The Manufactured Enemy: How Anti-Russian Myths Survived for Centuries | Dr. Manuel Ramos

Russia as an "enemy of civilization" is one of Europe's oldest and most successful fabricated war-narratives ever. From the aristocracy of old to the modern Epstein class, the big bad enemy in the east has been essential to some quarters of the Atlantic elites. Dr. Manuel Ramos joins Pascal to trace the historical construction of Russophobia, focusing on the forged Testament of Peter the Great. Ramos argues that its image of permanent Russian expansion survived exposure and shaped European political language, imperial rivalry and contemporary threat perceptions. They discuss Napoleon, Britain's Great Game, racial stereotypes, Russian responses, cultural admiration and Europe's economic troubles. The conversation asks how inherited enemy images obstruct diplomacy and whether Europe can rebuild a more balanced relationship with Russia. Manuel's Links: Substack: https://manueljoaoramos.substack.com Russophobia Forged — Part 1: https://manueljoaoramos.substack.com/p/russophobia-forged Russophobia Forged — Part 2: https://manueljoaoramos.substack.com/p/russophobia-forged-ii Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com/donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 The historical construction of Russophobia 03:09 The forged Testament of Peter the Great 09:51 The myth of permanent Russian expansion 17:56 Imperial rivalry and Britain's Great Game 27:02 Russia's European identity and the common European home 33:24 Enemy stereotypes and Russian responses 45:10 Russophobia, social crisis and Europe's economy 52:31 Can Europe rebuild its relationship with Russia?

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, we have a new piece to discuss with Dr. Manuel Ramos, who is an associate professor and senior researcher at the University Institute of Lisbon. Manuel, welcome back. Good morning—or good afternoon in your case. Good morning to you, sir. And you recently published two immense pieces on your Substack. They are huge, on the issue of Russophobia. Actually, you called them "Russophobia Forged," as in how Russophobia was created over time. And it's two essays, part one and part two. Both of them are very long.

You really wrote down basically the entire genealogy of how the West, and especially Western Europe, created Russophobia as a political tool to define the proper way of understanding Russia. So I really wanted to talk to you about this because I was also recently at a conference back in June in Russia on Russophobia, and the analysis is very similar. Russophobia is, of course, a political

concept, one that is constantly revived and thrives on a couple of very racist stereotypes. But you looked at the genealogy. Can you maybe walk us through the beginnings of Russophobia and then its development?

#Manuel Ramos

Okay, let me start by saying that I live in Portugal. I'm Portuguese, and in 2022, I was confronted with something that I always sort of knew: lots of Portuguese are Russophobes. This has to do with the Soviet Union. It has to do with the so-called third miracle of Fatima. I mean, it's a very local thing, but anyway. And suddenly I read in a British newspaper that there are three countries that stand out as very, very Russophobic: Ukraine, Poland, and Portugal. And I thought, what? Why are we so Russophobic? So, in the wake of the start of the war, I read Professor Diesen's book on Russophobia, and that was, in a way, my starting point.

And so I felt this was a huge thing. And then I read Rice's paper on the testament of Peter the Great, and suddenly things sort of became clearer. The so-called testament of Peter the Great sort of stems from a maybe fabricated occurrence involving Peter the Great on his deathbed. And this is something for internal Russian court consumption. There were lots of struggles over succession, and there's one point when someone says, yes, Peter said he renounces his testament and he's going to write a new testament on his deathbed. He says, "Give everything to..." and he dies.

And so, in a way, Peter the Great, on his deathbed, sort of created the possibility of someone writing his testament because he didn't have a standing testament. In 1710, the first occurrences of this story of the testament appear. It relates to the Swedish-Russian conflict and the battle of Poltava. Charles XII loses the battle and goes to Constantinople, and there a Hungarian says, yes, there's a secret testament in St. Petersburg, in the coffers of the palace. And then there's a Cossack hetman, Orlik, who is a very interesting person because, in Ukrainian historical circles, he is given the title of the father of the Ukrainian constitution. But he was an exile. He went to Poland.

#Manuel Ramos

And in Poland, he started talking about the testament and composing the first version of it. The testament has lots of versions because each version sort of appropriates the historical facts and repudiates the facts or elements that are not interesting for that historical period. So it's like a myth that creates its own transformations and variations throughout the 19th century. So you have this story that is, in the beginning, sort of a local story, becomes a regional story, and then, in the late 18th century, reaches Paris. And this is the moment that I think is important, because that's the moment when the testament becomes an official tool. Because it becomes...

#Pascal

Sorry, may I just ask? So, to this day, we have no idea if that actually happened or not. We can be pretty sure that there is no such testament. I mean, also because, even according to the story, you know, he died before he dictated it. But the idea is that back in—what did you say, 1710?—the Russian czar left behind a testament in which he actually wrote down the intention to conquer. That's the point, right? The Russian intention to conquer Europe and the world was apparently written in there. And that myth then gets a life of its own. But yeah, can you take it from Paris? Mm-hmm.

#Manuel Ramos

So, in a way, even in Poland, the idea of the testament was a tool for reaction. I mean, the idea was that, yes, the Russians are coming, so we have to do something. But, of course, it is with Napoleon and his very complicated relations with Tsar Alexander that the testament becomes something that can be a pretext for the invasion.

#Manuel Ramos

Because by now, the standard elements of the testament, which by the early 19th century become a set of 14 points, become the grammar. And what fascinates me, actually, is that no one reads the testament. It was debunked in the late 19th century by an Estonian historian, Berkholz. But you don't need the testament now because it's been imprinted. So the story itself doesn't hold water, but the contents are all there.

So when you listen today to Ursula von der Leyen, to António Costa, to Andy Burnham, to Merz, they all have the testament in the back of their heads without knowing anything about it. I believe that 99% of the parliamentarians in the European Parliament have never heard of the testament. But it's like you don't need to read the actual story, the actual testament, the actual forgery, because it has become imprinted in discourse. It has been imprinted in imagery. And I think that, in the late 19th century, Mackinder's view of the world and of Russia transformed the testament into a visual tool.

#Pascal

So what vision of Russia does this forged testament create, and what jargon does it then embed in the cultural memory of Western Europe, basically?

#Manuel Ramos

Yeah, there are quite a few. Like I said, the most complete versions have 14 points, but it is a testament that says that Russia is a war machine, is in a state of perpetual war, and is an expanding machine. And its destiny, the objective of Russia, is timeless. It goes beyond the contingent interests of each tsar. It is something that is beyond contingent politics. It's an eternal design for expansion:

expansion to the Baltic, expansion to the Indies, expansion to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. And also, it has an element which I believe is very interesting. It's the idea of total domination of the world, a design for total hegemony, with very interesting elements like the idea that you have to sow discontent in Europe. You always have to, you know, play the European powers against each other.

And inside each country, you have to play the actors against each other because that's what weakens them. And that's how we achieve global power—"we" being the Russians in the testament. So every act or behavior or initiative by the Russians towards appeasement is read as a mask for conquest. So there's no way out. It's like a testament that has captured European and Western imaginations, but it has also captured the Russian imagination and Russian reactions. And sometimes, Russophobia and the testament are also tools in Russian international policy, because each time a European or a Westerner says, "Yes, you want to conquer us," they say, "No, no, you're being Russophobic," you know? So it's a two-sided game, which means that everyone is caught up in this grammar, the grammar of the Testament of Peter the Great.

#Pascal

The grammar of Russophobia and the entrenched tropes that are in there—apart from this underlying assumption that Russia must expand, right, and Russia will expand, and if we don't stop it, then it needs to be stopped with force. That's, of course, the logical conclusion. What other elements are there in these Russophobic tropes that allow for, you know, painting a picture? Because the Russians are painted in a very specific way. Can you go into the other tropes?

#Manuel Ramos

Yes, it's a very specific way, with lots of tones and shades and masks. What I mean is, you know, Peter the Great is the utmost symbol of Russian Europeanization. I mean, he is the one who introduces Europe into Muscovy. So he creates Russia as a European power. And so, in a way, the old tropes about Russia or Muscovy and Novgorod and all that are that, yes, they're Oriental. They're Oriental, Mongol, Asiatic. But Peter the Great is not Oriental and Asiatic. He introduced the West into Russia. But at the same time, because the testament declares that the design goes beyond the emperor's wishes—it's much more, it's grander than the Tsar's wishes—the fact that he's introducing the West into Russia and Europeanizing Russia is seen as a tool for destroying Europe.

#Pascal

Ah, the infiltration—as in, the Russians want to pretend they're Europeans so they can come here and destroy what is really European.

#Manuel Ramos

Exactly. And so this is totally schizophrenic. But it is a schizophrenia that we can't escape, because every move towards Europe or against Europe that Russia makes is read through the Testament and is declared a suspicious act. And so it's like we're trapped. We're trapped because no move is good. You don't need to say that the Testament is false. And actually, one of the main researchers of the Testament, Subtelny, is a very interesting character. He came from, I believe, Kharkov, but he was born in Warsaw as a refugee. And he moves to Canada, like so many Ukrainians move to Canada. And he becomes a lecturer and is deeply interested in the Testament. And his work is outstanding.

But his work is also captured by the Testament, in a way, because he actually believes that the Testament is false. He goes through the old versions and sort of brings together the different versions. Until then, you know, you had one version, another version, but there was no reading through all the old versions. That's what he did. But in a way, even though he believed that the Testament was a forgery, he also saw it as having a prophetic character. And so his own work becomes a tool for Ukrainian nationalism, which is interesting. Even though you say the Testament is false, it's false, but look, there's so much historical evidence that they are at it. The Russians are at it: conquering the world, being a hegemonic power, expanding everywhere. The Testament is false, but it's like the witches. They don't exist, but we believe in them. We don't believe in the witches, but they exist. So, in a way, the Testament is like the traditional witches of European folklore.

#Pascal

How did that progress, then? Because, you know, Russia was not the only power in Europe, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, that was fighting against others, right? I mean, the Brits against the French, the French against the Prussians, the Prussians against everybody, the Austrians down there. And the Ottomans, of course. Maybe the Ottomans are the closest to the Russians in terms of how they're treated: constantly seen as these outsiders who don't belong here.

But neither the French nor the Brits nor the Germans or Prussians, I would argue, have that kind of stereotype attached to them as an intrinsically expansionist, intrinsically nefarious power that will try to take over everything. Even though, I mean, if anyone deserved that label, it would be the British Empire. They're proud that, in the 19th century, the sun never set on the empire, right? I mean, if there was a kraken that went everywhere and grabbed everything, it would be the Brits. But that stereotype, of course, never emerged. Why do you think that is, and how did it happen that it was attached so strongly to the Russians?

#Manuel Ramos

Yes, I mean, the issue of the Turks is complex. I'll sort of go through this question in the second part, which is the narrative of the Great Game. Because, of course, we can't deny that there are lots of expansionist elements in Russian history. I mean, it's an empire, and it was forged and developed in the 19th century to a huge extent. I mean, the whole of the Urals and Central Asia is a project of

Russian colonization, which, to a great extent, incorporated probably more people into it than the British ever did in their empire. The history of Russia is a history of expansion. The thing is, can we say that this expansion has a design?

Well, that doesn't make sense. That's what doesn't make sense. But the essentialization of the design is something that was used as a tool, first for military and international political purposes by Napoleon, and then by the British, mainly with the Crimean War. By the mid-19th century, Britain had actually become the hegemonic power, and it was confronting the other hegemonic power, a continental one. It was pressing that hegemonic power, be it in the Black Sea and Crimea or in India, and specifically in Afghanistan. So we have these two contexts that are really crucial for the crystallization of Russophobia beyond the Testament.

The Testament was being printed in Britain by the mid-19th century, and it was reprinted in 1870, in the late years of the 19th century, and in the mid-20th century. And, you know, Harry Truman referred to the Testament. Oh yeah, I mean, Churchill knew all about the Testament. Harry Truman says at one point to one of his advisers, "Go and read the Testament. It's all there," you see? So, in a way, I'm sort of going a bit away from what you asked, which is, "Why Russia?" We also can't forget the long history. I mean, one thing I remember reading in 2022 was this little fight on Telegram: Russians demeaning Ukrainians, Ukrainians demeaning Russians.

And one of the preferred insults of the Ukrainians was to call the Russians Mongols. Ah, Mongols. And that is something that is, you know, really in the back, in the back, in the back of our minds: the Mongol danger. Because the Mongols had a huge empire. And in a way, Russia—and probably consciously, the tsarist power—absorbed Mongol administration. And in a way, it becomes like a Christian empire—an Asiatic empire, you see? It's Christian, but it's not Christian like us because, in fact, they incorporated the yellow danger. And this comes from the Middle Ages and the 15th and 16th centuries.

So I think in this Russophobic dialogue, the element of the Mongol is something that's still very strong. You know, what separates the Russians from the Ukrainians or the Westerners is not that they are Mongols, but that they have been plagued with the epidemic of Mongolism, you see. So I think that's one of the cracks through which Russophobia can develop, you know. Yes, they're not Muslims, they're not African, they're not Asiatic. They are Christian, Europeanized or pseudo-Europeanized. Yeah, but down there, there's the other, and we must fear the other. And of course, this has been used as a very strong tool to invade Russia.

So it was used by Napoleon. It was used by the British. It was used by the Germans in 1941, because the Testament was also there, and the Russophobic narrative was also there. And it's in Churchill's words and attitudes. His Operation Unthinkable in June 1945 was designed as an offensive operation to counter the eternal design of the Testament. Not that he speaks in this way, but he was the quintessential British Russophobe. And, you know, all these characters that float around, like this interesting person called Jacob Rees-Mogg, they're soaked in Russophobia, but

they're also soaked in the grammar of the Testament. So it's not simply that, "Oh, we don't like them."

“They smell” or “They’re Asiatic.” No, no, no. It’s something else. They are soaked in the elements that make up the classifications of the Testament. Yeah, they’re going down there. They’re going through Central Asia, and they will attack us in India. They want the Black Sea because they will expand through the Mediterranean. I mean, even the war in Yugoslavia has elements of the Testament. Serbia was cut off from the Adriatic Sea. If you look at Kosovo, look at Montenegro, look at Bosnia—yeah, that’s the wall. That’s the wall to keep civilized Western Europe separate from the Slavs. So Serbia, because it was an ally of Russia, could not reach the Adriatic.

#Pascal

So what do you think the design of this Russophobic stereotype implies for keeping the Russians out of Europe? You know, by now it has been centuries, right? This Russophobic trope has been used and developed for centuries to keep the Russians out of Europe, right? But at the same time, we seem to have a very strong desire in Russia to integrate into Europe, up to and including, of course, Vladimir Putin. And not just Vladimir Putin—let's go back to Mikhail Gorbachev and the dream of a common European home, and this attempt by post-Soviet Russia to integrate.

Of course, we must not forget the Soviet Union. Marxism and communism were ultimately a very European dream. It was a European design, and a design for an internationalist understanding of what the Soviet Union was doing. Whether or not that was on Stalin's mind when he went around slaughtering and conquering, I don't know. But at least large swaths of the adherents of socialism in Russia definitely understood this as a European project. And Europe constantly, constantly, constantly says, “No, you don't belong here. No, you don't belong here,” right up to this point. What do you make of that?

#Manuel Ramos

Well, it's not only, “You don't belong here.” It's, “You can't belong here because we want to belong there.” I mean, we want Russia. We want parts of Russia. We want the parts of Russia that are not tiny Muscovy or Novgorod or St. Petersburg. Maybe we want St. Petersburg. Probably, in Kaja Kallas's mind, St. Petersburg is Estonian. I wouldn't be surprised if they think like this. So let's keep the Muscovites in Muscovy and take all that Russia has taken in the 19th century, because we have already taken what Russia has taken in the 20th century. So we still need the 19th-century part. We still need Central Asia. Probably we could do with Siberia.

I mean, we also can't forget that the Americans invaded Siberia in 1919. The British invaded the Baltic area of Russia at the same time, and the French were in Odessa in 1919. Their military was in Odessa with a plan to take Donbass. I mean, this is like a recurring problem, the idea that they don't belong here, but we belong there, right? Because theirs is not theirs. Theirs can be ours. And this is

something that keeps coming back. And there's, I think, a beautiful image in the final sequence of an amazing, amazing movie called The Russian Ark. I don't know if you've watched it.

It is one of the most amazing movies I've ever seen. It's all made in one take, from beginning to end. It's a very long film. One take. And he had the Hermitage for four hours to film, so he could only film for four hours. And it is like a display of Russian history, from Peter the Great to the time of the film. So it goes through Russian history from room to room in the Hermitage. And in the end, there's a huge ball. I mean, in terms of production, it's one of the most amazing things I've ever seen, because as the camera was filming, the actors had to go from one room to another and create a scene in the next room.

So in the final scene, there's a huge ball. And there's the Marquis de Custine. There's a Russian narrator who's talking with the Marquis de Custine, who was a Russophobe. He traveled to Russia during that period, and he writes evil things about Russia: they're primitive, barbaric, etc., etc. But there's this interesting dialogue throughout the film. And in the end, the unseen Russian narrator says to Custine, "Shall we move on?" And the Marquis says, "No, I'll stay here in the ball, in the very European ball." And so the narrator—the last voice in the film—says, "Goodbye, Europe." This is a film that came out in 2010. That's what the Russian narrator says: "Goodbye, Europe." So it's like the Petrine period is over in that film.

#Pascal

The 300 years of Russia trying to turn west, trying to turn to Europe, is over. And it was clear to the producer of the film in 2010 that it had come to an end.

#Manuel Ramos

Yes. So it wasn't 2022; it was 2010. I mean, it's a beautiful film. Everyone should watch that film if they want to understand Russian aesthetics, Russian history. I mean, it's a marvelous film.

#Pascal

You know, I do wonder how it works, though. The Russophobic trope, the Russophobic racism in European history, is probably one of the most successful racisms, and we've had a lot. And I've had a talk with Yakov Rabkin, and he, of course, compared it to the other very, very, very successful racism, which is anti-Semitism, and how they play on very similar themes in order to create that significant other that you need in order to galvanize your own political group against that enemy. In the Russian case, it's the enemy on the outside. In the Jewish case, it's the enemy on the inside.

And this has been recycled through the history of Europe so many times. It shapeshifts, but the tropes remain the same. And we see it at the moment, of course, with the rhetoric. And one of the fascinating things about the Russophobic trope is that the Russian must be, at the same time,

nefarious and grim and a big threat, but also ridiculous and stupid and brutish and kind of an idiot. And both must be true at the same time. If you question one of the two images, you basically get the anger of the Russophobe you're talking to, because he will tell you that you haven't understood the Russians. And why do you think that is—that you need this oxymoronic kind of contrast within the same character to be true?

#Manuel Ramos

I mean, yeah, probably we'd have to psychoanalyze the whole of the West to get an answer. But it's what you call Russophrenia: the idea that they're incapable, but they will conquer us. I mean, it's like two totally opposite stances within the same category. I find it fascinating because every category is filled with its opposite. The problem sometimes is that we don't want to see the whole category. We always try to separate the elements into good and bad, etc. But categories are shape-shifting all the time, according to context, according to occurrence. There's no such thing as a stable category except in an Aristotelian mind.

They're Aristotelian. There's no good lesson here. The idea that categories are binary doesn't really make much sense, and we know they don't make much sense, but we totally believe in the nonsense. So, this is to say, yeah, this othering of the Russian, like I said, is not just the othering of the Russian, but also the othering of the mask of the Russian. And it's also placed in Russians' minds and attitudes. I remember this late nineteenth-century Russian historian—I forgot his name. He has a very funny comment.

He says, well, the Muscovian—that is, the Russian—and the Ukrainian are both very, very tricky and smart. They are very cunning people. The thing is, the Ukrainian is cunning because he wants to look smarter than he is, and the Russian pretends to be dumber than he is. It's very funny. I mean, it's very racist. But you see, this idea of masks and double perception and disguise plays as much in the Western mind as it does in the Russian mind.

Also, one thing that I think is in the second part of the article—in the second part of the second part—is something that fascinates me. It's this expression that appeared in the mid-19th century. Dostoevsky or Gogol talks about it. It's a popular Russian expression. Its meaning also shifts a bit, but it's still very powerful, because I watched debates on Russian television in 2023 or 2024 with precisely that title. And the title is “The English Lady Poops on Us.” Poops on us, yeah. The lady poops. The lady poops. The English lady poops.

The meaning is that the English create trouble for us, not directly, but always indirectly. So they push the Turks to fight us. They push the French to fight us, but they're always in the back. They push the Americans to fight us. They push the Ukrainians to fight us. So there's this idea, this essentialization also of the British as these cunning people who want to destroy us. And this is very

strong in Russian popular culture. There are songs, there are jokes. I mean, this idea that the English are there, they only exist to harm us. So it's like a popular reaction to Russophobia. There is Anglophobia, very strong Anglophobia in Russia. That's what I mean.

On the other hand, I've been writing another small post or article on Substack about Russophilia, which I think is also needed, and I think I'm going to publish it today. Maybe Russophilia can tone down Russophobia and help us understand it. And what is—sorry. No, go ahead. Sorry, go ahead. Well, Russophilia is something that developed throughout the 19th century in France. And it's very important for understanding French attitudes, and partly German attitudes, and how they differ from official attitudes, be they French, German, or British. Again, it's a very ambiguous concept that has led to lots of debates in France. The idea of the commune—the Russian rural commune—is idealized throughout the 19th century.

And it's very clear: the Russian commune is like an ideal that means that the Russian community is naturally socialist. And so they have achieved socialism without having to go through proletarianization and urbanization. And so it becomes an ideal—the ideal of the Russian commune, which fought and outlived the Mongols and was endangered by Peter the Great and his Europeanization. It's something that's there as a trope in French intellectual debate. And, of course, this actually fed Marx, fed the so-called utopian socialists like Proudhon, and fed all this discourse on socialism, communism, and anarchism throughout the 19th century.

But it's also something that helped shape ideas that have become political and historical facts, namely the 1848 Revolution and then the 1871 Commune, the Paris Commune. Of course, you know, for me, this is interesting because now, in Southern Europe, in what you could call the Roman Empire lands of the European Union—or the European disunion—you have the lands that were conquered by the Romans and the lands that were never conquered. And so, you know, you have France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. And these countries are in upheaval because the young people are fighting for their lives. It's a class and generational struggle.

#Manuel Ramos

And what I find interesting is that the Commune came about to a great extent because of property rights and because of the lack of housing in Paris. So we have to consider the idea that we can imagine a future beyond neoliberalism and beyond this prison that Europe is in. In the 19th century, Russia—rural Russia—felt the possibility of moving beyond individualism and liberalism. I don't know, maybe if we become a little bit more Russophilic, we can try to find a way to solve many of Europe's problems.

#Pascal

I mean, it seems self-evident to me that if we try to learn from the best traits of our neighbors, we would naturally be able to improve our own house. But unfortunately, you also have a very long

European tradition of believing that your house is the only good one in the neighborhood and everybody else lives in a jungle, as Mr. Borrell used to look at the whole thing. But, you know, it's not just him. Let me ask you this instead. The term Russophobia—the term "phobia"—continually strikes me as wrong because it implies fear. A phobia is a fear, but from what I see in these tropes and so on, the fear factor seems to be much, much smaller than the factor of genuine disgust.

You know, it's not that you're afraid of this, but that you are disgusted by what that thing is. What do you make of that? Do you think that "phobia" is the right way of calling it? Because Russophilia, the love for Russia—of course, I think that term would fit all of the people who are in love with Russian music, with the great literature, with the architecture, and so on. There are so many things about Russia that should be admired, right? I mean, what was achieved is absolutely beautiful. But the term "phobia"—what do you make of that?

#Manuel Ramos

Well, actually, Glenn Diesen goes through this in his book, and other people have gone through it too. I was trying not to get the date wrong. It's, I believe, in 1836, right, that Russophobia sort of becomes a public term. And it's immediately, immediately criticized by the London and Westminster Review, which was edited by Stuart Mill. And what he says, or what that issue of the journal says, is, "Ministers are smitten with the epidemic disease of Russophobia." So in 1836, Russophobia was seen by some as a tool, by others as a disease—something that sort of occupied people's minds and prevented them from thinking about other problems.

Because they were so focused on the fear of Russia, they were not caring about social policies in Britain because they were totally smitten with the disease of Russophobia. You see, I don't know if I'm answering you, but I believe that it is also a pretext not to face up to the problems that we have. So, you know, in Lisbon and Porto and Barcelona and Paris and Athens, there are always demonstrations, and there's lots of public debate on TV and social media about the crisis—the housing crisis, the school crisis, the lack of money, lack of money for this, lack of money for that, et cetera, the destruction of the economies.

But no one talks about the relationship between these things. We have the neurons. I mean, I'm not saying that people are stupid. We have the neurons, but we have a problem with the dendrites. We have problems with connections. We don't connect what's happening in Ukraine and the war between Russia and the West to the problems that we have, to our everyday problems. And so I think one day people will maybe wake up and say, "Yeah, we're having these problems." These problems were partly made acute by the war and by the cuts, you know, by this "Goodbye Europe" or "Goodbye Russia." It's the mirror of "Goodbye Europe," the Russian art movie.

So this divorce is costing Europe, and especially poorer Europe—the Southern Europe that was incorporated into the Protestant, individualistic Europe of the North as consumer economies. And, you know, we are tourist parks today. I mean, we have become two things, I think, in Southern

Europe: tourist attractions, more and more for Americans and Chinese and Indians, and the Mediterranean equivalent of California. That is, industrial agriculture in greenhouses with foreign labor, poor labor. And we're feeding the world with berries and tomatoes and cherry tomatoes because they're being produced in southern Spain, in southern Portugal, in southern Greece, in southern Italy. And this is the Southern European economy. We have a huge problem. I mean, it's like calling Houston: "Houston, we have a problem."

If we call Brussels, Brussels doesn't really answer because Brussels doesn't have an answer for this. You know, it's filled with the Russophobic disease. That's what Mill was talking about. And so something will crack, surely. I don't know if it's going to crack in a good way or in a bad way, but something is cracking. And I believe that the European Union is itself cracking. And then the Russophobes will say, "Yes, it's cracking because—you just have to go to the Testament of Peter the Great. It's all there. It's the Russians. They have been waging hybrid war, and they are keen on destroying the European Union because it's their design, their eternal design, to destroy us." And so we'll still have these people talking about the testament long after the destruction of Europe has occurred, I believe.

#Pascal

It's really quite fascinating. And thank you very much. That answers my question very precisely, actually. Phobia, not in the sense of a fear, but in the sense of a sickness. And yeah, that would make much more sense. And one that then occupies your field of vision, right? So instead of actually looking at what destroys your economies and your social fabric and so on, which is basically the liberal capitalism that is starting to eat itself, you instead focus on an imaginary Russian conquest that is so smart while being, at the same time, so dumb that you can perfectly explain it. And it is nefarious and actually working. So you have the best of both worlds, especially if you're sitting somewhere in Brussels and you couldn't care less about what happens to your home country.

At the same time, though, this is a very sad kind of end to this European story of, you know, Russia in Europe or Europe with Russia. Do you think that, at some point, this will become clearer? Because, you know, for all the mistakes of the Europeans, sometimes we're able to learn from our own cruel past and say, "Yeah, look, colonialism was pretty darn bad. The slavery that we practiced and that we thrived on was pretty darn bad. The exploitation of the working classes during the Industrial Revolution was pretty darn bad." And, you know, we do try to remedy those things bit by bit. And we never do it completely, we never do it wholeheartedly, and we never do it to the extent that we would need to, but we do it a little bit. Do you think that there's a chance of remedying that type of racism that still riddles the brains of many Europeans?

#Manuel Ramos

You are a much more optimistic person than I am. I mean, Russia is not going anywhere. No, it's going to stay. And it's probably not going to decrease in the next few years. I mean, I believe that,

you know, the way European powers reacted to the war and to February 2022 was very dumb, in the sense of, “Yes, we have an opportunity. We have an opportunity.” What's interesting about the testament of Peter the Great is that it was not always there. The testament appears and disappears. You know, for the British and the Americans, it disappeared. It had to disappear during the First World War. It had to disappear during the Second World War.

So sometimes, you know, when it's useful, the testament or its afterlives reappear, and then they disappear. And it was useful to conquer Russia in 2022, you know, inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, fragment Russia, weaken Russia. I mean, the politicians' words were filled with this, as we know. But now they're not filled with this. So they have to come up with a coping mechanism, saying, “Yes, yes, we're not conquering Russia, but they are conquering us, and they are destroying us. And now they have Weidel and the AfD, and Marine Le Pen is coming.” And, you know, this is a new discourse, a new Russophobia—the Russophobia of the fear of being destroyed by the testament, because the testament says that the Russians will sow division in Europe.

So we are in a moment not of conquering, but of sleepwalking into this self-destruction induced by the Russians. You have idiots like Merz saying, “We are at war with Russia, and we will transform Germany into a war machine.” And he's still thinking of conquering Russia, and there are people thinking of conquering Russia. But the general mood is one of despondency, I believe. And it's a moment when people sort of see, “Yeah, we are between Russia and America, and maybe America is not the land of the free and democracy, and we don't have to look up to America and look down on Russia.”

That moment of at least a balance between these two superpowers will come, you see, in the sense that Russophobia can be not displaced, but toned down by Americophobia or Anglophobia. Because, you know, the moment when the British come into the European Union—because there are these plans by Andy Burnham to bring them back—I mean, it's like, oh yes, we have the henhouse here and we have the fox there. Let's bring the fox into the henhouse. Good idea. I mean, if you want to destroy what's left of the European Union, you don't need the Russians. You just put the British inside the European Union, and they'll do it themselves, I believe. I mean, it's like they will foster relations with the Baltics and the Poles to destroy Germany and to destroy France.

I mean, we'll be back to the small power games that have engulfed Europe since the Middle Ages. And that, I think, is the problem. That's why, you know, sometimes I say to my friends, when they say, “Yes, the Russians are coming”—because I have people saying this all the time, “Yeah, Putin is evil”—I mean, it's like, what? Look, Russia is the world's largest country. Why would Russians want a peninsula of Asia that is filled with hatred and unresolved nationalism? I mean, we're smaller than India. You know, we call India a subcontinent of Asia, but we call Europe a continent. Europe is not a continent. Europe is a peninsula of Asia, and it's filled with people who have forever been fighting each other.

And sometimes, because we don't have many resources, we go to Russia for resources, or to Ukraine, or to the Black Sea. Or we have to migrate, or we have to conquer the seas, because we are a small, overpopulated peninsula that doesn't have the resources to feed the population. So, you know, in the late 19th century, the world's biggest migration movement, much bigger than present-day migrations in proportional terms, was European migration. I mean, it was huge—to Brazil and everywhere else—because the continent could not accommodate everyone. And now that we don't have the resources, the energy, the industry, we're just totally doomed on this little peninsula. So my view is that either we make peace with Russia or we'll have to migrate to Africa.

#Pascal

No, no, let's do the following. We paint the European Commission building white, and we paint the parliaments in our capitals white. We turn the doors inside out so that we can lock them from the outside. And then we give them a couple of wardens and so on who take care of these poor lunatics. But then we go to the flower store, we buy flowers, and we knock on Russia's door and ask them, "Hey, can we talk about this again?" But at some point, we'll get over it. And the lunatics will always be lunatics, but I don't think that they will remain in power forever. Manuel, this was highly fascinating. Thank you very much.

#Manuel Ramos

Well, it was a pleasure, and thank you for inviting me. People who want to read your essay should, of course, go to your Substack.

#Pascal

And it's very long.

#Manuel Ramos

Yeah, it's boring and long. But, you know, I couldn't stop. I couldn't stop, and I thought, you know, I have to somehow detail the whole story. And so, you know, I got carried away.

#Pascal

So everybody, go and have a look at it. It's called "Russophobia Forged." It's on Manuel Ramos's Substack. Just Google it and you'll find it. I'll also put it in the description box below. Manuel Ramos, thank you so much for your time today.