continued "ignoring" of Russia, as well as the fear of more systemic support, that caused Russia to oppose NATO and their operation in Kosovo in the late 1990s, including the bombing of Belgrade, which meant a gradual cooling of relations (Braun 2008).

The second stage can be characterized as a "soft turn" towards a harsher criticism of the US and Western European countries, as well as the re-establishment of a centralized system of governance in Russia itself. Vladimir Putin's coming to power, despite the initial continuation of a course of co-operation with the West, gradually constituted a more nationalist and anti-American agenda. The reasons for this were differences in geopolitical interests and internal changes in Russia aimed at strengthening state control. First, it is necessary to recall the process of large-scale nationalization of major campaigns in energy, natural resources, industry and the military-industrial complex. Second, the expansion into the geopolitical boundaries of the USSR, including the Chechen wars, support for separatists in Georgia, Moldova and Central Asia, and the conflict over the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. Third, the instrumentalisation of energy resources (natural gas, oil, valuable metals), which increasingly began to be used as a tool to achieve geopolitical goals and a manifestation of regional ambitions. That is, during this period, the Russian leadership formed an independent foreign policy, the goals and manifestations of which were voiced by Vladimir Putin during his speech at the Munich Security Forum. Richard Sakwa rightly points out that

in the new realism there was a much sharper recognition of the limits of Russian power, grounded above all in economic weakness. (Sakwa 2003: 210)

The third stage can be characterized by a toughening of rhetoric towards the US and Western European countries, as well as Russia's transition in its foreign policy to "hard power" principles, which include the use of military power and economic (in Russia's case, energy) resources to achieve its foreign policy goals. James Sherr perfectly illustrates how Russia manages to combine such tools to exert pressure not only on neighboring states, but also on international organizations and regional alliances, such as the European Union (Sherr 2013). We tend to believe that at this stage Russia's foreign policy is aimed at asserting itself as a "*challenger*" in relation to Western hegemony, primarily American hegemony. This idea is consonant with the concept of challengers, which was proposed by George Modelski (1987). According to his concept, challengers

are states that challenge the dominant world hegemon to change the existing order of things. Challengers seek to offer alternative leadership and challenge the existing hegemon, often by opposing the dominant economic, political and military structures.

We can see that such a “geopolitical challenge” is long-lasting both temporally and spatially. At this stage, Russia annexes Crimea (2014), begins military support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, including sending a military contingent, interferes in the US presidential election, and increases information pressure on European states with the subsequent strengthening of friendly political regimes, as in the case of Hungary or Serbia. That is, the use of military force, interference in regional conflicts, cyberattacks and information operations have become key tools in the arsenal of Russian foreign policy. In our opinion, this has become a catalyst for the strengthening of anti-American sentiments in Russia, which sees itself as an alternative to American hegemony in the Eurasian region, including, above all, Europe and Central Asia. Since the West, in its pursuit of expansion, has been unable to seriously consider Russia’s strategic interests and act prudently (Peng 2017: 269).

The fourth stage is characterized by Russia’s direct confrontation with the West, which includes open military action, tough rhetoric and confrontational steps in the international arena. This policy is aimed at defending Russian interests and spheres of influence, as well as countering Western expansion. While the previous stages were oriented more towards the regional space of geopolitical action, the fourth stage is oriented towards the global space. Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine should be seen as just one point of bifurcation, which was provoked by Russia and should not be limited exclusively to the European region. Firstly, Russia is increasingly turning its attention to the states of the Global South, which have long been marginalized in the context of American hegemony and are therefore inclined to seek an alternative center of power. Secondly, support for anti-American sentiments is reflected in the formation and financing of political elites in European states, support for military coups in Africa (Burkina Faso, Gabon, Gambia, Mali, Sudan, Chad). The same period also saw more dynamic interaction between Russia and the states of the Global South, primarily through international organizations and regional associations such as the SCO or BRICS. Although some researchers have also noted that the Russian-Ukrainian war is fueling the formation of two blocs in Africa that latently or openly support one of the parties (Moti 2023), which could have unexpected consequences for the region.

Researchers have noted that contemporary Russian anti-Americanism is rather reactionary in nature, as the Russian leadership attempts to portray the current geopolitical situation as a reaction to US actions (Budraitskis 2022). This also explains the growth of radical movements in Russia and the radicalization of the political elite that structures public discourse. It was during the Putin era that anti-American considerations among the political elite became more homogenous and focused (Rivera & Bryan 2019), which can be seen in conjunction with the authoritarianism of the political regime, the construction of personalized power and the construction of practices of “satrapization” of territory and resources (Zaporozhchenko 2023: 124). We see that the radicalization of Russian foreign policy is directly proportional to the strengthening of

anti-Americanism as a legitimate basis for aggression. The ideological justification of anti-Americanism in Russia is usually based on the ontological antagonism between Western liberal democracy and the Russian concept of sovereignty and national self-sufficiency (for example, the concept of “Russian World”, the concept of “sovereign democracy”, the concept of Eurasianism). Political justification serves as a tool for mobilizing the population and legitimizing the actions of the Russian authorities, primarily to justify the need for an aggressive foreign policy. Historical justification, as a rule, is used as a common denominator for ideology and politics. History is used by the Russian leadership not only to illustrate the historical confrontation and Russia’s exceptional civilizational mission in various political forms, but also to justify its special place in history. Therefore, combining ideological, political and historical contexts allows us to take a broader look at the persistent practices of Russian anti-Americanism.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: INTERPELLATING ORIENTALISM

In her time, Christina Klein connected the problematics of Orientalism with the processes that took place in the Asian region during the Cold War. A really important aspect of her work is that culture and politics are always intertwined in the process of shaping public opinion. This means that political and ideological factors are integral to the construction of social reality. Christina Klein emphasizes that the perceptions of Asia that were formed during the Cold War continue to influence American society (Klein 2003). On the other hand, the use of Orientalism’s conceptual and methodological possibilities is also reflected in attempts to connect Orientalism to the military context. One possible variant of this “symbiosis” is attempts to analyze the Orientalist views that shape Western perceptions of wars fought in Eastern regions of the world. This includes the use of visual culture, ethical and political factors, stereotypes and beliefs (Barkawi & Stanski 2013).

Such studies have led us to think about the possibility of using postcolonial theory in relation to the constitution of anti-Americanism in contemporary Russia. We proceed from the fact that Russia, which for a long time in its history has been an empire in various political-regime forms (Zaporozhchenko 2023), is by nature a peripheral empire (Lieven 2006). This means that the peripheral logic of constructing a political system depends on the need to construct an antagonistic image that would justify the need to become a new center. Just as new states in the post-imperial space constitute historical memory and find structures to legitimize their own existence in history (national heroes, national culture and literature, historical battles and others), the peripheral empire also seeks to use its history to provide justification for its own existence. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) argues that postcolonial societies seek to “provincialize” Europe, that is, to revise hegemonic historical narratives in which Europe (or, more broadly, the West) has been central as the standard of civilizational progress. Russia, as a former empire on the periphery of the global system, also participates in the process of “provincialization” of the West, but with unique features: unlike classical post-colonial states, Russia was not an object of colonization, but acted as an empire itself, which now must challenge the global dominance of the West. This process involves not only political and economic

rivalry, but also a cultural and historical revision of Western dominance, which allows Russia to assert its “exceptionalism” and an alternative path of development.

The methodological framework of our article focuses on two complementary approaches, the understanding of which will help to identify more clearly the key features of anti-Americanism. The first approach is related to Orientalism, which consists in interpreting the West as a system of constructing the image of the “Other” in relation to the East and everything “*Eastern*”. First, we are talking about the processes of stereotyping, mythology and Westernization, which helps to justify the dominant power of the West and to constitute a hegemonic order. Edward Said writes that

orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by orientalism, rather than after the fact. (Said 1978: 39)

That is, Orientalism, as a practice of rationalization of domination and subordination, is a particular discourse (broadly speaking, a political action) that produces, disseminates and controls knowledge about the Orient. Here, in our view, it is very important to realize that Orientalism does not simply reflect the reality of the Orient but creates a new political and cultural language to interpret the Orient. Alexander Macfie, for example, quite interestingly captures Edward Said’s idea that Orientalism serves as a point of contact between orthodoxies, where unequal West and East exist, where awareness of this fact spreads (Macfie 2000: 220).

Equally important are the institutionalization of Orientalism and the structures of representation of Orientalism’s discursive practices. Edward Said points out that Orientalism became an institutionalized practice involving universities, research centers, colonial administrations, media, visual culture, and other structures. The task of such institutions was to produce, disseminate, and control Orientalist knowledge, which was used to maintain a particular colonial discourse within the hegemonic order (Said 1978: 164). Amir Mufti, for example, writes about the institutionalization of the education system in British India, which contributed to the reinforcement of British dominance as well as the creation of Orientalist practices of perceiving both the colonial administration and India’s own history (Mufti 2010). Equally important is also that “cultural explanations allow the West access to the Orient as informed, authoritative and powerful subjects” (Schirato 1994: 45). It is this thesis that carries with it the potential of structures to represent discursive practices and construct the “Other” social reality. Practice of representation enables the use of power and the system of power relations to create conditions to control images, knowledge, and thus social reality. Although such “opportunism” of Edward Said has been criticized by other scholars (e.g., Mellor 2004), he nevertheless also finds opportunities for a deeper comparative analysis of representations (e.g., Rossow 2004).

In other words, Edward Said proposes the thesis that the West creates and uses stereotypical representations of the East to justify its power and dominance. However, what is important for us is to understand the foundations of anti-Americanism, which can be conceptualized as a practice of Orientalism, only the object will be the West, not the East. Such a methodological approach has been suggested by Ian Buruma and Avishai

Margalit (2005) who proposes the term *Occidentalism* as the opposite of *Orientalism*. While Orientalism views the East through the lens of Western perception, Occidentalism is the way in which the East and other non-Western regions see and make sense of the West; this perception is often characterized by hostility to Western modernity, democracy and liberalism. Another researcher, James Carrier, suggests that occidentalism should be seen as a process in which non-Western societies create their own narratives about the West, often negative or critical. He shows how images of the West can be used to justify internal political struggles or to justify resistance to globalization and Western influence (Carrier 1995). In other words, across cultures, occidentalism manifests itself in the form of resistance to Western hegemony, which is perceived as suppressing or ignoring alternative forms of identity and subjectivity (Venn 2000).

Here and below we will make use of the key features of occidentalism, among which: (1) the West appears in occidentalism as a civilization that is opposed to and always in confrontation with other cultures; (2) occidentalism involves the idealization of traditional values that are opposed to Western individualism, secularism, and capitalism; and (3) occidentalism can be a tool to legitimize authoritarian regimes or radical movements that claim to protect their peoples from Western influence. We suggest that in this context occidentalism refers not only to the criticism and rejection of Western civilization, but also to the processes by which Eastern or other non-Western societies shape their collective images of the West, often hostile or stereotypical. And here it is important to clarify that occidentalism is presented as a reactionary process that emerges in response to Western dominance in the political, cultural and economic spheres, and is often formed as a form of resistance or protest against the globalization, modernization and imperialism with which Western countries are associated. And since occidentalism builds on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, we will use key features of both approaches to maximize the research result.

Therefore, the main thesis that we propose, and which we will explore further, is that elements of occidentalism can be seen in Russian anti-Americanism, where the West (especially the US) is portrayed as a source of threat, decadence and immorality, a threat to traditional values and development. Just as the West used orientalism to construct an image of the East, Russia uses anti-Americanism to create an image of the enemy in the person of the US, which helps to consolidate domestic support and justify foreign policy. Such practices, which have ideological roots, are a reality of contemporary Russian foreign policy. Therefore, in order to "dissect" them more thoroughly, we suggest using Louis Althusser's concept of ideology to identify the mechanisms through which these images are created and used to maintain power and resist external pressure.

Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, perhaps, still remains ambiguous and, to a greater extent, provocative. However, its conceptual possibilities allow us to uncover the normative and value structures of the reproduction of social reality. A key feature and merit of Althusser can be considered to be the separation of the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state, which are necessary both for constructing the social reality of society and for fixing hegemonic norms and rules. Louis Althusser points out that "ideology is not always taken seriously as an existing practice" (Althusser 1985: 167),

and therefore ideology is presented as “those individuals’ imaginary relation to the real relations in which they live” (Althusser 2014: 183). In order to try and understand ideology, not in the context of an absent history, but in the context of a *militant* reality, Louis Althusser introduces the category of apparatuses of the state to show how these apparatuses function to enforce the dominant ideology, ensuring the reproduction of the conditions necessary for capitalism to flourish. The ideological apparatuses of the state are structures and organizations at various social levels that shape people’s beliefs and behavior according to the needs of the political system. Ideological apparatuses include the education system, media and mass media, religion and church, the institution of the family, culture and politics.

The other side of the reproduction of ideology is the repressive apparatuses of the state, to which the author includes the police, prosecutor’s office, army, judicial system, repressive-punitive structures, political institutions and structures of the state as a whole. In other words, repressive apparatuses are structures that ensure the functioning of the state through suppression, coercion and the use of force. Unlike the ideological apparatuses of the state, which function mainly through ideology (in other words, persuasion), repressive apparatuses ensure the implementation of state decisions through coercion and violence. These structures are centralized and function as a unit, maintaining order and control through force (Althusser 2014: 42). Therefore, the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state work together to create false and flexible combinations of repression and ideologization of being. The latter, among other things, is necessary for the reproduction of social order and the maintenance of permanent social conflict.

However, it is much more important to understand not only how and in what way the ideological justification of social order is constituted, but how the various ideological apparatuses ensure the process of interpellation, that is, the creation of subjectivity. Interpellation takes place through a challenge or appeal directed at a person who recognizes himself in this appeal and thus becomes the subject of ideology. The process of interpellation consists of three key ideological acts (Althusser 2014: 191):

- (1) *hailing* individuals to include them in the structure of social action, such as when an individual shouts something to another individual and thus encourages them to act;
- (2) *transforming* individuals into subjects through the process of invocation, as the individual who instinctively or purposefully agrees to respond involves himself or herself in the process of invocation;
- (3) *immanence of* ideology, which exists through proclamations and appeals to individuals, and thus integrates individuals into a common ideological field.

We see that in the context of contemporary Russia, anti-Americanism is often used as a tool of state ideology to form and support national identity and political legitimacy. Within Russian ideology, anti-Americanism is used to form an image of an “external enemy” that mobilizes society around certain values and ideas. State ideological apparatuses such as state media, the education system, religion and political institutions

actively promote anti-American rhetoric that serves as a means of mobilizing public opinion. Here, a research optic that bridges Orientalism and state ideological apparatuses to identify key features of Russian anti-Americanism seems quite interesting. We propose to consider the ideological apparatuses of the state in the context of Russian anti-Americanism as a mechanism for using Orientalist representations of the “Other World” to interpellated the citizens of their state. That is, orientalist stereotypes about the United States, for example, are used as antagonistic structures of confrontation between tradition and innovation, liberalism and traditionalism, secularism and religiosity, materialism and postmaterialism.

On the other hand, we see the active use of historical memory and memory politics, especially in the context of the Second World War, the history of the Romanov Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. Here, Orientalism is a space of possibilities within which various factors of instrumentalization of historical memory, its nationalization, and ideological transformation are constructed. It is not so much a question of identifying new features as of using established narratives, such as American imperialism or “decaying Europe”, which are presented as barbaric and incapable subjects of global culture. This encourages greater use of information policy and media to actively oppose Western influence as it is shaped as dangerous and chaotic. The key task of Russian imperialism is to form sustainable structures for the reproduction of the civilizing mission of maintaining order, tradition, and power.

4. MANIFESTATIONS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN RUSSIAN POLITICS

Today, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, anti-Americanism is widely used in Russian politics and media to shape public opinion and justify foreign policy decisions. Vladimir Putin’s speeches often include criticism of the United States, accusations of attempts to dominate and interfere in the affairs of other countries, and more. Such rhetoric resonates with Russian society, which is tired of economic hardship and looking for an external enemy. Back in 2014, Vladimir Putin spoke at the Valdai Forum, where he accused the United States of seeking global hegemony and violating international law. Today, in almost every speech, such accusations sound like targeted political rhetoric of the Russian authorities. The Russian media actively support this line by distorting information about the events in Ukraine and presenting them as part of a Western conspiracy against Russia. Russian state media actively support an anti-American agenda, covering international events considering the confrontation with the United States. This includes criticizing US foreign policy, military interventions and sanctions, as well as promoting an alternative view on global issues.

We see that Russian anti-Americanism is primarily used to create an image of the US as the “Other”, which helps Russian power structures to consolidate internal unity and mobilize society to fight an external threat. An important feature of this “Other” is a paradoxical interpretation where the US as a global hegemon is perceived as a threat to Russia; but the US as a global brand (economic, financial, productive, and cultural) is still recognized. In the context of anti-Americanism, Russia presents the US as aggressive, expansionist and culturally alien, especially in the context of the spread of liberal values

that are opposed to the traditional values of Russian society. To achieve this goal and reproduce the necessary policies, Russian power structures use the tools of stereotyping and mythologization, i.e. the use of images, symbols and meanings in media and political rhetoric. They also use cultural identification, in which anti-Americanism is necessary for the construction of cultural identity and, more importantly, political identity. In Russia, anti-Americanism is often linked to Orthodox and Slavic values that are opposed to Western liberal ideas.

The core of Russian anti-Americanism, in our view, is a rhetoric of resistance, which Edward Said defined through the formation of sets of representations of the Orient as “Other” and “exotic” to instrumentalize these representations for the reproduction of power and control. The optics of occidentalism that we propose to use demonstrates the use of anti-Americanism as a rhetoric of resistance in contemporary Russia. This means that new political and social discourses are established regarding American hegemony, American imperialism or American neo-colonialism. In this case, the rhetoric of resistance will not only be directed against Americanization, but also for the constitution of national sovereignty and civilizational (historical) identity.

Firstly, the anti-colonial rhetoric of contemporary Russia¹ is increasingly used to build geopolitical communication with the states of the “Global South”. The Russian authorities appeal to the colonial past of such states, pushing them to find another alternative to American hegemony. The situation with military coups in Africa, as well as increased actions in Latin America, demonstrates that Russia uses colonial rhetoric to fix the gap between the center (the US and its allies) – and the periphery (post-colonial states). Second, Russia actively uses history as a tool to reproduce anti-American rhetoric. We propose considering the instrumentalisation of historical memory as a process of using historical events, symbols and narratives to achieve political goals and shape public opinion. Examples of the instrumentalisation of historical memory are:

- (1) *Revision of historical events* – rethinking and reinterpreting the role of the Soviet Union in international politics or Stalin’s policies of industrialization and collectivization, including the justification or exaltation of specific historical events or personalities. This can also include the revival of military parades and “Victory Day” celebrations².
- (2) *Stigmatization of dissenters and construction of subalterns* – historical individuals or social groups that opposed the Soviet Union or oppose the Russian-Ukrainian war are stigmatized and blamed and excluded from

¹ You can read more about the anti-colonial rhetoric of modern Russia in the work of Professor Edyta Bojanowska “*Putin’s Anti-Colonial Agenda?*”. The author claims that Putin uses this rhetoric as a tool to justify aggression against Ukraine and to attract the countries of the “Global South” to his side. The article emphasizes the hypocrisy of the Russian position, as Russia itself has an imperialist past and present, which is not mentioned in official propaganda.

² Marlène Laruelle, in her work “*Russia’s Ideological Construction in the Context of the War in Ukraine*”, views “Victory Day” as a central event in the Russian calendar, used to strengthen patriotic feelings and justify current political actions. Whereas Russian history is interpreted through the prism of heroic events such as the Great Patriotic War, which allows the Kremlin to legitimize its power and strengthen national unity, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

social discourse and politics. This fits into the concept of subalterns, in which social groups emerge that are deprived of their own voice and representation in the power structure, for example, the voices of mothers whose children are at war or of civil society organizations that oppose the war are ignored.

- (3) *Appeal to historical fact* – the annexation of Crimea in 2014 was justified by the Russian authorities as the return of Russian territories that were unjustly given to Ukraine. Such “territorial revisionism” is not only a mechanism of expansion, but also a structure for maintaining political order (Pisciotta 2023), such as retaining power and creating favorable conditions for the reproduction of support by elite groups.
- (4) *“Defender of Peace”* – any empire always positions itself as “Defender of Peace” (Münkler 2007), where peace implies the political order that has been established. This means that the empire assumes the role of liberator and defender of territories or populations, such as the defense of the Russian-speaking population or the fight against the “fascist and Nazi Kiev regime”.

Third, Russian anti-Americanism policy is also invested in the system of building global alliances, for example, through regional or international organizations such as the SCO, BRICS or CSTO. The most obvious alliance that took shape during the Russian-Ukrainian war is the Moscow-Tehran-Beijing triangle. The attempt to form such an alliance suggests that Russia, as a Challenger, is unable to challenge US hegemony on its own and therefore needs allies. Russia and Iran are major exporters of oil and gas, which has attracted interest from China, whose economy needs energy resources to maintain its status as the “factory of the world”. Mutual trade and investment, especially in infrastructure projects and technology, have also been increasing in recent years. Equally important is co-operation on regional security issues in Central Asia and the Middle East, which are geostrategic mechanisms for maintaining confrontation with American influence in these regions and beyond. Although the seriousness of such a geostrategic alliance has been questioned by some scholars who point to symbolic steps to demonstrate the authenticity of such an alliance rather than coordinated global action (Grajewski 2022).

Next, we will examine the ideological state apparatuses that are used by the structures of power to reproduce anti-Americanism. The role of ideological state apparatuses cannot be underestimated, as they shape the perception of the world and create the social reality of society. Russian media (Russia 1, Channel One, Russia 24 and others), which are state-owned, regularly broadcast materials that form a negative image of the United States. Such programs emphasize aggressive US foreign policy, interference in the affairs of other countries, double standards, political or economic consequences of US hegemony. To the Russian media we should also add Internet resources, such as various channels and groups in social networks or websites that are engaged in covering the activities of the Russian authorities in a positive way and criticizing US activities. We can recall the interference of the Russian “bot factory” in the US presidential election, but

we can also speak about the active use of social media as a tool of propaganda and spreading disinformation (Kiforchuk 2023). No less interesting is the study that analyses the perception of the Russian-Ukrainian war in the context of its discussion by Russian citizens in Russian social networks. The authors conclude that the Russian military invasion of Ukraine was discussed mainly in relation to losses in the Russian army, and that allusions to World War II, including Russia's fight against Nazism and defense of the *civilized world*, were common (Urman & Makhortykh 2022). Equally interesting is also a study indicating that Russia's authoritarian and more competitive regime uses social media to construct strategic narratives in the Russian-Ukrainian war, including narratives of anti-Americanism (Ptaszek, Yuskiv & Khomych 2024).

The use of media and social networks is one of the ways of interpellation, i.e. the formation of citizens as subjects of anti-Americanism. Ideological interpellation in the context of Russian anti-Americanism embodies the process of forming public consciousness and political attitudes directed against the United States and the West as a whole. One of the key elements of ideological interpellation in this context is the creation and maintenance of the image of an external enemy, which is used to mobilize public opinion and justify domestic political and social decisions. Russian state propaganda actively reproduces this image through the media, political speeches and educational programs, emphasizing the dominant role of the US in global politics and its alleged anti-Russian aggression. We see military-patriotic education programs¹ being created in contemporary Russia from various militarized organizations and structures of the Russian armed forces.

The aim of such state initiatives is to build a legitimate and universally shared political discourse where Russia represents a stronghold of tradition and history that "external enemies" are trying to destroy. In this context, patriotic discourse is also being reinforced in Russian media and social networks, such as calls for patriotism and defense of the state, joining the armed forces, and ignoring American culture, goods and services. Although researchers have noted that the Russian state strategy of militarizing and strengthening patriotism among young people has faced some pushback, it has employed all possible ideological and repressive tools to achieve societal consolidation against external threats (Pynnöniemi 2021).

If we use the idea of Antoni Gramsci (1971) that any hegemony is always built on an ideological foundation, then, consequently, any ideological mechanisms and tools will be used with the perspective of achieving hegemony, i.e. the consent of citizens to the established order of things. For contemporary Russia, hegemony and consensus are integral characteristics of the resilience of the political system and Vladimir Putin's regime. Achieving a stable hegemonic order within Russia itself is achieved through both

¹ Jennifer Mathers and Allyson Edwards note that military-patriotic education in Russia occupies a special place, since it is aimed at forming a "united front" that should justify and support the actions of the Russian government. This initiative is seen as part of a broader strategy to strengthen national identity and support political stability in the face of current geopolitical tensions, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. You can read the article in more detail at the following link: <https://theconversation.com/russia-programme-of-patriotic-education-aims-to-create-next-generation-of-putin-faithful-181511>

the use of occidentalism and other mechanisms, such as the mobilization of public opinion. The Russian authorities actively use anti-American sentiments to divert attention from domestic problems and consolidate society around a common enemy – the United States. Efe Tokdemir has rightly observed that anti-Americanism tends to serve as a tool of political mobilization and consolidation to allow governments to divert attention from domestic problems and rally the population against a common external enemy (Tokdemir 2017). In such a context, anti-Americanism is often used by the Russian authorities to legitimize authoritarian methods of governance and support the current political regime. Putin's administration, for example, presents itself as 100 percent Russian and anti-Western, which strengthens its position among nationalist-minded citizens.

Russia also uses anti-Americanism as part of its foreign policy strategy to strengthen its influence in the world, as active opposition to the U.S. in the international arena helps it build alternative alliances and expand its geopolitical interests. The last factor we highlight concerns active control over the information space within Russia itself and interference in the information spaces of other states. The purpose of such practices is quite simple: propaganda and disinformation are aimed at strengthening the negative perception of the US and its policies not only inside Russia, but also outside it, primarily in European states, as well as in the states of the "Global South". Some authors note a paradoxical situation where Russia's balance of power and ambitions are not identical, so it tries to maintain regional hegemony by seeking allies in other regions, while it needs not to lose hegemony at home (Russo 2018).

The last key aspect we will examine concerns the repressive state apparatuses that Russia uses to reproduce the political order and mark its legitimacy. Anti-Americanism, as an ideology and policy, justifies repressive measures against domestic opponents or internal threats that undermine the established order. Repressive apparatuses such as police, prosecutors, authorities, courts, and the military use anti-Americanism to identify internal threats, like the McCarthyism policies in the United States in the second half of the 20th century. Examples of such repressive measures include the Foreign Agents Act, Navalny's Case, social media censorship, detention of social activists, military-patriotic education, marginalization of specific social groups, and others. Censorship in social media is justified by the need to control information and block access to resources that disseminate information that negatively reflects power or supports American values (sovereign internet). Navalny's case can be positioned as a construct of a "traitor to the Motherland" who has been accused of collaborating with Western intelligence services and betraying national interests. Open protest against the Russian-Ukrainian war, for example, entails new forms of "ostracism" (culture of cancellation), as happened with Russian cultural industry representatives who spoke out against the war.

In other words, Russian state media systematically support a negative perception of American foreign policy, emphasizing its aggressive aspects and double standards. This contributes not only to mobilizing public opinion inside the country, but also strengthens the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime, showing it as a defender of national interests against external threats. Anti-Americanism is used to form alternative alliances and

strengthen Russia’s geopolitical position in the international arena. Opposition to the United States allows Russia to play the role of a key geopolitical actor, looking for allies among countries that share anti-American sentiments or are concerned about US dominance. In order to illustrate our proposed matrix for analyzing occidentalism, we offer the following table.

Table 1. Analytical matrix for studying manifestations of Russian anti-Americanism

Creating an image of the “Other”	Stereotyping and mythologization	In the Russian media, the US is often portrayed as an aggressive imperialist seeking world domination.
	Cultural identification	Traditionalism is opposed to liberalism; materialism is opposed to post-materialism.
The rhetoric of resistance	Anti-colonial rhetoric	Statements by Russian leaders about the need to resist American imperialism.
	Instrumentalization of historical memory	A look back at the Soviet era and the struggle against American influence, including the victory in World War II.
	Regional and global alliances	Russia’s strategic co-operation with China and Iran on the basis of common anti-American positions.
Ideological reproduction	Ideological apparatuses of the state	Examining curricula and school textbooks for anti-American rhetoric
	Ideological interpellation	Calls in the Russian media for patriotism and defense of the Motherland from Western influence.
	Hegemony and consensus	Analysis of political campaigns where anti-American rhetoric is used to mobilize support
Repressive measures	Repressive apparatuses of the state	Examples of repression against activists accused of pro-American sympathies.
	Legitimization of repression	Justification of arrests and bans on opposition parties and organizations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Researchers of anti-Americanism argue that in many countries, anti-Americanism serves as a useful political tool for leaders to deflect criticism and mobilize support by positioning the United States as a convenient scapegoat for domestic problems (Rubin & Rubin 2004). Contemporary Russia’s use of anti-Americanism only confirms this thesis, as

Russian anti-Americanism is a component of the political regime and its legitimization practices. The Russian-Ukrainian war, as one of the aggressive manifestations of such Russian policy, demonstrates the instrumental nature of anti-Americanism. Anti-Americanism is used by the Russian government to strengthen its legitimacy inside the country, as well as to promote an alternative global order in the system of international relations. Presenting the US as an external enemy and alien “Other” performs the function of diverting public attention from domestic problems and focuses on strengthening internal unity and national identity, which is based on Russia’s historical memory, culture and civilizational mission in the region and the world. Therefore, the Russian-Ukrainian war should be seen not only as a local event, which it could be, but as a global one, which it is. Here we will reiterate that the Russian-Ukrainian war is used by Russia as a fight against American hegemony and not to take into account the interests and ambitions of the Russian leadership. Consequently, the war helps both to strengthen anti-American rhetoric and to justify Russia’s foreign policy and geopolitical actions.

The use of Louis Althusser’s concept of ideology demonstrates how anti-Americanism is interpellated into the consciousness of citizens through various ideological apparatuses of the state, including media, social networks, education, culture, and religion. This contributes to the mass dissemination of anti-American sentiment and its entrenchment in the public consciousness. Whereas the application of Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism allows us to understand how anti-Americanism is shaped through the creation of a distorted image of the US as an enemy. Such practices aim to reinforce nationalist, radicalized and traditionalist sentiments; to support aggressive foreign policy; and to articulate hostile rhetoric. Occidentalism, which is a characteristic feature of contemporary Russian geopolitical actions, can serve as a conceptual matrix to explain the actions of the Russian leadership. However, further and more thorough research into this issue may reveal other scenarios and options for the ideological justification of Russian hegemonic ambitions.

One such option could be the study of anti-Americanism in conjunction with the concepts and theories of “Russian World”, Eurasianism or “Rashism.” As for the functional component of the Russian leadership’s use of anti-Americanism, it also manifests itself in foreign policy. Russia, which is trying to rethink and reformat the global order, offers an alternative to various international actors that are either excluded from the American hegemonic order or ignored by the United States. Such actors include, above all, China, Iran, and the states of the “Global South”. Increased cooperation with such states, the formation of situational or permanent alliances, support for military coups, and energy policy are mechanisms through which Russia accumulates anti-American sentiment in the world. Since both Russia’s geopolitical and military-industrial positions are not sufficient, it is forced to compile a global anti-American discourse, bringing civilizational and ideological character to it.

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