

From the Cold War to a Lukewarm Peace:
Russian views of the September 11th and beyond

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In Russia, few world events in the past decade generated such a robust public reaction as the terrorist acts of September 11th 2001 and the America-led war on terrorism that followed. At the beginning of this millennium, nearly free of political censorship, Russian society was still very young as a democracy but already mature enough to embrace a wide range of diverse opinions expressed unreservedly. Scores of Russians from powerful politicians who made serious official statements, to pundits expressing themselves in flamboyant newspaper editorials, to passers-by making remarks in live television interviews—all responded passionately to the unfolding events and their ramifications for Russia, U.S.-Russian relations, international terrorism, and the future of the world. Some of these responses echoed the fears of the confrontational and ideology-driven “old school” of thinking formed during the Cold War. Others were obviously sympathetic towards America and Americans. Yet other reactions reflected a dynamic, contradictory, and at times confused mixture of love-hate beliefs founded on rational assessments, passing emotions, political alliances, or other personal commitments. Despite such a perceived diversity and eclecticism of opinions, Russia’s reactions to what happened on September 11th in America, and then later on in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in the world, were rooted in a solid, relatively coherent ideological and cultural foundation. This nearly consensual climate of opinion had been forming for several decades and was firmly shaped during the post-Cold War period after 1991. To put it bluntly, decades of Russian frustration over the economic gap between Western nations and Russia, a widely-held fear of American power and suspicion of American arrogance, combined with Russians’ long-standing belief in own exceptionality, desire for cultural autonomy and international leadership, created a widespread feeling within Russia that America, while deserving of sympathy following 9/11, was not to be fully trusted with an international war on terrorism.

A view from the past: the Cold War

All modern Russian leaders try to walk a fault line that runs between two tectonic plates: on the one side is a great majority of Russians' comfort with a predominantly traditionalist and backward provincial way of life, isolated from the outside world, and on the other is Russians' long standing admiration for Western capitalist dynamism and world-dominant culture. For generations, Russian leaders and scores of domestic thinkers have attempted to find a strategy that would allow Russia to overcome its economic inferiority without losing its cultural heritage. This predicament created chronically ambivalent attitudes toward Western countries. In particular, for decades, many Russians have perceived the United States as more advanced and "civilized" than Russia, even in the thick of the Cold War. Such ambivalent attitudes are glaringly obvious among the Russian elite throughout many years of pre-Soviet, Soviet, and recent Russian history. Today, suspiciousness and resistance to everything western is miraculously combined with the attraction to and acceptance of its customs, beliefs, symbols, and most elements of the western way of life (Shlapentokh, 1988; Shiraev and Zubok, 2000).

Discussing their lifestyle, culture, technology, and hopes for the future, Russians seldom compare themselves with their eastern or southern neighbors, such as Turkey, China, Iran, or India. Russia, as a nation, has always been keen to measure itself against the West. Despite its ambiguous geographic location, people of this country persistently, and especially in recent history, considered nations located westward as closer to them culturally than all of the territories, kingdoms, caliphates, emirates, and empires to the east and south. Part of this mindset is also the symbolic tradition of singling out one Western country at a time in history to be a paragon for acceptance and imitation. Never has this role been handed over to China, Afghanistan, or Korea. These functions were historically assigned to countries such as the Netherlands, France, Prussia, or England. In the second half of the twentieth century it was the United States' turn to serve in this symbolic role.

Since the 1940s, during the communist years, Russian attitudes about the United States were based on the fortified pillars of a totalitarian and anti-Western ideology. The attitudes were reinforced by the generally limited access of the Soviet people, due to censorship, to any truthful information about the West. In public schools and through the government-controlled media, the Soviet people were given some facts about technological and economic achievements of western democracies. Yet the main message conveyed to the Soviet people that the West was chronically

ill and all its material success was temporary and superficial. The free-market economic system and liberal democracy, according to the official Soviet ideology, had no future (Vasiliev, 1955). The notorious remark, “We will bury you,” made by the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 was not necessarily a reflection of the belligerent intentions of the Soviet regime but rather a deep-seated belief in the inevitable implosion of capitalism. The Soviet ideologists also vigorously promoted the view that western capitalism wouldn’t die without a fight and that the United States and its allies would do anything to prolong their agony by trying to dominate the world. Soviet leaders were genuinely afraid about the spread of a western-style democracy and commonly labeled the U.S. foreign policies as “imperialist,” “colonialist,” “militarist,” and “aggressive.” In the press, the distinction was often made, however, between “good” ordinary Americans, especially the working class, and the “evil” elite including the military-industrial complex, big property owners, decadent intellectuals, and government officials (Kukharkin, 1974).

Despite the systematic institutional effort to develop strong anti-Western and, subsequently, anti-American attitudes in the Soviet people and especially in the younger generations, the outcome of such ideological brainwashing was not what officials had expected. Although the majority of the Soviet people by the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s maintained negative or non-supportive attitudes about U.S. foreign policies, most people saw clear the advantages of the American and West European political and social system (Shlapentokh, 1986). No reliable poll results exist to support this observation because surveys were heavily censored in those days but based on retrospective work by an array of Russian social scientists we can generalize using the rule of the thirds: about one third of the Soviet people generally accepted the anti-American attitudes prescribed by the government; about one third rejected most of the critical information conveyed via the media about the United States; and the remaining third either did not care at all or had a mixed set of opinions (Shlapentokh, 1988; Shiraev and Bastrykin, 1988).

The coming of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985 signaled a major shift in Soviet domestic and foreign policies. Gorbachev’s *perestroika* meant a serious shift, as well, in the official ideological perception of the West. Gorbachev pushed a more positive Soviet view of the United States, in particular, to provide a reformists framework for restructuring of socialism at home. However, the initial plan of gradual improvement of the socialist economy set forth by

Gorbachev failed. The government-controlled economic system and social institutions rapidly collapsed. The reforms in foreign policy led to the end of the Warsaw Pact, which was the political and military alliance of the socialist countries, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, and the normalization of the relationship between Moscow and Washington. These changes in the late 1980s affected the Soviet people's attitudes toward the west in three ways.

First, most people who carried deeply seated suspicions about the United States became even more distrustful. They blamed the pro-western policies of Gorbachev for the failure of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a super-power. On the other hand, those people who already had developed pro-western views saw the ongoing social changes as a true blessing and the long-awaited confirmation of their reformist views (Shiraev and Zubok, 2000). Second, a significant number of people who maintained mixed or indifferent views about the West, witnessing an inevitable collapse of an inefficient regime, sided with the "pro-western" viewpoint; they believed it was the only alternative to the ideology-driven, pro-communist, and anti-western doctrines of the past. Third, most pro-western attitudes, the expression of which had been virtually prohibited before 1985, were easily conveyed during the period of Gorbachev's reforms via a growing number of independent media outlets. Anti-American views in the late 1980s-early 1990s were virtually shut down by the government and the distribution of such views was limited to a few significantly weakened media sources supported mainly by disjointed pro-socialist and nationalist groups.

In Russia's new atmosphere of ideological pluralism and diversity, the United States became an important cultural symbol. For many Russians, having either a negative or a positive attitude about America was an essential part of their ideological orientation and cultural identity. Especially for most representatives of Russia's new educated middle class in the late 1980s, America by default had become the natural antipode of the past: the inefficient, bureaucratic, and backward Soviet Union (Glad & Shiraev, 1999).

Getting closer: Post-Soviet developments

Since December 25 1991, the date when the official “death certificate” of the Soviet Union was issued, the administration of Boris Yeltsin, the new Russian president, began to act openly and exuberantly on pro-American attitudes. When Yeltsin spoke before the U.S. Congress in June 1992, he effusively praised the United States for helping Russia slay the dragon of Communism. Yeltsin was not speaking just from the heart. He hoped that his post-Cold War pro-Americanism would, literally, pay off for the Russian people. Many Russians expected the United States to provide them with a massive program of economic assistance, similar to the Marshall Plan of the 1940s in Europe (Arbatov, 1992). These expectations turned out to be wishful thinking. Russians’ excited hopes for a massive influx of American and western assistance to help their society rebuild after the defeat of communism has never materialized.

Russia’s encounter with severe economic difficulties in the early 1990s chastened Russian optimists (never a large number) who had held out the western free-market model as the panacea for Soviet economic failures. Social disenchantment with American-style market reforms grew after 1992 due to social and personal insecurity, shortages of money, rampant inflation, skyrocketing prices, and epidemic corruption (Wedel, 2006; Grushin, 1994). The United States provided the Russia people with no massive economic help and both elites and common folk bitterly realized that their country would face its overwhelming problems using its own, limited resources. To make things worse, the Russian economy after a period of recovery in the mid-1990s took a deep and painful dive again in 1998, thus further damaging Russians’ faith in the power of a self-regulating free market to create prosperity for more than a few oligarchs. One of the psychological consequences of this period of economic difficulties was a sustained growth of an anti-western mood, deliberately “beefed up” by anti-market political opposition, mostly communists, populists, and nationalists. By the late 1990s, anti-Western attitudes had gained considerable strength in Russia. America’s apparent indifference to Russia’s troubles and well-reported decisions not to provide assistance angered the average person. America’s prosperity, strength, and selfishness were seen as a sign of arrogance. Many Russians believed that their nation’s loss of super-power status was good for America but bad for Russia.

To millions of Russians, the fall of the Soviet Union created an immeasurable psychological gap between past and present. Once they were citizens of a gigantic multi-national superpower, both respected and feared around the world. Then, by the early 1990s, Russia had become a shrunken, second-rate nation unable to compete on the international stage. History

gives only too many examples of how apparent national humiliation coupled with devastating economic collapse sparks explosions of xenophobia. The rise of Russian-grown chauvinism and nationalism coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The main target for Russian chauvinism was, not surprisingly, the west and its most powerful country. A new form of xenophobic Russian isolationism emerged. The ugly chimera of Cold-War ideology was resurrected by the supporters of Russia-grown national socialism, a popular version of “Stalinism without Stalin” (Shlapentokh, 1988, 162). Others followed the example of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famed writer. Although he passionately advocated anti-communism, he also maintained anti-western and nationalistic views based on historical, philosophical, religious, and moral grounds (Solzhenitsyn, 1998). Another nationalistic school of thought embraced a popular idea of Russia’s historic Eurasian mission as a path-breaker and beacon of humanity designated by a special historic calling (Dugin, 1998).

Attitudes about the West and the United States began to play a role in domestic political battles. A pro-Western foreign policy course chosen in the early 1990s evoked persistent disdain from the domestic political opposition to the Kremlin policies. Anti-Americanism and anti-western attitudes were used as a political card to achieve specific goals at home. To be accused of being unpatriotic became dangerous for any politician running for re-election in the 1990s and after. On many occasions, Russian policy toward the West fell hostage to domestic political considerations. Nationalists and Communists, despite ideological differences between these movements, were among the main carriers of anti-Western and anti-American attitudes. According to many surveys, about a third of Russians shared these hostile views (Shirayev and Terrio, 2003).

Several international developments further contributed to anti-American sentiment in Russia. First, many Russians believed NATO’s westward expansion in the mid-1990s to be an anti-Russian demonstration of disrespect to their country’s security concerns. The Russian mass media portrayed the United States as a major coordinator of NATO expansion and accused the United States of deliberately attempting to undermine the post-Cold War strategic balance in Europe. Next, a majority of people, including Russian top officials perceived western military intervention in Bosnia as an attempt by Americans and their European “puppets” to punish small and “innocent” Serbia and establish American control over the Balkans (Shirayev and Terrio, 2003). The negative image of the United States was further darkened during the U.S.-led NATO

military campaign against Serbia in 1999. Russians were especially irritated by what they called arrogant and irresponsible actions of the western powers against a sovereign country in the heart of Europe. The mainstream Russian media repeatedly called NATO an aggressor and a threat to Russia. This powerful anti-western mood crossed party lines. Even cautious moderate politicians began to issue statements against the perceived dangers of American and NATO policies.

In the wake of the war in Serbia, by the end of the 1990s, opinion polls yielded a steady 60-percent national average of anti-western attitudes (which doubled the 10-year average for anti-western sentiment). Even small bilateral or international issues suddenly began to matter to an increasingly large proportion of people. The United States was frequently accused in the mass media of selling poor-quality products. Russian consumers began to be bombarded by the newspaper stories about U.S. corporations ripping them off. One of the most remarkable cases was a media campaign that supported the boycott of American frozen chicken legs (called in Russia “Bush’s Legs,” a reference to President George H. Bush who was president when the frozen food product was first imported into Russia) (Shiraev and Zubok, 2000). Despite this increasing hostility towards the United States, as soon as the situation in Kosovo calmed down, negative attitudes towards America declined steadily to an average 30-percent national average. More importantly, the sudden raise to power in 1999 of a former security officer from St. Petersburg, the relatively young and pragmatic Vladimir Putin, was viewed by most Russians as a sign that Russian foreign policy would be based on common sense, rational calculations, and a reliable and mutually beneficial relations with the United States.

September 11th and after: the media and elites’ reactions

The Russian government responded almost instantly to the September 11th attacks on the United States. President Putin condemned the attacks in a special appearance on all Russian television networks. He called the terrorist acts “barbaric,” emphasized that they were directed against innocent people, and referred to the feelings of “indignation and revolt” directed against the perpetrators of the strike. Putin sent a telegram to George W. Bush that not only expressed sympathy to the American people but also stated that he believed that the attacks must not go

unpunished (Interfax, 9/11). The Kremlin issued a decree to lower Russian flags to half-mast and observe a moment of silence throughout Russia at noon Moscow time on September 13th. On that day, Putin again held a telephone conversation with Bush and discussed joint actions. Russia and NATO issued an extraordinary statement expressing anger at the devastating attacks on the United States and calling for international efforts to combat global terrorism.

Top public officials from Defense and Foreign Affairs ministries also issued statements and made public remarks that echoed Putin's comments of September 11th. On a rare occasion, Sergei Lebedev, head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, the general who usually keeps a very low profile, stated publicly that his agency was working closely with national security offices of other countries to prevent new attacks. He also called for renewed attempts to fight international terrorism (Uzelac, 2001). Boris Nemtsov, the leader of the Union of Right Forces, known for his conciliatory approach to conflict, was reported to have said on September 13th that Russia should come down hard on terrorism to prevent future attacks against the Kremlin. Grigory Yavlinsky, the leader of the Yabloko party recognized for his long-term support of the principles of liberal democracy, said on September 15th that the terrorist attacks in Washington and New York were the beginning of a new era in which close cooperation between the largest countries, such as the United States and Russia, in the sphere of combating international terrorism, was inevitable.

Other politicians, however, had different ideas. Alexander Shokhin, head of the Duma's finance and crediting committee, was quoted in *Kommersant* on September 12th predicting, with regrets, that the United States would not listen to reason and would choose to punish their enemies unilaterally, instead. Another Deputy Speaker of the Duma, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (2001, 09/14), known for his flamboyant behavior, said with apparent joy that the terrorist attacks signaled the end of the U.S. dominance. The leader of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov (2001, 09/14), voiced concern about the Islamic world, Arab countries, and Russia's neighbors in Central Asia. Some politicians' worries over a possible international conflict led to the Duma's resolution of September 19th that stated that any use of force, presumably by the United States, must be rigorously monitored and should not provoke any destabilization in the region.

Russian newspaper headlines on the morning of September 12th were more than dramatic. "Armageddon Now," read the *Kommersant*, a respectable daily newspaper. The paper then warned about the ongoing market collapse and a chaotic situation in currency exchange

operations. The word “Armageddon” was used by other printed sources, including a popular newspaper *Izvestia*, which also proclaimed the beginning of the war of civilizations. Similar apocalyptic doom-and-gloom metaphors were featured on the front pages of most newspapers. *Vremya MN* issued a headline that read: “The Apocalypse Happened Yesterday.” *Komsomolskaya Pravda* referred to a Third World War started by terrorists. The vast majority of articles contained negative, condemning, and disapproving comments referring to cruelty, murder, extremism, insanity, and evil of those who perpetrated the attacks. As an example, the newspaper *Izvestia* put together the following sequence: “Armageddon. Big country. Big sorrow. Big suffering.” Only a very few papers, such as the ultra-nationalist newspaper *Zavtra*, published articles justifying the murderous actions taken against the United States.

Instant opinions

Most Russians could watch the unfolding events of September 11th on CNN (Fox News and MSNBC were not available to them yet). Ten years earlier, in 1991, Americans were anxiously sitting in front of television screens following the live CNN coverage of the dramatic events of the August putsch in Moscow. Americans were concerned, puzzled, and hopeful that the fragile Russian democracy would survive and people would not die. Now, in 2001, it was Russians’ turn to watch the live coverage. Numerous conversations and interviews with Russians of all walks of life revealed that the most common emotional reaction was shock and fear coupled with deep concerns for the Americans. The American Embassy in Moscow and the U.S. consulate general in St. Petersburg drew huge crowds of people bringing flowers, leaving compassionate notes, or simply standing there in silence. People lamented and prayed during spontaneously organized candlelight vigils and regular church services all over the country.

Results of opinion polls were published as early as on September 13th. A majority of the Russian people sympathized with the Americans. In a national poll taken September 15-16 by the Public Opinion Foundation, 77 percent of respondents said that they experienced strong emotions when they first heard about the attacks. Only 8 percent of the respondents said they did not care about the events in America. At the same time, about 15 percent reported their satisfaction. Predictably, more than one third of the respondents satisfied about the attacks

identified with Communist Party (www.fom.ru, 09/20). A large number of Russians believed that the attacks against America were somewhat warranted. According to a survey conducted on September 11 and 12 by the Moscow Academy for Humanitarian and Social Issues (MGSA), 21 percent of the respondents agreed that the attacks were a justified punishment for the Americans. A similar question asked by the All-Russia Public Opinion Study Center (VTsIOM) showed that 35 percent of Muscovites polled two days after the events spoke of the terrorist act as a punishment of Americans, which they deserved for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Iraq, and Yugoslavia. However, in both surveys, more people disagreed (37 percent and 61 percent respectively) with the idea that the attacks were justified punishment. Opinion polls also showed a wide range of opinions about what the United States should do in terms of its military and nonmilitary responses (Stepanov, 2001). Russians didn't have a predominant opinion about who to blame for the devastating terrorist attacks.

Who to blame for and what to do?

More than a half of Russian newspaper publications in September and October 2001 immediately pointed at Islamic militants or fundamentalists including Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, and another 10 percent mentioned Arab terrorists in general (Shirayev, 2005). In the search for instant evidence, reporters quoted mostly foreign information services. Most paper reports underlined the international nature of the sophisticated plot (Ovcharenko and Umerenkov, 2001). Approximately one third of published references included a variety of guesses, including America's own government or "homegrown" American terrorist groups (Kagarlitsky, 2001, 09/18). To illustrate, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia drew parallels between the September 11th attacks and the burning of the Reichstag, the House of Parliament, in Berlin in 1933 after which Hitler assumed dictatorship in Germany. Zhirinovskiy predicted during a television interview on October 18th that, in a fashion similar to what Hitler had done, the United States would identify an innocent scapegoat and would attack it. General Boris Agapov, a distinguished specialist on Afghanistan, also expressed reservations about Afghan groups as perpetrators of terrorist acts. He said that it was impossible to imagine how "primitive" organizations such as the Taliban or Bin Laden followers, could have executed such a complicated and large-scale act of terrorism as flying airplanes into buildings (Kagarlitsky,

2001, 10/30). Other commentators raised doubts about the evidence that pinpointed Arab terrorists, as did Leonid Shebarshin, the former chief of the Soviet Foreign Intelligence (2001, 10/17). But these skeptical reactions were largely published by pro-Communist newspapers such as *Sovetskaya Rossiya and Zavtra*. In other papers, including the mainstream *Moskovski Komsomolets*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and *Trud*, more than 70 percent of references were about Islamic or Arab militants as perpetrators.

The tragic events overseas also sparked immediate concerns about similar attacks against Russia. For instance, on September 13 an influential Moscow newspaper discussed whether or not a kamikaze pilot could hit the Kremlin or any other strategic target in Moscow and whether or not such a criminal action was preventable (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, on September 13). Some articles urged Russia to accelerate its military buildup to reduce the probability of such suicidal actions (Ptichkin, 2001, 09/14; Pavlovsky, 2001, 10/24). Dmitry Rogozin, chairman of the State Duma International Affairs Committee said it was the time for the United States to agree with Russian requests and reconsider its nuclear defense programs in face of unconventional threats from terrorist groups (Gornostaev, 2001).

America is hit, but what about us?

Gradually, comments shifted to one of Russia's most serious domestic problems: the breakaway republic of Chechnya. In the past, Moscow repeatedly accused bin Laden and the Taliban of helping the Chechen guerrillas. Hours after the attacks in the United States Russian politicians were already drawing comparisons between the U.S. tragedy and the troubling situation in this southern region of Russia. On September 11th, Dmitry Rogozin, whose name was mentioned earlier, said that that the events in the U.S. could and should change western attitudes toward Russia's policy in Chechnya: America would finally see the rebels as terrorists, not freedom fighters (*Russia TV*, 09/11). Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the presidential spokesman on Chechnya Nikolai Kovalev, deputy chairman of the committee of the State Duma for Security, and Nikolay Patrushev, Director of the Russian Federal Security Service made similar comments (*ORT*, 09/15; Kovalev, 2001, 12/06). Russian politicians including those who had earlier urged

conciliatory policies in Chechnya had become distinctly hawkish since the attacks against the United States. Boris Nemtsov (2001, 09/13) the leader of the Union of Right Forces, and one of a few active supporters of a political settlement in Chechnya, had changed his position. In an interview with Moscow newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets* on September 13, Nemtsov sounded very skeptical about negotiations and insisted on the toughest measures against terrorists of all kinds. Scores of columnists and television commentators began to use harsh remarks about Chechnya insisting on tough measures against the terrorists. The reports also reminded readers that Russia had repeatedly claimed in the past that there was a connection between the international terrorist groups, on the one hand, and Chechen terrorists, on the other.

Several themes appeared in the interviews given by politicians and articles written by commentators. Russia was commonly perceived as an equal partner of the United States in the war against terrorism. In September 2001, Putin stated that Russia was ready to cooperate with the United States during the anti-terrorist campaign (*RIA Novosti*, 2001, 09/24; *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 09/24). More importantly, Russia perceived itself as an increasingly essential partner in any international coalition. As early as October 2001, the Russian media started to discuss direct and indirect benefits that the country could and should receive for its support of the United States and the war on terror (Osipov and Palshin, 2001, 10/02; Markov, 2001, 10/23). Russian defense minister, Sergei Ivanov, emphasized the importance of profitable arms deals with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in Afghanistan (*gazeta.ru*, 10/29); publications started to appear in which the West was criticized for the lack of benefits given to Russia for its cooperative role (Nikonov, 2001, 10/27). A new course of events was believed to have affected specific problems related to the NATO expansion eastward, American plans to develop strategic defense system, and Russia's tough approach to the Chechen problem. Repeatedly, these issues were mentioned as now being resolved favorably for Russia given the new changed world (Pavlovsky, 2001, 10/24).

Some, including Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov (ITAR-Tass, 2001, 09/17) suggested hopefully that the tragic events in the United States could stimulate the development of a new world order, with Russia actively participating in a stronger U.N., a non-ideological NATO, the World Trade Organization, and an efficient G-8 (Bogaturov, 2001, 09/28). Some also recommended the creation of a new antiterrorist coalition, modeled after the anti-Hitler coalition of the 1940s and on the basis of NATO. In that coalition, Russia was anticipated to take a leading

position alongside the United States and draw closer to the West (Markov, 2001; Uzelac, 2001). Some argued that if Russia did not approach the West, it would face huge debts, hostilities to its southern borders, and fierce competition from China (Vasiliev, 2001; Khamrayev, 2001; Alexeyev, 2001).

The campaign in Afghanistan: “Yes but....”

While the Bush Administration’s plans for the war on terror were not clear in the fall of 2001, the Russian media almost immediately after September 11th began to publish commentaries about a definite military action against Afghanistan (Pavlovsky, 2001). Although President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov made statements about the importance of balanced and intelligent decisions, they did not rule out the possibility that the United States would use force in the fight against terrorism (Interfax, 2001, 09/15). Politicians began to discuss the “price” the Kremlin had to demand for its involvement in the forthcoming war, as was done in a radio interview by Head of the Foreign and Defense Policy Council, Sergei Karaganov (Ekho Moskvyy, 09/17).

Meanwhile, cautions and anti-war voices were also becoming stronger. Military experts expressed an overall positive opinion about a forthcoming retaliation from the United States. However, they warned about many difficulties that awaited any military force in Afghanistan. Moscow Region Governor Boris Gromov, who had served as a top commander in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, ruled out any movement of infantry. Even the U.S. special forces, he believed, would suffer heavy casualties (RIA, 09/18). Similarly, most politicians and commentators supported, in general, the position of Washington, but expressed serious reservations about potential loss of life among peaceful population (Arbatov, 2001). All these ambivalent opinions about a military action against Afghanistan launched by the United States reflected generally the views of the public. In October, different sources published similar reports about the divided public opinion about potential air strikes against Afghanistan (Shusharin, 2001, 10/26).

After the Kremlin had promised to support the military campaign in Afghanistan and

possibly elsewhere (*Russia TV*, 09/15), officials began to spell out possible limitations to what Russia and other countries could do. Early in the fall, several Russian officials had ruled out the use of Russia's ground forces. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov told *Russia TV* that Russia was not planning to participate in attacks against terrorist bases in Afghanistan (ORT, 13 September). This official Russian opposition stood in stark contrast to the decisions of the governments of several former Soviet countries who chose to participate in American-led actions against international terrorism. Anatoly Kvashnin, Head of General Staff of the armed forces, said it was highly unlikely that Russian troops would take part in an anti-terrorist operation, and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov insisted that there was not even any hypothetical grounds for a possible NATO deployment in Central Asian states (Ulyanov, 2001, 09/19). Dmitry Rogozin (2001, 09/13) suggested that the result of any military action initiated by the United States would be innocent victims and further terrorist retaliatory acts.

During the late fall of 2001, then, the moderate majority of Russian political elites was split between supporters of the course chosen by president Putin and those who were already wary about it for various reasons. Of course, some individuals vehemently supported the new foreign policy of Russia. They voiced their opinion mostly through a few consistently pro-liberal, pro-Western media, such as TV channel 6, the newspaper "*Kommersant*," and the weekly "*Itogi*." Top military officials and intelligence bureaucrats, however, were unhappy about the possibility of a war and the deployment of NATO troops in Central Asia. The "open letter" of a group of Russian generals and admirals published on November 10, 2001 criticized Putin's policies and his alleged pro-Western course. Left-wing political parties expressed a similar disdain. They all stood firmly against any form of Russian military participation in the evolving anti-terrorist coalition (Ulyanov, 2001). Most politicians saw in Putin's support of America a threat to their dream to rebuild Russian independence, keep its distance from the west, and strengthen its military power (Shlapentokh, 2001). Some lobbyists predicted a potential loss of business with partners in the Middle East or Central Asia (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2001, 09/25). Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznev earnestly expressed a common objection in a television interview; he declared on September 18th that Russia should distinguish between governments and simple people and not deliver blows against entire nations (www.ortv.ru, 09/18). Some extremist and nationalist politicians did not hide their direct hostility against the West. For instance, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the LDPR in his usual flamboyant fashion said that

the only way for Russia to become a great power again was not to support the United States but to side with the Taliban and create an alliance with the Arab world (Khamrayev, 2001; *NTV International*, 10/02).

What was the general reaction of the press? Overall, as the analysis of the publications in major daily newspapers shows, unilateral military actions of the United States were supported in fewer than 15 percent of publications. It was common for the media to doubt the effectiveness of the military actions and to suggest Russia to stay away from the conflict (Shelia, 2001, 10/11). *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was among the most pacifist-oriented newspapers with basically all publications related to the events appealing to sobriety of judgment, self-restraint, and non-violent solutions. Pro-communist *Sovetskaya Rossia*, while leaning toward the non-interventionist approach (18 percent of articles) and suggestions about how the U.S. should change its foreign policy (30 percent), displayed a greater variety of opinions. The vast majority of newspaper publications conveyed a negative opinion about a possible war in Afghanistan. Possible outcomes of the war, such as the liquidation of the terrorist camps, replacement of the oppressive political régime of Taliban, and the creation of a democratic government in Afghanistan, were practically ignored by the Russian media.

The majority of Russians were skeptical about the military actions in Afghanistan. Most people did not have access to diverse information and were fed from sources that conveyed a one-sided opinion about the war on terror. Not surprisingly, many individuals perceived the Afghan war as an aspect of America's imperialistic ambition and its desire to dominate the world. To these people, the events of September 11th were just a convenient justification for the future war. To others, although they understood the defensive nature of the military actions, the war was still launched on behalf of American interests. The ideals of democracy were too distant and unacceptable to many Russians struggling from payday to payday, feeling insecure and frightened by free-market uncertainties. Yet other groups understood the necessity of the war but did not see any opportunity for Russian forces to join in: people remembered the gruesome experience of the Soviet Union during its occupation on Afghanistan in the 1980s. Numerous articles in Russian newspapers and magazines contained personal accounts from Russian officers who fought in Afghanistan and who predicted a tough time for the American troops in that country. Plenty of warnings came from former military veterans who referred to the U.S. inability to learn from other countries' mistakes, like ones that the Soviet Union committed in

Afghanistan in the 1980s where the Soviet military lost at least 15,000 dead (Aushev, Interfax, 09/17).

U.S. foreign policy assailed

By late September of 2001, after the shock and uncertainty caused by the terrorist acts had faded, media reports began to focus on the United States' foreign policy. Comments about perceived U.S. arrogance and overconfidence were common on newspaper front pages and in editorial columns. America was frequently ridiculed for overestimating terrorist threats and of ignoring international law. Yuri Baluyevsky, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff said that the ability of rogue states, including Afghanistan, to deploy weapons of mass destruction was grossly exaggerated and, therefore, military strikes against such countries were unjustified (2001, 12/09). Russian political scientist Gleb Pavlovsky, head of the Fund for Effective Policies, referred to the "traditional" U.S. policy of demonstrative retribution, which the Americans resorted to time and again to show the world how tough they were (Pavlovsky, 2001). Some publications suggested that the war on terror was a general excuse to fight an aggressive war against any state that dares to express anti-American attitudes (Dugin, 2001, 09/13). America was commonly accused of bullying the rest of the world into submission (Pankov, 2001, 09/18). Other reports questioned the ability of American people to persevere in the face of adversity. For example, Yulia Latynina, a journalist with *ORT*, called Americans intellectually lazy and incapable of fighting to the bitter end. She also said that the U.S. government always removes its soldiers from the places that were too frightening for them (2001, 09/19).

The most negative opinions came from nationalist and communist sources, which blatantly accused the United States of barbaric actions, hegemonic policies, and disrespect for international law (Zyuganov, 2001, 09/13). But even in more liberal publications a distinct anti-American sentiment surfaced. In the wake of the September 11th, at least three of these liberal newspapers, *Izvestia*, *Obshchaia Gazeta*, and *Novaia Gazeta*, published several poorly-substantiated, openly-prejudiced articles filled with racial remarks as if their authors were taking pleasure in the American tragedy (Shlapentokh, 2001).

Policy after 2002: Prospects in cooperation

Russian foreign policy-making, formalized in the 1993 Constitution, is dominated by the president. President Putin, since taking power, had maintained a pragmatic foreign policy aimed at an effective, although somewhat limited, partnership with the United States. Putin's willingness to fight terrorism together with the United States, especially after the tragic events in 2004 in Beslan taking the lives of more than 300 hostages including children, his interests in regional stability, support of non-proliferation policies, and the pursuit of a greater economic stability for Russia motivated most of Russia's governmental relations with the United States. Since 2001, the Kremlin and the White House shared similar attitudes on at least five common foreign policy-related issues (Trenin, 2003).

The first issue that brought the United States and Russia closer together was the possibility of joint actions aimed at forming an anti-terrorist coalition. This coalition, Putin believed, could create a convenient basis for the broader U.S. - Russian relationship. An umbrella of "collective action" would allow Moscow and Washington to pursue independently their national objectives, namely, fighting terrorism.

Second, both countries shared a common concern over proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Russian government was and is genuinely alarmed by the nuclear weapons programs of North Korea and, especially, Iran. After September 11th, both nations felt even more vulnerable to horrific attacks and both governments began to work on programs to secure nuclear, chemical and biological materials in their own countries, as well as all over the world.

Third, both nations had major concerns about regional security and, in particular, the situation in Afghanistan after 2002, in Iraq after 2003, around Iran after 2005, and in the Middle East. On Iraq, Putin stated on several occasions that Russia had no interest in a U.S. policy failure. Although Russia, as the member of the Security Council, did not support the war in Iraq, officials believed in 2004 and after that a forced withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq would have created a highly dangerous situation too close to Russia.

The fourth shared issue was oil-related. Because Russia has large oil reserves and because of its renewed hopes for efficient economic relations with the West, Russia has become one of the most reliable suppliers of oil for the West. OPEC, with all its diverse interests and

past use of oil as a political weapon, is, arguably a less reliable supplier. The “oil card” has increasingly played and will play a serious role in Russian foreign policy, which is likely to tie together Russian and western interests.

And, finally, the fifth and most controversial concern affecting Russian and American interests was the question of international cooperation. After losing its super-power status, Russia became more dependent on arenas of joint cooperation. In particular, the Russian government looked to the United Nations as a means of magnifying its own international influence. Thus, Putin pursued measures to create a stronger and more effective United Nations and to take advantage of Russia’s seat on the Security Council. Here, Russia and the United States, in practice, were often moving in different directions.

The Obstacles

Even as Putin worked to emphasize common American - Russian interests and to de-emphasize areas of difference, a series of events, unrelated to the War on Terrorism worked to divide the two nations. A few critically important examples are worth mentioning. The Bush administration decision to walk away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was wildly unpopular in Russia. Overwhelmingly, Russians considered Bush’s move to be unwise and dangerous; it evoked old Cold War concerns about the United States seeking unilateral advantages at the expense of Russia. Second, during the campaign in Afghanistan and then as a result of the larger War on Terrorism, significant numbers of American troops were deployed near the Russian border in Georgia and Central Asia. This forward troop deployment is widely perceived by Russians as a dangerous development that threatens Russian national security. Even apparently insignificant American developments have produced quite unexpected reactions in Russia. For most Americans, the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City and the 2004 Games on Greece were quickly forgotten. A majority of Russians, however, were very upset over several Olympic incidents, especially the treatment of Russian figure skaters and gymnasts (considered “mistreatments” in Russia), and these incidents have remained sore spots in Russian attitudes about the West and the United States. Seventy percent of Russians, right after the Winter 2002 Olympics, told pollsters that they considered the United States an unfriendly country. While this anger faded with time it had reappeared again during the time the United States prepared to

invade Iraq in 2003.

Thus, Russian perceptions of the United States had gotten significantly worse at the end of 2002 while the debate over the looming war in Iraq intensified. Criticism of the U.S. actions has reached an apogee in the media, which even some Russian commentators called “hysteria.” By late 2003, after the invasion, only 4 percent of Russians said that they sided with the American decision to go to war, while 48 percent mentioned sympathy toward Iraqi people (POF, May 20, 2004). This public opinion was not unexpected. When Saddam Hussein was in power, many Russian politicians and officials from the Russian Orthodox Church had visited Iraq, citing their desire to help Iraq to cope with U.N. sanctions. These visits were widely discussed in the Russian media and it was reported that certain Russian companies were allegedly given the right to purchase Iraqi oil in exchange for political support in Moscow. As a result of these Russian - Iraqi connections, that included economic interests and humanitarian concerns, a number of influential voices that ranged from communists to nationalists to key Kremlin officials opposed the U.S. invasion. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, a Deputy Speaker of the Russian Duma and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party was among the most vehement opponents of the war in Iraq. He not only claimed a friendship with Saddam Hussein, he also had strong business contacts with the Iraqi government and the ruling party. Not surprisingly, Zhirinovsky considered the war to be an exercise in raw American power. He publicly praised the strength of the Iraqi army and determination of the Iraqi people; he predicted various doomsday scenarios for Americans. When the war was almost inevitable he switched tactics and began to criticize his own government for inaction, insisting that Russia should deploy its troops in Iraq and split the country into several zones of occupation. He argued that if Russia does nothing, America would establish control over the Iraqi oil and deny Russia access to Iraqi resources (Trofimova, March 11, 2003).

When the U.S.-led coalition forces invaded Iraq in 2003, Russian-American relations reached their lowest post-Cold War point. President Putin publicly disagreed with President Bush on the war, its causes and possible consequences. Many Russians argued that the war proved traditional arguments about American expansionism, imperialism, and desire for the world domination. In addition, Russians argued that the American war revealed a new American “clash of civilizations” doctrine. The events in Iraq were seen by some as evidence of a new crusade by the West against Muslims all over the world, including in Russia. Konstanin Zatulin,

Director of an influential Moscow think-tank and host of a popular television show “Materik,” said that a new holy war had been declared by the West against the East and the task of all Orthodox Christians was to resist the aggression of Catholicism and Protestantism (Zatulin, 2003).

Zatulin based his view on a theory. However, a strong pro-Islamic lobby had also emerged in Russia in the early twenty-first century. This movement represents a diverse range of interests and is gradually gaining strength. No powerful organization spearheads this movement. Nevertheless, a common set of principles unifies this diverse crowd of pro-Islamic officials, journalists, and influential non-governmental organizations. All support Muslim emigration into Russia from states, such as Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and even Afghanistan. Many of these pro-Islam advocates in Russia are supported by business groups associated with oil and other lucrative businesses in the Caucasus region of Russia as well as in Azerbaijan and other Central Asian countries. They not only sponsor immigration to Russia but also build Islamic schools and mosques (Krotkov, 2003). An avalanche of classic anti-American rhetoric is found in the essays of one of the most popular representative of this movement, Geidar Jamal. Commenting on international events, he typically fires a barrage of sarcastic shots at the United States’ geopolitical ambitions, Russian undemocratic elections, the chaos in the Middle East, Russia’s weakness in the international arena, and Putin’s inability to maintain a firm foreign policy. Jamal also tries to persuade his readers that the United States has become a totalitarian country after September 11th and that its citizens no longer have political freedom. There are few original thoughts in his claims. Like other radical critics of the Bush administrations, he argues that the United States started the war in Iraq to enhance its own re-election chances and because of the Pentagon’s desire for world domination (Jamal, 2004).

Since 2003, there has been no shortage of opinions expressed by leading Russian foreign-policy experts regarding the future of U.S.-Russia relations. Alexei Bogaturov, Director of the influential Institute of the USA and Canada and a firm believer in geo-economics, considered America dangerous not because of its global political ambitions but rather because of America’s ability to “steal” economic partners from its competitors. Gleb Pavlovsky, a popular independent expert who established his high reputation under Boris Yeltsin, was more optimistic and believed in Soviet-American cooperation. On the other hand, one of his opponents in media discussions, Stanislav Belkovsky, president of the Institute of National Strategy, has expressed grave concern

about America's growing influence in the former Soviet Asian republics. Viacheslav Nikonov, President of an influential think tank "Politika" and former member of the Duma, has been more pragmatic in his attitudes and has suggested that Russia should get closer to the United States and Great Britain to gain access to Iraqi oil.

The Russian people have demonstrated some interest in these debates. Unfortunately, emotional assessments overshadow any attempts at rational criticism. A trendy book series, sold in street booths under an unambiguous title, "Great Confrontation: America against Russia," has become a bestseller. Its authors, Krupnov and Kalashnikov (2003), have created a 500-page mixture of paranoid beliefs, panicky conclusions, blatant misinterpretation of pseudo-facts to convey their main idea that Russia has already lost four world wars (WWI, WWII, the Cold War, and the war for economic superiority). The fifth war, they argue, will be the most decisive of all. This war has already begun: its first blows are the expansion of NATO and the antiterrorist campaign of the United States. The authors conclude that Russia has been knocked out of its eastern markets and suffocated by a variety of subtle but powerful economic sanctions administered by the West.

Public opinion: ambivalence, bitterness, and hope

While the pundits and reporters were busy writing their columns critical of U.S. foreign policy, most Russians paid little attention. There is nothing uniquely Russian in this position. As in many other countries, Russians cared less about America and cared more about their own economic aspirations. They watched re-runs of "Sex and the City" on Russian television, checked their TV guides for the next NHL or NBA games, and downloaded (often illegally) the music files of the latest American hip-hop or rock sensations. Jack Daniels was served in Moscow bars, and Jeep Cherokees and Lincolns moved down narrow Russian highways. Russians rented American movies on DVD and did not boycott American cigarettes because of the war in Iraq. Neither did they pour Pepsi in the Volga River in protest over American expansionism.

Surveys taken by the Public Opinion Foundation between 2001 and 2006 showed that Russians' attitudes about America are significantly influenced by immediate events and their coverage in the media. The more negative the coverage of the U.S. involvement in an

international issue, the worse are their attitudes. From the beginning of 2001 through 2002, on average, according to the same polling company, more than one third of respondents considered the United States a friendly country (Bavin, 2003). In March of 2003, however, when the war in Iraq began, surveys showed that only about 17 percent of Russians believed that America was a friendly state. However, soon thereafter the numbers returned to average levels. Only 16 percent of people consider Russian and the United States equal partners. Twice as many view these two countries as partners out of necessity. About forty percent of Russians said they would like to visit America. Among young people, the percentage of those who want to visit the United States is close to 55 percent (Public Opinion Foundation, September 11, 2003). However, overwhelmingly Russians in 2004 (74 percent) stated that their nation should not participate in a U.N. multi-national peacekeeping force, if the decision was made to send such a contingent to Iraq (Romir, 2004b). Throughout the 2000s approximately two thirds of the polled Russians say they liked Americans as people. Yet approximately seventy percent did not like the actions of the U.S. government over the similar period.

As in the late 1980s, a substantial proportion of people today associate America, more than any other place, with wealth, prosperity, and advanced technologies. In surveys, people typically refer to America as the country where “the law works,” and as a “free, civilized, democratic country.” Most negative evaluations of the United States (27 percent) point to U.S. foreign policy; America is compared to “a boa constrictor who ate a half of the world” or is called the “world’s executioner.” Some Russians are quite emotional in discussing the United States: “I wish this country was covered with water,” “I wish I had a hand grenade to throw on them.” Overall, Russians respect American economic success and are impressed by its democratic form of government. But they are fearful of its international ambitions. The Iraq attack only hardened those core beliefs (FOP, March 22, 2003).

Most Russians remain proud about the country’s victory in World War II in 1945. Russians know that America has never fought a war on its own territory, at least a major war compared to what Russia has encountered during its long history: the Mongol rule, the Polish invasion, the war against Napoleon, millions dead during World War I, and many more killed during World War II. These reflections on own history give many Russians a sense of moral superiority over Americans who have not really, as the Russian old saying goes, “sniffed the gunpowder” on the battlefield. But more and more, in Russia, nostalgic feelings of superiority

and security have been replaced by a sense of both personal and national insecurity. Many ordinary Russians maintain the view that the United States represents a general threat to Russia's national security—significantly diminished since the end of the Cold War—but still perceived as a threat. Surveys conducted by leading polling organizations show that many Russian, up to fifty percent, believe that since America was so quick to bomb Afghanistan and Iraq, there is a strong likelihood that given a small pretext, F-16s and B-2s might drop bombs on Russian military bases and that armored Humvees could well roar on the streets of the republics of the former Soviet Union. This fear is exacerbated by the expanding NATO presence in Eastern Europe. Although 32 percent of Russians did not believe that the new expanded NATO was a threat to the country, about 60 percent of Russians believed in April 2004 that the inclusion of new NATO members was a “definite” or “somewhat” certain threat for Russia (Romir, 2004a).

As these and other surveys demonstrate, when most Russians look at the United States they distinguish two basic features. The first one is that the United States is the world economic leader and the country where most people live and prosper. But in addition, they see a nation driven by an aggressive foreign policy. Most Russians still believe that the main objective of Washington to have a weakened and obedient Russia as a result of U.S. policies. As a result, Russians have ambivalent feelings about the United States. Thus, specific events, such as the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, or the Iraq War, or the United States' tough position related to Iran's nuclear ambitions, drive Russian public opinion back and forth from pro to anti-American sentiments.

Conclusion: what's next?

Although president Putin confirmed his country's strong support of the United States on September 11th 2001, top officials in the Kremlin quickly articulated the conditions under which Russia would participate in the War on Terror. They clearly signaled that Russia was not giving America a *carte blanche* and that Moscow would support Washington, but not on all occasions. In Washington, such ambivalence was accepted and based on an understanding that to protect his political base Putin needed to appear presidential and independent. Key elements of the Russian mass media echoed the Kremlin's measured support of America's foreign policy in 2001 and

after.

However, many opinion leaders of the conservative wing in Russia did not care about which direction the political wind was blowing from the Kremlin. As 20 years ago, they remained committed to the anti-western attitudes of the Soviet era. The United States, as a powerful representative of the Western world, is the most obvious and convenient target of their extreme dislike of capitalism and everything that is associated with it. What was different in 2001 and 2006 was that instead of the old, one-dimensional communist ideological platform, contemporary anti-American views of this crowd are based on a wide variety of beliefs including nationalist, fascist, racist, and chauvinist attitudes. The only solid psychological foundation remaining from the past was the all-encompassing, visceral, and broiling dislike of capitalism, the United States, and most things American. However, these leaders support internationalism and multilateralism only because this is the only way for Russia to have a meaningful foreign policy.

Another type of Russian negativism and criticism came from a different ideological and political crowd. These were members of the Russian opinion elite, largely former or current officials, renown pundits, and respected journalists, many of whom during Gorbachev's perestroika held pro-Western, liberal attitudes, but who were galvanized by the developments in the early and mid-1990s that left the United States the world's only superpower and Russia a subordinated player on the world stage. They believe in Russia's great potential and many of them also would be pleased to see Russia playing a leading, if not unilateral role in the world.

Despite the obvious political and ideological charge of the elites, most ordinary people in Russia in the early 2000s remained politically indifferent. "Serenity, peace, and order," was the key slogan used by the pro-Putin United Russia party during the parliamentary election year of 2003. About 46 percent of those Russians who voted for the first time in the parliamentary elections of that year cast their votes for Putin and his ruling party. There is nothing unusual in voting for a party of status quo. This new young generation of Russians, however, has embraced social conformity and political indifference as the answer to their aspirations. Surveys show that they prefer to occupy a middle ground and not to engage in anything that could radically transform their lives (Makhovskaya, 2003).

Things changed in Russia after September 2004. In the wake of the worst terrorist attacks on the Russian soil, including suicide bombings in Moscow, airplane crashes, and killing of

hundreds of children and adults in Beslan, most Russians showed their support to central authorities in their pledge of world-wide unilateral actions against terrorism and the subsequent anti-democratic reforms in Russia to strengthen the Kremlin's power. Nevertheless, the raise of authoritarianism in Russia left many Russians with the feeling that their country, in contrast with America, was not allowed to do much to confront terrorism. This was another proof to many that the United States applies one set of rules to its own policies and does not allow other countries to start their own war against terror (Rudensky, 2004).

For most Russians, the United States still stands as a kind of cultural symbol of individualism and self-responsibility: in America, Russians widely believed, if you want your life to be better than you and nobody else can and should act to make it better. And the liberal reforms that began in Russia in the mid-1980s have been an attempt to emulate the experience of western democracies and the American experience, in particular. But after two decades of struggle, insecurity, and uncertainty, an increasing number of Russians have come to doubt that American economic models, principles of free-market capitalism, and civil liberties can take root in the Russian soil. People are tired of being poor and helpless and are frustrated by Russia's omnipotent bureaucracy, corruption, crime, and constant, failed social experimentation. In the face of these bitter failures, America, once a symbol of inspiration to many, has become a symbol of domestic irritation. People realized that America, as a superpower, was capable not only of making statements. It also does something about its own national security, whether it is viewed as a right action or a wrong one. And this "active" position bothered many Russians being frustrated about someone engaged in decisive, unilateral actions. Although the September 11th brought these two nations closer together, it also served as a turning point for the development of a new kind of Russian self-perception, a new national identity. Based on this image, Russia should become a country that is independent, self-confident, and free to act on its own.

Quite often, Russian journalists depicted the United States of the 2000s as a faceless, arrogant, and greedy monster; these images were quite similar to those used in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Apparently, some cultural images do not easily change. In the 1970s, one of the officially promoted Soviet ideological beliefs was that the Soviet people did not hate Americans, they only disliked America as a country: its social system, its government, and its policies. Likewise, in the first years of the twenty-first century, burying its own victims of terrorism,

most Russians empathized with American people. But many Russian had little if any sympathy for America as a country. History, at least in Russia, it seems, can repeat itself.

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