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Defying the World: Globalisation and Nationalist Party Politics in Russia

The process of globalisation is commonly recognised to be characteristic of contemporary international developments. Globalisation implies two distinct phenomena. First, it suggests that political, economic and social activity is becoming worldwide in scope. Secondly, it suggests that there has been an intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness among the states and societies (Held, 1991). Among these relations are those created by the progressive emergence of a global economy, the expansion of transnational links which generate new forms of collective decision-making, the development of intergovernmental and quasi-supranational institutions, etc. (Giddens, 1990). Consequences of globalisation are controversial and not necessarily positive. Are there reasons for thinking that the system of international authority structures would be more accountable than existing mechanisms of accountability such as traditional models of representative democracy? Severe questions rise about the accountability of such diverse international organisations and agencies as the International Monetary Fund and NATO, which challenge the very idea of sovereign state.

In the new Eastern European states experiencing transition to representative democracy the dilemmas of globalisation become even more salient. Held (1991: 226) argues that 'as more and more people today are claiming the principle of democratic legitimacy for themselves - and asserting that ... government must operate on their behalf if it is to be legitimate government - the very scope and relevance of this principle is ... being contested by processes of global restructuring'. In post-communist Russia the process of institutional changes involves the creation of at least some elements of democratic institutional design. With the emergence of such democratic political institutions as elections, representative assembly, and even imperfect multiparty system, the location of sovereignty arguably shifts from a narrow elite cycle to the people. Globalisation presumably eroding national sovereignty is perceived to be an impediment for Russia's national development. Additionally, it is unclear whether the inchoate Russian market system will adopt to the conditions and requirements of the 'new economic order' based on the developed market system, or not. The real and imagined dangers of globalisation evoke antiglobalist and nationalist emotions among the Russian population. Indeed, some recent studies of mass consciousness indicate that the Russian publics become increasingly perceptive to the nationalist rhetoric (Prizel, 1998). Greenfeld stresses (1992: 10) that 'the location of sovereignty within the people... , which constitute(s) the essence of the modern national idea, (is) at the same time the basic tenets of democracy'. Hence the process of state building occurring in the context of globalisation may provoke the rise of nationalism in a specific form, further in this analysis referred to as anti-

globalism.

In Russia, globalisation as a threat is a persistent theme in the rhetoric of several important political parties. One of them is the major nationalist party currently represented in the Russian parliament, the misleadingly labelled Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). Another organisation that puts strong emphasis on this theme is the Russian All-Popular Union (RAPU), a political group forming the core of the People's Power faction of the 1995-99 parliament. And, most importantly, the largest opposition party in Russia, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), has accepted the negative view of trends towards globalisation as a pivotal element of its new ideology that currently takes shape to replace Marxism-Leninism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that anti-globalism is an increasingly important factor of Russia's political life.

The contents of anti-globalism can be roughly summarised as follows. Globalisation is not a spontaneous process. Rather, it is a strategy deliberately pursued by a tiny group of people striving for world domination. This group, comprising the world's financial and entrepreneurial elites, lacks any national or cultural identity and is indeed anonymous. It is nevertheless powerful, as it has at its disposal both the vast financial resources and the contemporary technological means of domination (primarily, mass communication technologies). It not only runs the transnational corporations that are instrumental in creating the 'new economic order', but also manipulates a number of organisations that are instrumental in implementing the 'new political order' (primarily, the International Monetary Fund and NATO). To achieve their strategic goal, the proponents of globalisation have to degrade nation states, which is impossible without eliminating national cultures. Upon placing the United States and West Europe under their effective control, they found the major obstacle to their plans in Russia - both in its powerful statehood and in its rich cultural heritage. That is why they initiated an assault against Russia that resulted in the demolition of the Soviet Union, economic devastation, and cultural degradation manifested in the arrival of 'mass culture'. In their 'undeclared war' against Russia, the proponents of globalisation rely upon their hidden allies - the 'agents of influence', both Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin belonging to this category. It must be mentioned that some of the literary expositions of anti-globalism present it as a sophisticated, even esoteric, theory owing much to the extreme right-wing ideologies of recent descent (such as the French 'new philosophy'). Admittedly, our brief summary conceals many of the 'intellectual depths' of anti-globalism.

Contemporary Russian anti-globalism is perhaps an extreme example of how the phenomenon of world society can be misused in public political rhetoric. Its utterly inadequate imagery may be easily disregarded. But insofar as it enters the political life of one of the largest countries of the world, it grows in its significance and starts to influence world society in important and often unpredictable ways. That is why it has to be understood. The study is not only about self-deception or deliberate political manipulation, but also - and primarily - about practical incentives that make nationalist party politicians in Russia adhere to anti-globalism.

The broad purpose of the proposed research is to explain why anti-globalism, as described above, has emerged as the dominant political discourse in Russia's opposition politics. More specifically, we attempt to reveal those functions that anti-

globalism performs on the political arena of contemporary Russia. This is be achieved by addressing several inter-related problems pertaining to the (mis)use of globalisation in the rhetoric of nationalist party politicians in Russia. First, we explore the cognitive foundations of contemporary Russian anti-globalism. Second, we make an inquiry into its role in shaping the political field of opposition politics in Russia. Third, we examine to what extent anti-globalism helps political parties secure electoral support, that is, how well this mode of opposition rhetoric fits into the expectations of voters.

While the existing body of literature does deal with a variety of problems pertaining to anti-globalism, no systematic study on the subject has been undertaken so far. In part, this can be explained with reference to the fact that most studies take fairly narrow disciplinary approaches to the problems of party building and electoral politics in Russia. We believe that solving the mentioned empirical problems will allow us to theoretically explicate the causes of the rise of anti-globalism in contemporary Russia's party politics.

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