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DISCUSSION

TWO CIVILIZATIONS: THE RELATIONS OF RUSSIA AND WESTERN EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21st CENTURY

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The challenges of building relations between two different civilizations, which Samuel Huntington and Lev Gumilev wrote about, are currently becoming more obvious due to the cardinal geopolitical and geoeconomic changes that have taken place since the demise the USSR and the world socialist system. Today, in the West, as if in contrast to the famous project by Charles de Gaulle — "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals", an extremely negative image of Russia is being formed. Western ideologists stick to the axiom according to which despotism and slavery, allegedly being the basis of Russia's internal order, inevitably give rise to aggression in relations with the outside world. Of course, these ideas do not take into account the ongoing socio-economic changes in the country and have little to do with modern realities. They are a mere reproduction of the old Western xenophobic moods going back to the time when Russophobia was widely spread in a number of leading European countries. The article explores historical roots of Russophobia and their manifesttations at the beginning of the XXI century in Poland and the Baltic countries.

Keywords: inter-civilization splits, Russophobia, geopolitics, peaceful coexistence, the Baltic region

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Samuel Huntington's book "The Clash of Civilizations"[1], often mentioned by political scientists and political geographers, as well as the

[1] Huntington, S. 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York.

work of Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyov on intercivilizational relations and the formation of Eurasian civilization[2], are, unfortunately, not fully comprehended. This is manifested in the desire to impose the authors' view of the world, which is characteristic of a particular civilization. The possibility of a different attitudes to social processes is regarded as defective, impossible and requiring, at the very least, censure. Any deviation is considered unacceptable and immoral. A vivid manifestation of such an approach is the so-called Russophobia — an unjustifiably critical view of Russia, the Russians and their ethno-cultural, religious and national-state identity. In this sense, a number of authors propose to consider Russophobia one of the forms of xenophobia [1—8]. Today, the question of negative attitudes towards Russia is acquiring not only scientific but also political [9—19] and practical dimensions.

In the 19th century, Russophobia as a phenomenon was spread quite widely. Similar sentiments in the West were connected with the active foreign policy of the Russian Empire aimed at preserving European monarchies and the political balance of power in Europe. Interference in the internal affairs of other states and Russia's participation in all European wars led to Europe becoming fearful of Russia's strengthening and her growing role in the European and therefore in the world order. The clash of the foreign policy interests of the Russian Empire in the Balkans and then in Central Asia with those of other European countries, especially Great Britain, led to aggressive political propaganda declaring the Russian people "barbarians and the cunning Asians".

In his time, the outstanding Russian thinker I. A. Ilyin in his article "The World Politics of Russian Sovereigns" listed the characteristic features of the West's attitude to Russia in the 19th century and described the existing in Europe set of "bad affects: fear, arrogance, enmity, envy and ignorant slander…". A capacious, precise and expressive formulation by Ilyin explaining the essence of such an attitude can be summarized as follows: "Europeans 'need' a bad Russia: **barbarous**, so that it could be 'civilized' in their own way; **threatening with its size**, so that it could be divided; **expansionistic**, so that a coalition against it could be created; **reactionary**, so that one could justify a revolution in it and demand a republic for it; **religiously decomposing** [highlighted by I. A. Ilyin] in order to break into it with the propaganda of Reformation or Catholicism; economically untenable in order to claim its 'unused' space and its raw materials or at least to demand favorable trade agreements and concessions. But if such a 'rotten' Russia could be strategically used, then the Europeans are ready to make alliances with it and to demand its participation in military actions "to the last drop of its blood" [20, p. 93].

[2] *Gumilev, L.N.* 1979—1980, *Etnogenez i biosfera Zemli* [Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere], Moscow, Vol. 1—3 (in Russ.).

Much of what I. A. Ilyin wrote and what gave rise to Russophobia as an ideological and political phenomenon retains its relevance nowadays. It is not by chance that the Russophobic policy, which took the form of Russiaphobia, intensified in the West and became actually the prevailing tendency when Russia had overcome the crisis of transition period and risen from its knees, when, by relying on its restored economy and revived armed forces, it returned to the policy of defending its national interests, which by no means always and completely coincide with those of the United States (which took the place of the 19th century Great Britain) and their Western allies. There are still attempts to 'civilize' Russia; if they fail, then to dismember or at least to internally divide her, to use our country's resources in their own interests (let us recall the famous 'project' of Zbigniew Brzezinski to make Siberia a common Eurasian domain, subject to transnational efforts for its development and settlement[3]).

At the same time, Russophobia (Russiaphobia) is greatly manifested in the foreign and domestic policies of not only the leading Western states (primarily the United States and Great Britain), but in particular in those of their Eastern European allies. It is primarily about the position of the current authorities of Poland and the Baltic States and their ideologists who were defined by German researchers back in 2007, that is before the events in Ukraine, as "soldiers of the Cold War" who are set to increase conflict with Russia[4].

The origins of Russophobia and our times

According to F. I. Tyutchev, the basis for Russophobia is "a fiery, blind, cruel and hostile attitude… towards Russia" [21, p. 191]. From his point of view, the appearance of the image of Russia as a "monster" and "cannibal of the 19th century" [21, p. 176] in the public consciousness of Europeans was conditioned by a number of reasons: firstly, by deep civilizational differences between Western and Eastern Europe (i. e. Russia); secondly, by the lack of understanding of the social system, a civilization that can replace the Western one: "The Western people who make judgments about Russia are a bit like the Chinese making judgments about Europe, or rather the Greeks (Greculi) making judgments about Rome. This seems to be the law of history: never has any social system or any civilization manifested the understanding of that one which had to replace it…"; and thirdly, "moral irresponsibility" [21, p. 100, 182, 191]. Fourthly, Tyutchev also notes the instinctive nature of Russophobia,

[3] Brzezinski, Z. 2004, *Vybor. Globalnoe gospodstvo ili globalnoe liderstvo* [The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership], Moscow, p. 139—140 (in Russ.).

[4] Kulik, S. A. 2013, *Rossiya v Baltijskom labirinte* [Russia in the Baltic Labyrinth], Moscow, p. 26—27 (in Russ.).

which arises in Western society in the face of the material strength of Russia. This instinctive feeling is "something between respect and fear — the feeling of awe, which is held only in relation to the Power" [21, p. 100—101].

All these historical roots of Russophobia, alas, are relevant today; the only difference is that Russophobia is now acting mainly as Russiaphobia[5]. For all their similarities and common Christian roots, quite serious civilizational differences persist between Russia and the West, and it is obvious that the attempts of the West to mould Russia as they wish will not be successful. Moreover, these attempts are incomprehensible and unnecessary — Japan is a very successful member of the geopolitical West in spite of the fact that in terms of mentality it is much further from the West than modern Russia.

The source of Russophobia is also the fact that Russia, without abandoning modernization and innovation, at the same time remains loyal to historical traditions and values and is becoming one of the leaders of enlightened conservatism in the modern world. It is notable that a well-known American politician and publicist Patrick Joseph Buchanan, famous for his conservative views, in his book "The Death of the West"[6] repeatedly mentions Russia and Russian realities and apparently considers our country a natural ally of the West if not a part of it. Russia is also turning into a leader of the conservative world in the eyes of a number of right-wing European politicians[7]. This, in turn, causes a negative, or if you wish, Russophobic reaction from the liberal-minded political circles of the United States and European countries, because Russia and attitudes to it and relations with it are becoming a factor of both the foreign and domestic policy, an instrument in the fight for votes.

As in Tyutchev's time, Russophobia rests on the same fear of the military might of Russia, which is not only one of the two leading nuclear states but has also recently demonstrated, as we saw it in Syria, the ability to project power and achieve its geopolitical goals by using conventional weapons in opposition with the world's leading geopolitical players.

[5] In the modern outwardly politically correct and tolerant West it is not customary to demonize peoples, so now they demonize Russia as a state, hypocritically emphasizing that they have nothing against the Russian people. Still the essence of Russophobia remains the same; that is why in this paper we use this term for describing the modern period of time.

[6] Buchanan, P.J. 2003, *Smert' Zapada* [The Death of the West], Moscow (in Russ.).

[7] Osipov, E. 2017, The Leader of the Conservative World, *Izvestiya*, March 7, 2017, available at: https://iz.ru/news/669056 (accessed 12.10.2018) (in Russ.).

The economic growth in Russia, which after overcoming the transition crisis has become one of the world's main centers of attraction and export of foreign capital, has also raised fears in the West. It is significant that in 2013, the year before the imposing of anti-Russian sanctions, the Russian Federation ranked third in the world in terms of inflows of foreign direct investment and fourth in their exports[8]. One should mention also the role of Russia as the world energy superpower, which plays a key or important role in the supply of energy to many countries of the world, primarily to Europe.

One of the roots of the traditional and recently increasing Russophobic policy of the United States, in which it involves the rest of the West, is the fear of a rapprochement between Russia and Europe. As noted by the well-known American political scientist and geopolitician George Friedman, "For generations, keeping the technological sophistication of Europe separated from the natural resources and manpower of Russia has been one of the key aims of American foreign policy"[9]. He emphasizes that "the unification of Russia and Europe would create a force whose population, technological and industrial capability, and natural resources would at the very least equal America's, and in all likelihood outstrip them". That is why, as noted by G. Friedman, "during the twentieth century, the United States acted three times to prevent the kind of Russian-German entente that could unify Eurasia and threaten fundamental American interests". In his opinion, "the response of the United States to a Russian-German entente must be the same during the next ten years as it was in the twentieth century. The United States must continue to do everything it can to block a German-Russian entente and to limit the effect that Russia's sphere of influence might have on Europe, because the very presence of a military powerful Russia changes the way Europe behaves."[10]

Objective factors of cooperation between Russia and Western Europe

The current processes of confrontation contradict the fact that economic and geographical factors determine the need for cooperation.

Russia and Western Europe are objectively complementary and, according to Vladimir Chizhov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU, "there is no reasonable alternative to cooperation

[8] World Investments Report 2014, New York ; Geneva, p. XV.
[9] Friedman, G. 2011, *Sledujushie 10 let* [The Next Decade], Moscow, p. 20 (in Russ.).
[10] Friedman, G. Op. cit., p. 20.

and unification of potentials"[11]. Now we are talking mainly about the complementarity in the supply of raw materials (primarily energy) in exchange of finished goods, but in the future the complementarity of economies can also cover high-tech areas such as nuclear energy, aerospace and others. Certain groundwork in these fields has already been laid. In the long run, with the normalization of relations, a colossal industrial and raw material giant from "Lisbon to Vladivostok" can be created[12].

There are objective factors for the cooperation between Russia and its closest European neighbors, including such anti-Russian "Cold War soldiers" as Poland and the Baltic States.

Dr. Leszek Sykulski, the author of the recently published book "Geopolitics and Security of Poland", who previously worked as an analyst on international security issues in the office of the President of Poland Lech Kaczynski, notes that Poland and Russia are doomed to cooperate because of geography itself[13]. And he is not alone in his views. Thus, Kornel Morawiecki, who is the oldest deputy of the Polish Sejm and the father of the current Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki, believes that Poland could become a natural bridge to the East for Western Europe and to the West for Russia[14]. For example, the pan-Eurasian transport system "The New Silk Road" proposed by China could become one of the promising projects that would benefit both Poland and Russia. However, largely because of Poland's policy towards Russia, the transportation of cargoes can be redirected round that country through Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg[15]. Ultimately, Warsaw would gain from the restoration of mutually beneficial pragmatic relations with Moscow, but in the first place it is the Russophobic emotions that impede that. Russia,

[11] Chizov, V. 2017, Chizhov: otnoshenija Rossii i Evrosojuza ispitivajut deficit kanalov kommunikacii [Chizov: the EU-Russia Relations are Lacking in Communication Channels], *RIA Novosti*, available at: https://ria.ru/politics/20171204/1510182711.html (accessed 12.10.2018) (in Russ.).

[12] Yakunin, V. I. 2013, Political and Economic Competitiveness of Europe and Russia: Possible Synergies, *Sravnitelnaya Politika*, No. 1 (11), p. 77—78 (in Russ.).

[13] Khavich, O. 2018, Polsha i Rossija: Soyuz pochti ne viden [Poland and Russia: Union almost out of Sight], *Ukraina.ru*, available at: https://ukraina.ru/exclusive/20181004/1021310602.html (accessed 12.10.2018) (in Russ.).

[14] Morawiecki, K. 2018, Kornel Morawiecki: improvement of Polish-Russian relations for the benefit of the world peace [Kornel Morawiecki: Uluchshenie otnoshenij Polshi i Rossii v interesah mira], *RIA Novosti*, available at: https://ria.ru/interview/20180703/1523789744.html (accessed 12.10.2018) (in Russ.).

[15] New Silk Road may not go through Poland [Novij Sholkovij put' mozhet bit prolozhen v obhod Polshi], *Radio Polsha*, 15.05.2018, available at: http://www.radiopolsha.pl/6/138/Artykul/363551 (accessed 12.10.2018) (in Pol.).

however, is not going to respond in the same manner. As stated by Russian Foreign Minister S. V. Lavrov: "We have been included in the category of enemies; we will not reciprocate, although we see that Russophobia is being consciously, consistently and on a large scale planted in Poland as a national idea". The Minister assured that if Poland understands that a dialogue can only be based on mutual consideration of interests, Russia will be ready for dialogue with Poland[16].

The Russophobic policy of the leadership of the Baltic States seems to be even more irrational compared to that of Poland, since due to the history, geographical location and economic development features Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia even more badly need normal relations with the Russian Federation. The curtailment of previously uneven economic relations with Russia — first of all the cessation of cargo transit through the Baltic ports as well as the support of anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the European Union seriously hurt their economies. The attempts to abandon Russian energy supplies will force them to incur higher costs for the purchase of liquefied natural gas from other countries, as has already happened to Lithuania. The Baltic States, pursuing Russophobic policies both internally and externally, seem to have almost missed the chance given by geography and history to become a transit territory (or "gateway region" in the terminology of the American geopolitics scholar, Saul Cohen) between Russia and Europe. According to S. Cohen, the main function of the regions, which he considered 'the gateways', is the stabilization of the world geopolitical system, the stimulation of global economic and political interaction and international cooperation[17]. In fact, the Baltic Sea region is rapidly becoming (if it has not already become) a zone of confrontation, a kind of "new powder keg" of Europe like the Balkans at the beginning of the last century, an economically depressed margin of Europe losing its population as a result of mass migration (especially youth). The blame for that should be put, above all, on the anti-Russian Russophobic policy pursued by the ruling elites of these countries.

Conclusions

In the modern world Russophobia appears, above all, as Russiaphobia, that is hostility towards Russia as a state, its foreign and domestic policy. It is a reflection of the strategy of the West which seeks (and not

[16] Lavrov: Polsha zapisala RF v kategoriju vragov, Moskva ne budet otvechat' vzaimnostju [Lavrov: Poland Believes Russia is an Enemy, the Feeling is not Mutual], *Tass, Russian News Agency*, Jan. 15, 2018, available at: https://tass.ru/politika/4874070 (accessed: 12.10.2018) (in Russ.).

[17] Kolosov, V., Mironenko, G. 2001, *Geopolitika: uchebnik dlia vuzov* [Geopolitics: a university handbook], Moscow, p. 109—110 (in Russ.).

for the first time since the times of tsarism) to oppose the "bad Russian authorities" to the majority of the population, to whom (say the supporters of this policy) they are friendly and seek to help them live in prosperity, freedom and democracy of the Western type. It is indicative, however, that "bad" are any authorities in Russia, which try to defend Russian national interests and do not allow the Western states to pursue their own economic and geopolitical ends in relation to our country — regardless of whether it is the tsarist, Soviet, or post-Soviet capitalist rule. Perhaps, the only exception is the period from the end of "perestroika" until the mid-1990s, when the West supported first M. S. Gorbachev's policy and then B. N. Yeltsin's. It is not worth mentioning that this policy resulted in the collapse of the USSR, the economic crisis and the significant loss of Russia's previous geopolitical positions. The population, with a few exceptions, for which Western ideologists of the transition to democracy and market advocated so much, was plunged into deprivation and poverty, which was overcome only after a serious adjustment of the economic and political course. All this makes us at least be wary of the game of contrasts "the bad authorities — the unfortunate Russian people".

Russophobia is not so much ethnophobia as the tool that the West led by the United States is using to prevent the restoration of Russia as a great world power that occupies a rightful place among the leading players in global politics and economy. It is not by chance that Russophobia is declining when Russia is weak and when it is possible to try to manipulate her. When these attempts fail, the West turns back to Russophobic policy, as it happened in 2003—2004 when "color revolutions" began to spread in the post-Soviet space.

Russophobia as ideological and political tool is used not only by great powers, such as the USA or EU leading countries, but also by the countries of the second (Poland) and third (Baltic States) echelons. In this case we are talking about using Russophobia and whipping it up in order to act as privileged partners of the first-echelon Western countries to benefit from this partnership economically and politically. At the same time, in Poland and especially in the Baltic States, Russophobia to a much greater extent than in the "Old West" exists not just as a tool, but as ethnophobia, i. e. hostility towards Russians as an ethnicity but towards Russia as a state.

It seems that it is possible and necessary to counteract Russophobia through an active information campaign abroad (an example of such a successful campaign is the work of the RT TV channel), support for pro-Russian parties, public associations, politicians, activists and the grassroots as well as through the formation of pro-Russian lobbies in the leading Western countries (primarily in the United States), the promotion of contacts of ordinary people (the recent World Cup 2018 in Russia played a huge positive role in this sense), etc. In other words, it is necessary to activate all possible mechanisms of "soft power", which now, in our

opinion, are not used by Russia in full or are insufficiently coordinated. An important positive role in overcoming Russophobia in the Baltic Sea region can and should be the active participation of Russian regions, governmental and non-governmental institutions in the programs and projects of cross-border and trans-border cooperation both on a bilateral and multilateral bases (primarily with the EU). We believe that cooperation at the local and regional level will gradually contribute to overcoming mistrust and to improving relations at higher levels of interaction between Russia, individual countries of Western Europe (including the Baltic Sea region) and the EU as a whole.

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