

# Russia's views of America in a historic perspective

Eric Shiraev

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*The American leadership, official and private consultants, has been deeply involved in implementing the Russian economic reforms. They arrogantly assumed a large part of the responsibility for the radical transformations of the thousand-years-old way of life of a giant country. This preordained that the failures and excesses of the reforms would be perceived in Russia as linked to the American participation, and this would inevitably reflect itself upon foreign relations with the United States.*

*Alexei Arbatov (1992), member of the liberal "Yabloko" Party  
and former Head of the Defense Committee of the Duma.*

## **A long-term context**

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Russia faced a dilemma: which way to go? Two paths of development were, as a fork in the road, associated with two different outcomes or possibilities. One path led toward a predominantly traditionalist and authoritarian provincial country, isolated from the outside world, feared and mistrusted by its neighbors. The other led toward equal membership in the European community as well as openness to innovations and the ever-superior Western social and political system and its lifestyle. Facing this dilemma, all Russian leaders and scores of thinkers, both affiliated with the rulers and opposed to them, confronted the predicament of overcoming the country's economic and social backwardness without losing its political independence and rich cultural heritage. In fact, this was a foundation for the chronically ambivalent attitude toward western countries and America in particular as more advanced and "civilized" than Russia. Such ambivalent views are the most persistent features of the Russian elite's mentality reflected in the everyday opinions of most ordinary Russians. This frame of mind existed throughout many years of pre-Soviet, Soviet, and the most recent Russian history. Today, as well as in the 1980s or a hundred years ago, suspiciousness and

resistance to anything western is amazingly combined with the attraction to and acceptance of its customs, values, symbols, and the general way of life (Shlapentokh, 1988; Shiraev and Zubok, 2001).

When Russians discuss government, culture, technologies, or societal progress, they seldom compare themselves to their eastern or southern neighbors. Russians have always been keen to measure themselves against the West. Despite its ambiguous geographic location, people of Russia in recent history persistently considered nations located westward as somewhat closer to them culturally than the kingdoms, caliphates, emirates, and empires to the east and south. This mindset is also rooted in the tradition of singling out one western country at a time in history to be either a paragon for acceptance and imitation or a model for blatant rejection. Historically, the “positive” roles were assigned to countries such as the Netherlands, France, Prussia, and England. Germany was a “villain” during both world wars in the past century. By the second half of the twentieth century, the United States had become such a country, to which most Russians compare themselves and the rest of the world.

Since the 1940s, during the communist years, attitudes about the United States were based on the fortified pillars of a totalitarian ideology, generally limited by the lack of access of the Soviet people to the West. Studying in schools and reading government-controlled newspapers, the Soviet people were given information about some achievements of western democracies in economy and technology. At the same time, the main message conveyed to the people about the United States and the West was that their material success was superficial. The capitalist economic system and liberal democracy, according to the official Soviet ideology, were doomed to fail because they had been based on the false beliefs in a free market (Vasiliev, 1955). The notorious remark, “We will bury you,” made by the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev was not necessarily a reflection of the deadly intentions of the Kremlin but rather an ideological belief in the inevitable collapse of capitalism. The official point of view in Moscow was that the U.S. and its allies were warmongers. In the Soviet media, the government’s statements, and in high school textbooks, U.S. foreign policies were commonly called “imperialist,” “colonialist,” “Zionist,” and “anti-people.” In the ideological rhetoric, the distinction was often made, however, between ordinary Americans—especially those who represented the working class—and the elite, including the corrupt politicians, greedy leaders of the military-industrial complex, and the die-hard ideological “hawks” (Kukharkin, 1974).

However, despite the systematic institutional effort to develop anti-Western and anti-American attitudes in the Soviet people, especially in the younger generations, the outcome was ambiguous. Although the majority of the Soviet people by the late 1970s-early 1980s maintained negative or non-supportive attitudes about U.S. foreign policies, few people then believed that the capitalist social system and economy were doomed to fail, and even fewer people rejected the western lifestyle and ideals of material success (Shlapentokh, 1986; Shiraev & Bastrykin, 1988). There are no accurate numbers describing these attitudes because public opinion polls were not permitted to administer surveys without the direct control and censorship of the authorities. Overall, we can offer 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 had a mixed opinion (Shlapentokh, 1988).

### **Perestroika and its impact on Russia's views of America**

The coming of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985 had indicated a major shift in Soviet domestic and foreign policies. Gorbachev needed a reform to provide all the necessary conditions for the successful restructuring of the failing socialism. Official ideological perceptions of the West have also been changing. Overall, the reforms of the late 1980s affected the Soviet people's attitudes in at least three ways.

First, most people who carried suspiciousness and mistrust toward the United States and the West strengthened their attitudes, regarding the "pro-Western" policies of Gorbachev as treason and the main cause of the failure of his reforms. On the other hand, people who already maintained pro-Western views saw the reforms as a confirmation of their beliefs about the necessity of political reforms in the Soviet Union and cooperation with the West (Shiraev and Zubok, 2001). Second, a significant number of people with mixed views about the West, facing an inevitable collapse of an inefficient regime, had chosen to side with the "pro-Western" views considering them as the only alternative to ideology-driven, pro-communist, and anti-Western beliefs of their opponents who wanted to keep socialism. Third, most of the 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 sources, especially newspapers. At the same time, anti-American views in the late 1980s-early

1990s were virtually shut down and their distribution was limited to a few significantly weakened media outlets. Overall, in the struggle among the advocates of the emerging post-communist ideologies, the United States was becoming an important political and cultural symbol: having either a negative or a positive attitude about America was an essential part of an individual's ideological orientation and cultural identity. For most representatives of Russia's new middle class, the free-market and prosperous America became the natural antipode of the inefficient, bureaucratic, and backward Soviet Union (Glad & Shiraev, 1999).

Despite their apparent decline, anti-Western attitudes of the late 1980s were still supported by millions of communist and their sympathizers. Moreover, these attitudes were gaining strength from new and increasingly diverse sources. Some of the advocates of the Cold-War ideology, who sought an evolution of the old regime, promoted the development of a kind of Russian National-Socialism, a version of "Stalinism without Stalin" (Shlapentokh, 1988, 162). A small minority followed the example of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famous writer who passionately advocated two national models of development. The first was to be in total opposition to the old Soviet regime. The second was the rejection of Western and particularly American civilization on historical, philosophical, religious, and moral grounds (Solzhenitsyn, 1998). Another, similar and vital movement embraced the nationalist idea of Russia's historic Eurasian mission to become a moral and economic leader of the world independent from the decadent and imperialistic West (Dugin, 1998).

Since December 25, 1991, after the failure of Gorbachev's reforms, the Yeltsin administration continued a pro-American course. It began to act openly and exuberantly on its pro-Western beliefs. During Yeltsin's appearance at the U.S. Congress in June 1992, he gave credit to the United States and praised it for helping Russia slay the dragon of Communism (Ryurikov, 1999). Overall, the pro-Americanism of Yeltsin's supporters was based on specific material reasons. They expected that a massive program of economic assistance, similar to the Marshall Plan, would be provided to a new democratic Russia (Arbatov, 1992).

### **Attitudes and their sources in the 1990s**

The development of attitudes about the United States among Russians during the decade prior to September 11th was mostly a reflection of the domestic events, as well as a reaction to a range of international developments. On the domestic front, pro- and anti-American attitudes reflected the

internal political struggle and ideological and political debates about the future of the country and the role that Russia should play in international affairs.

The economic difficulties that Russians encountered in the 1990s reduced people's trust in western free-market models. Social disenchantment with the course of the reforms grew in 1992 during a severe economic crisis. Serious mistakes were committed in the implementation of market capitalism. The legal reform was slow. Corruption and crime were rampant. The severity of Russia's domestic political turmoil was highlighted in several instances, including the constitutional crisis of 1992-93, Yeltsin's use of military force to disband the Supreme Soviet in September-October 1993, opposition victories in the legislative elections of 1993 and 1995, and the war in Chechnya, which officially began in December 1994 but had actually started months prior. The expected massive influx of American and western assistance never materialized. There was no Marshall plan prepared for Russia. The country's leadership realized that Russia needed to solve its problems using its own, already drained resources. Instead of achieving instantaneous prosperity, the Russian economy took a deep and painful dive again in 1998 thus shattering the beliefs in the self-regulating power of the free market.

One of the psychological consequences of the economic difficulties was the sustained growth of an anti-Western mood. America in particular—with its perceived attitude of indifference toward Russia's troubles, seemingly arrogant advisers, and unattainable wealth—became a convenient source of frustration. In the minds of many Russians, America was a prosperous country that was able to provide to its citizens a standard of living that was impossible to achieve in Russia. America was seen as a rich neighbor who does not care much about the others who fell to their knees.

A substantial portion of the Russian population—almost a quarter of adults, according to the polls—remained largely impervious to pro-Western and pro-market messages. They were critical of western policies, indifferent to western fashion, and disinterested in pursuing wealth of the “Western” type. They believed that the West was responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union—the dissolution of which was commonly mourned by a majority of people, according to national surveys. Many (up to one third of respondents) believed that the United States was still an enemy desiring to deprive Russia of its hard-won gains. These individuals continued to respond favorably to the themes—promoted unflaggingly by many politicians and the media—

that endorsed xenophobic isolationism and the “Russian” way of life and thinking (Grushin, 1994).

For millions of Russians, the fall of the Soviet Union and the sudden emergence of an independent Russia created an immeasurable psychological gap between past and present. Not long ago, they used to be citizens of a gigantic multi-national superpower. It was respected and feared around the world. Suddenly, by the early 1990s, Russia had effectively lost its great-power status. Economically, militarily, and diplomatically, Russia could no longer make a difference on the international playing field. History gives examples of how national humiliation coupled with devastating domestic collapse sparks explosions of xenophobia and fascism. Indeed, the rise of Russian chauvinism and nationalism became apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Two specific groups became carriers of the great-power ideas. The first was represented by several, mostly disjointed, radical nationalist formations. The new Russian “right” represented a sophisticated blend of ideas about Russian exceptionalism, the country's special Eurasian status, and the exclusive way that Russia should be followed as the “chosen” country. The main principles of western capitalism were declared genuinely foreign to the Russian people, who were “destined” to be more spiritual, collectivist, and educated than the average ignorant, egocentric, and narrow-minded European or American (Kurginian, 1992; Dugin, 1998). The second group was the Russian Communists, who in the 1990s were relatively organized and unified. Despite their many ideological differences, nationalists and Communists were among the main carriers of anti-Western and anti-American attitudes shared by approximately 30-40 percent of Russians (Wyman, 1997; Shiraev, 1999).

The pro-Western course chosen by Yeltsin in the early 1990s evoked criticism from the growing domestic political opposition. Anti-Americanism and anti-Western attitudes were used as a political card to achieve specific goals at home. On more than several occasions, Russian policy toward the West fell hostage to domestic political considerations including national elections (Shiraev & Terrio, 2003). During the 1990s, the left-wing and nationalist opposition, and later even the mainstream press constantly blamed the West for attempts to keep Russia away from economic competition, America's refusal to give Russia the status of a most favored nation, and, as already mentioned, provide any significant financial help.

Overall, support for pro-western and pro-American policies waned during the 1990s. A key turning point was reached in December 1995, when elections to the State Duma resulted in a large majority of seats going to opponents to “soft” foreign policies, including Russia's allegedly pro-American policies. Bowing to pressure from opposition legislators, Yeltsin finally removed the foreign minister Kozyrev known for his pro-western views, a move cheered by the opposition. Kozyrev's fall signaled a new age in Russian foreign policy, which began to be shaped primarily by elite power struggles and the search for a new Russia's post-Cold War identity, which involved a turn away from a “pro-American” foreign-policy period of the early 1990s.

Several international developments of the 1990s and early 2000s have contributed to anti-American feelings among people representing different layers of Russia's public opinion. In particular, NATO's westward expansion in the 1990s was seen as an anti-Russian demonstration of power, and total disrespect for Russia's strategic interests and security concerns. The United States was viewed as a major coordinator of the expansion and accused of deliberate attempts to undermine the strategic balance that occurred in Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Next, NATO's military intervention in Bosnia in the mid-1990s was perceived by many, including the Russian government, not as an attempt to resolve one of the bloodiest civil wars in contemporary European history, but rather an attempt by Americans and their European puppets to punish Serbia for its role in the war and establish American control over the Balkans (Sobel & Shiraev, 2003).

Another event had a particularly strong impact on the Russian people's attitudes toward the West and the United States. It was the U.S.-led NATO military campaign against Serbia in 1999. As in the case of the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s, Russians were especially irritated by the actions of Washington and London against a sovereign country. The United States and NATO were called aggressors and a threat to Russia. At that time, anti-Western sentiment crossed party lines. Even cautious moderates began to issue warnings against the dangers of American and NATO politics. Public opinion polls yielded a steady 60 percent level of anti-Western attitudes. Overall people's irritation spread to other areas of concern. The United States was frequently accused of selling Russia poor-quality food products. In addition, U.S. corporations have been accused of ripping off Russian consumers and manufacturers who dare to compete with their American counterparts. One of the most remarkable cases was a media campaign in support of the boycott of fairly popular American frozen chicken legs (called in

Russia “Bush’s Legs” in reference to the former U.S. president) as a retaliation for the increase of U.S. tariffs on imported steel, some of which was being produced in Russia (Shiraev & Zubok, 2001). The United States was frequently accused of following the policies of the IMF, the World Bank, and other transnational financial institutions without paying closer attention to the specific circumstances of Russia and other countries “in need” (Kagarlitsky, 2000).

Despite the ambiguity of opinions about the United States, the sudden raise to power in 1999 of a former security officer from St. Petersburg, a young and pragmatic Vladimir Putin, was increasingly seen by Russians as a sign that Russian foreign policy will be based on common sense, rational calculations, and reliable and mutually beneficial relations with the United States. Largely, it turned out to be the case.

### **How policies are made and attitudes expressed**

In the U.S.S.R., foreign policy-making had been the unquestioned purview of Communist Party elites—Politburo members in particular—who had exercised decisive sway, especially over policy related to the United States. *Perestroika* marked the beginning of serious change in Soviet foreign-policy making. But most of the restructuring came after Russia gained independence in 1991. Institutional reforms required that new policy-makers be designated and their relative powers decided. Also, in accordance with Russia's democratic aspirations, new ground rules had to be set up on how to take into account the views of the political opposition, the media, and interest groups. While the new constitution of December 1993 institutionalized the reform of foreign policy-making institutions, the practical sorting out of new arrangements continued throughout the 1990s and into the new century. As this process has evolved, the number of actors involved in Russian foreign policy has proliferated, and relations among them have been very contentious. This can be seen, in part, as a natural result of Russia's initial steps toward democratization, which, in theory, transferred power over policy from party elites to representative government institutions. However, the expansion of the foreign policymaking arena and sharp struggles among politicians have also been due partially to resistance toward democratizing policy-making—specifically, to the President's efforts to keep decisive control over policy. In the 1990s, president Yeltsin deliberately enlarged the number of institutions involved in foreign-policy making in an effort to dilute the power of any one person or institution which might rival his own. He also played actors off each other for the same reason. Thus, while

power over foreign policy decisions was more dispersed by 2001 than it had been earlier, it remained concentrated in the executive branch. The dominance of the president in foreign policymaking was also formalized in the 1993 constitution.

While the legislators did gain some influence in foreign policymaking, an oligarchic style of decision making, of course, has long been favored by Russian elites. It seems that old patterns are hard to break. The political elite of the 2000s (whether just the executive branch or all political officials combined) appears to remain convinced that they, not voters, are the ones who should decide policy—especially foreign policy, given its concern with central issues of U.S.-Russia relations and security. The public seemed largely content to let their political leaders handle Russia's foreign policy. Yet the circle of political elites who helped decide policy is now broader than in the Soviet era, and political elites are part of an elected government. There are numerous channels for unrestrained public criticism, and critics felt free to put pressure on their government to respond to their views. While the Kremlin hangs on to the power to decide foreign policy in Russia, Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, who became president in 1999, found it increasingly difficult to do so without taking into account the wishes of critics, especially opposition legislators and the media.

Despite a consolidation of the Russian media since 2000 and the increase of the direct and indirect government control over broadcasting, the media are free of government control. Elements of censorship still exist though. For example, anti-Putin messages are typically not published due to internal “rules” that most editors and producers began to embrace after Putin ascended to the presidency. Criticism is largely directed at the methods by which policies are conducted, but not at the leader. However, printed sources that represent the interests of the political opposition generally express less tolerant attitudes about Russia’s domestic and foreign policies than newspapers more loyal to the government.

Surveys taken by the Public Opinion Foundation between 2001 and 2003 showed that Russian people’s attitudes about America are significantly influenced not only by immediate events but also by their coverage in the media. The more negative, one-sided the coverage is the worse are the attitudes (Bavin, 2003). Many critical and supportive comments related to the United States launched by the Russian media were obviously echoing the Kremlin’s position.

However, many opinion leaders in Russia do not care much about which direction the political wind is blowing. They remain committed to anti-American (and commonly, anti-

western) attitudes of the Soviet era. What was different in the 2000s is that instead of the old single radical communist anti-western ideological platform, contemporary anti-American views are rooted in a wide variety of beliefs ranging from militant nationalism, fascism, and racism, to isolationism and post-materialism. The other type of criticism of America was coming 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, and who were confronted by the developments in the early and mid-1990s after the United States has become the world's only superpower and, as a result, Russia ceased to play a dominant role in international affairs.

Public protests are regularly organized by different organizations, in particular, by pro-communist, pro-nationalist, or other radical groups. The vast majority of such gatherings are peaceful. During the war in Serbia, for example, when the public mood was especially irritated by the apparent U.S. and NATO invasion, the Russians did not puncture the tires of Fords and Chevrolets on the streets and pour out bottles of Pepsi or Coca Cola—something that some Americans had done to the cars of Soviet diplomats and bottles of Stolichnaya vodka in 1983, when the Soviets shot down the Korean airliner due to a negligent mistake. In the late 1990s and 2000s, the Russians continued to wear Nike and Reebok, watch Hollywood movies, buy American cars, use American computers and communicate via Microsoft's Hotmail or AOL's instant messenger, and listen to western and American pop, rock, and hip-hop. Thousands traveled to America and applied for immigration. Today, the consumption of western products and services is increasing. Boycotts and other form of active resistance are not common. For instance, in 2001, it was widely reported that several leading Russian representatives of the presidential Administration and the government were considering a boycott of the reception at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the evening of January 20, commemorating the inauguration of the U.S. president-elect. However, this action went generally unnoticed by the press.

## **Part II**

## **“Sorry, but...”: Russia’s responses in the wake of 9/11**

Eric Shiraev

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*Russia ought to use the presently advantageous situation to attempt to resolve at least some of our problems in Chechnya and Georgia.*

*Mikhail Leontiev, TV Host, September 15, 2001*

*We should be interested only in how, during the period of this war, Russia will be able to position itself in the new changed world.*

*Gleb Pavlovsky, Political Commentator, October 24, 2001*

### **The week of September 11<sup>th</sup>: The government’s immediate reaction**

The reaction of the top Russian officials to the violent acts against the United States was quick and unambiguous. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, Putin made a brief televised statement broadcasted on all networks. He called the 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 attacks. Later the media reported on a telegram sent by Putin to George W. Bush, in which the Russian president not only expressed sympathy to the American people but also stated that the attacks must not go unpunished (Interfax, 9/11). Putin issued a decree to lower the flags and observe a moment of silence throughout Russia at noon Moscow time on September 13<sup>th</sup>. On that day, Putin held a telephone conversation with Bush, the second in a matter of hours to discuss joint actions. The prime ministers of Russia, China, and four Central Asian states issued to the media a joint declaration on September 14<sup>th</sup> condemning the brutal terrorist attacks in the United States. Earlier, Russia and NATO issued an extraordinary joint statement expressing anger at the devastating attacks on the United States and calling for international efforts to combat global terrorism. Public officials from Defense and Foreign Affairs ministries also issued statements or

made public comments that resembled Putin's statements made on September 11<sup>th</sup>. On a rare occasion, Sergei Lebedev, head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, who usually keeps a very low public profile, stated publicly that his agency was working closely with national security offices of other countries to prevent or respond to new attacks. He also called for renewed attempts to fight international terrorism, suggesting that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were perpetrated by terrorists (Uzelac, 2001).

While President Putin did not make public comments about what Russia and the United States would do jointly and how the events would affect specific domestic and international developments, politicians and public officials of various ranks had more than an ample opportunity to express their reactions to the events, make assessments, and draw predictions for the future. Boris Nemtsov, leader of the Union of Right Forces and the person known for his conciliatory approach to conflicts, said on September 13<sup>th</sup> that Russia should get tough on terrorists because otherwise they would soon strike against the Kremlin. Grigory Yavlinsky, a politician known for his long-term support of the principles of liberal democracy and market economy, said on September 15<sup>th</sup> that the terrorist attacks in Washington and New York signaled the beginning of a new era of cooperation between the United States and Russia in the sphere of combating international terrorism.

Many politicians, however, expressed ambiguous opinions. Some were anxious. Irina Khakamada (2001, 09/14), Deputy Speaker of the Duma, said that she could foresee a nuclear war. Alexander Shokhin, Head of the Duma's finance and crediting committee was quoted by the *Kommersant* paper on September 12<sup>th</sup> as predicting with regret that the United States would not listen to reason and would choose to undertake unilateral actions to punish other countries. Another Deputy Speaker of the Duma, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (2001, 09/14), notoriously famous for his flamboyant behavior said that the terrorist attacks meant that the rest of humanity would no longer put up with the U.S. dominance. The leader of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov (2001, 09/14), has voiced concern that Russia's partnership with America would foist upon the country's relations with the Islamic world and other neighbors in Central Asia. Politicians' concerns over a possible destabilization lead to a Duma resolution of September 19<sup>th</sup>. The resolution, while stating that the perpetrators of the attacks had to be brought to justice, also underlined that any use of force—presumably by the United States—must be rigorously monitored and should not provoke any destabilization in the region.

## The reactions to the September 11<sup>th</sup> events: A summary

Issue	Descriptions of general reactions
How America should react to the September 11 <sup>th</sup> events	America should coordinate its actions with the world community and Russia; America may retaliate only against those responsible for the attacks and must make sure the civilians are not hurt. In less than 15 percent of the publications, unilateral U.S. military actions were suggested. An emphasis on multilateralism was strongest in October and waned in December. <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda</i> was among the most pacifist-oriented papers; in basically all <i>K.P.</i> publications related to the events, sobriety of judgment, self-restraint, and non-violent solutions were suggested. The pro-communist <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> , 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.
How Russia should react to the September 11 <sup>th</sup> events	Overall 40 percent of publications suggested offering support to the United States, although the enthusiasm declined by the end of the fall. <i>Zavtra</i> was the most consistent in suggesting isolationism and no support to the U.S. <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> expressed both the opposing and supporting views (help and isolationism). Local newspapers expressed mostly pro-internationalist views (70 percent).
Identifying the perpetrators of the September 11 <sup>th</sup> attacks	More than 54 percent of all publications pointed to Islamic militants or fundamentalists, including Bin Laden and/or Al Qaeda; another 10 percent mentioned Arab terrorists as perpetrators. The remaining third of references included a wide variety of guesses including America's government or "homegrown" terrorist groups (15 percent), but these were largely earlier reactions and suggested primarily by <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> and <i>Zavtra</i> . In newspapers such as <i>Moskovski Komsomolets</i> , <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda</i> , and <i>Trud</i> , more than 70 percent of suggestions referred to Islamic or Arab militants.
The words to describe the September 11 <sup>th</sup> act or its possible perpetrators	The vast majority of descriptions of the events in America contained negative or very negative adjectives referring to cruelty, murder, extremism, insanity, and evil. Only about 1 to 2 percent of references advocated rationalizations for the suicidal actions (newspaper <i>Zavtra</i> ).
The root causes, motivations, or conditions that led to the September 11 <sup>th</sup> events	U.S. foreign policy or specific actions were named as root causes in 35 percent of the publications. Religious and political fanaticism, religious fundamentalism, or prejudice against the United States were suggested in 36 percent of the articles. Poverty and suffering were mentioned in 8 percent of the cases; self-targeted conspiracy was also mentioned (5 percent) but mostly in the earlier September issues. <i>Vek</i> is the steadiest supporter of "non-US" causes of the terrorist actions (77 percent of its publications); <i>Zavtra</i> and <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> pointed to the U.S. as the cause of the attacks more than any other newspaper (66 and 62 percent of their publications respectively).
The abstract	The events were regarded as an attack against freedom, democracy,

<p>phrases used to describe the conflict brought to light by the September 11<sup>th</sup> events</p>	<p>humanity, or the civilized world in 36 percent of articles, mostly by <i>Izvestiya</i>, <i>Trud</i>, and <i>Rossiyskaya Gazeta</i> and by the local newspapers. A clash between religions or civilizations was suggested in about 22 percent of reports. A class conflict was suggested in 9 percent of articles. In October-November these abstract evaluations were used significantly less frequently.</p>
<p>The motivation of the U.S. officials or government in the war in Afghanistan.</p>	<p>Strengthening its own power, or political and economic influence in the region or in the world was suggested by a plurality of articles (48 percent). A desire to stop terrorism was mentioned in 15 percent of publications, whereas revenge was referred to in 21 percent of articles. <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> mentioned the power-driven U.S. motivation in all its publications; <i>Nezavisimaya Gazeta</i> and <i>Zavtra</i> did the same in most of their articles; whereas <i>Moskovsky Komsomolets</i> was particularly insistent about punishment as the prime motivation. Motivations such as the defense of freedom, democracy, humanity, or protection of the Western civilization were largely ignored.</p>
<p>Assessments of the U.S. war in Afghanistan and its outcomes</p>	<p>The vast majority of assessments were negative, including statements that the U.S. actions harmed civilians (30 percent), did not lead to the capture of Bin Laden, or increased anti-American feelings. There was practically no mention of the positive outcomes of the war, such as the liquidation of terrorist camps.</p>
<p>The words or phrases used to describe the U.S., its government, and people.</p>	<p>About 11 percent of descriptions were associated with positive features attributed to the U.S. and Americans. About 72 percent of descriptions were negative, including those that underline U.S. and people as weak and shaken (18 percent), greedy (5 percent), belligerent and oppressive (20 percent), indifferent and selfish (11 percent), and unfair, hypocritical (9 percent). The number of accusatory descriptions increased through October and December. At the same time, the number of sympathetic descriptions decreased. <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> displayed the most negative evaluations, followed by <i>Zavtra</i>, <i>Moskovsky Komsomoles</i>, <i>Vek</i>, and <i>Novaya Gazeta</i>. <i>Vek</i>, on the other hand, gave frequent positive evaluations as well.</p>
<p>General appraisal of attitudes about the U.S.</p>	<p>The overall picture reflects an even distribution of both favorable (33 percent) and unfavorable (34 percent) opinions and an equal share of mixed attitudes (33 percent). In September, favorable comments were somewhat more frequent (39 percent) than negative ones (25 percent), but the tendency reversed in October (22 percent positive and 48 percent unfavorable) and in December (only 9 percent of positive vs. 37 percent of negative comments).</p>

### Instant reactions: media and elites

The authorities of the four national networks—ORT, RTR, NTV and TV6—all chose to provide a commercial-free coverage of the events in the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup> and other developments taking place later. The networks picked up CNN live reports and accompanied them by simultaneous Russian translation. All regularly scheduled programs were canceled (with the exception of local coverage in some areas provided by smaller, regional television companies). Immediately after the attacks, a few editorial comments were added and some footage was edited in, such as the reaction of President Putin and pictures of Muscovites bringing flowers to the U.S. embassy.

The newspaper headlines in the morning of September 12<sup>th</sup> were dramatic. “Armageddon Now,” read across the issues of *Kommersant*, a respectable daily newspaper. Commenting on the aftermath of the events in the United States, the newspaper mentioned on several occasions the ongoing market collapse and a chaotic situation in currency exchange operations. The expressions, “Armageddon” or “end of the world” were used by other printed sources, including a popular newspaper *Izvestia*, which also proclaimed the beginning of the war among civilizations. The doom-and-gloom metaphors and apocalyptic phrases were featured on the front pages of most newspapers. *Vremya MN* issued a headline that read: “The Apocalypses Happened Yesterday.” *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in the September 12<sup>th</sup> issue referred to a Third World War, which had been started by terrorists.

Newspapers were also filled with reports about Americans coping with the devastating consequences of the terrorist attacks. Articles written by Americans—in which they thanked Russians and their government for the sympathy and compassion—began to appear in the Russian media, such as one titled, “Thank you Russia” by Michael McFaul (2001, 09/17). Only a few newspapers in the first four days after the terrorist attacks provided a relatively rational and comprehensive analysis of the developing situation. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, as an example, on September 14<sup>th</sup> had been already discussing military plans, strategy, logistics, and other operational issues related to a possible retaliatory strike by NATO in Central Asia against terrorist camps.

Analysis provided for this book shows that the vast majority of descriptions related to the Russian media’s immediate reactions to the tragic events in the United States, contained negative, condemning, and disapproving comments referring to the cruelty, murder, extremism, insanity, and evil of those who perpetrated the attacks. As an example, the newspaper *Izvestia*

put together the following headline: “Armageddon. Big country. Big sorrow. Big suffering.” Only a very small proportion of the printed comments (mostly from the ultranationalist newspaper *Zavtra*) offered a justification for the murderous actions against the United States.

While many Russians were laying flowers outside the U.S. embassy in Moscow, some people began to panic. Several money exchange offices refused to accept dollars on Tuesday and Wednesday, just hours after the attacks, as reported in *France Press* and *Reuters* (AFP, 09/11; Reuters, 09/12). Some businesses stopped operating, anticipating the imminent collapse of the dollar. However, the overall initial fall of the U.S. dollar against other currencies as a result of the attack was as small as one percent and was covered by an upsurge, which was reported by most newspapers, two or three days later.

### **Instant reactions: Opinion polls**

The first results of opinion polls were published as early as September 13<sup>th</sup>. A telephone survey of 500 randomly selected adult Muscovites conducted by ROMIR, an independent public opinion company, revealed that almost 35 percent of respondents believed the attacks were part of a campaign of terror against the United States. About 30 percent of the surveyed considered the attacks to be the starting point of a massive global terrorist warfare. About 39 percent expected the United States to retaliate against the states suspected of being related to the attacks. Four out of ten of the respondents said that the United States would attempt to destroy the strongholds of international terrorism. About 50 percent of the respondents believed that the Islamic extremists were behind the attacks; less than 8 percent thought that other religious extremist groups conducted the attacks. Similarly, small proportions of the surveyed attributed the blame for the terrorist acts to the secret services of some countries (7 percent, the names were not mentioned), anti-globalization radicals (5 percent), and the U.S. secret services (3 percent). Almost one quarter of the surveyed did not have an opinion on the issue. At the same time, more than 47 percent of the respondents of this ROMIR poll believed Russia could also be hit by a similar wave of terrorism. Three quarters of the Muscovites expressed confidence that president Bush was able to deal with the situation, as compared to 20 percent who said he was not. The respondents split their opinions about whether the United States would find the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks. About 48 percent expressed confidence that the perpetrators would be or were likely to be found. To the contrary, more than 45 percent said that the people behind the

attacks were not likely to be found or would not be found at all. The opinions were divided about the economic impact of the recent events. About 35 percent believed that there would be no consequences on the global economy, whereas 33 percent of the respondent worried about the harmful effects of the terrorist acts on the Russian economy. However, less than 8 percent anticipated a global economic crisis.

Another early poll was conducted on September 11 and 12 by the Moscow Academy for Humanitarian and Social Issues (MGSA). According to this survey, 21 percent of the respondents agreed that the attacks were a justified punishment for the Americans. A similar question asked in a poll 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 well-deserved punishment of Americans for the “past” bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Iraq, and Yugoslavia. However, in the MGSA survey, 37 percent disagreed with the statement about a “justified” penalty and in the VTsIOM poll, a significantly larger number of respondents (61 percent) disagreed with the idea that the United States brought the punishment on themselves.

The Russians also expressed concerns about their own safety in the wake of the events in the United States. Some 59 percent of Muscovites believed that Russian law-enforcement agencies could not protect them from terrorist acts. A hypothetical appearance of Taliban units at the border with Tajikistan worried 72 percent of Russians and more than a half of the respondents expected the Taliban's infiltration into Tajikistan in the near future (Stepanov, 2001). Opinions split when people were asked whether Russia should support U.S. retaliation if it turns out that Islamic extremists were responsible for the September 11 attacks. Overall, 43 percent of the surveyed agreed with this action, whereas 47 percent expressed disagreement (VTsIOM, 09/18).

A majority of the Russian people sympathized with the victims of the attacks. In a poll taken on September 15-16 by the Public Opinion Foundation, 77 percent of the 1,500 respondents across Russia said that they experienced strong emotions when they first heard about the attacks in the United States. Only 8 percent of the respondents said they did not care about the events. At the same time, about 15 percent reported that they were greatly satisfied with the attacks and 15 percent said they had experienced some satisfaction. More than one third of the respondents who were satisfied with the attacks identified with Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov ([www.fom.ru](http://www.fom.ru), 09/20).

A telephone survey conducted on September 23<sup>rd</sup> by the independent Russian television network TV-6 and the popular weekly program *Itogi* hosted by Yevgeniy Kiselev showed that many people supported direct military help by Russia to the U.S. campaign against terrorism. Almost four thousand out of ten thousand phone calls received by the show's organizers suggested that Russia should have provided military assistance to the war and almost five thousand thought Russia should provide both political and diplomatic support. Although the host of the show suggested a substantial growth in support of a pro-active position of the Russian government in the war against terrorism, his conclusions were based on the results of two straw polls, which are viewed in public opinion studies as generally inaccurate (TV-6, 09/23).

Plans to retaliate against unknown terrorists caused an ambivalent reaction. According to the data of the MGSA research institute, 19 percent of the polled failed to give any answer, whereas 48 percent of Muscovites spoke confidently in favor of a powerful attack on the areas where terrorists live. Several hours later, only 3 percent of the polled (VTsIOM) favored an immediate strike. Some 72 percent of the polled insisted that first the culprit should be found, and military action taken after that. Only 4 percent of the polled failed to give an answer to this question. At the same time, only 40 percent of Muscovites thought then that the target for military attacks could be determined. Fifty-two percent of the respondents did not believe that the masterminds of the terrorist attacks could ever be found (Stepanov, 2001).

### **Naming the causes of September 11**

More than 54 percent of all analyzed Russian publications pointed to Islamic militants or fundamentalists, including Bin Laden and/or Al Qaeda and another 10 percent mentioned Arab terrorists. In search of immediate evidence, reporters quoted mostly foreign information services. Others referred to "domestic" facts, such as a map confiscated from Chechen rebels displaying directions of strikes at the World Trade Center in New York (RIA, 09/24). Most publications underlined the international nature of the sophisticated plot (Ovcharenko and Umerenkov, 2001). Approximately one third of the published references included a wide variety of guesses including America's own government or "homegrown" terrorist groups (Kagarlitsky, 2001, 09/18). To illustrate, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and whose name was mentioned earlier, drew parallels between the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the burning of the Reichstag, the House of Parliament, in Berlin in 1933 after which Hitler assumed

dictatorship in Germany. Zhirinovskiy predicted in a television interview on October 18<sup>th</sup> that, in a fashion similar to what Hitler had done, the United States would identify an innocent “scapegoat” and would attack it ([www.ortv.ru](http://www.ortv.ru), 10/18). General Boris Agapov, a well-known expert 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 groups could have executed such a complicated and large-scale act of terrorism (Kagarlitskiy, 2001, 10/30). Other commentators also raised doubts about Arab terrorists, as did Leonid Shebarshin, the former chief of the Soviet Foreign Intelligence (2001, 10/17). But these skeptical reactions were largely expressed earlier in the studied period mostly by opposition newspapers such as *Sovetskaya Rossiya* and *Zavtra*. In other newspapers, including *Moskovski Komsomolets*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and *Trud*, more than 70 percent of references accused Islamic or Arab militants.

### **Threats against Russia**

The tragic events in America sparked concerns about Russia’s own national security. Two sources of such threats were identified. First, journalists and commentators suggested possible attacks from terrorists against targets in Moscow. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, on September 13, for instance, speculated about a kamikaze pilot who could change course and hit the Kremlin or any other strategic target in the city. The newspaper warned helplessly that nobody could prevent a terrorist act if someone had plans to do it. Some experts referred to statements by Chechen separatists in which they had made threats in the past about a suicide terrorist on board an airliner that would target the Kremlin (Fedorov, 2001, 09/14). Some commentators called for the acceleration of a military buildup to reduce the probability of such suicidal actions (Ptichkin, 2001, 09/14) and not wait for too long and thus invite the enemies to launch their strikes against the country (Pavlovskiy, 2001, 10/24). The other source of potential threats to Russia was primarily strategic. Analysts referred to the country’s regional instability, the growth of insecurity of Russia’s southern borders, and the significant loss of revenues from weapons deals with Arab countries, which would not commit billions of dollars to Russia if the country decided to help the United States in its future wars (Pushkov, 2001, 09/15; Pronina, 2001, 09/24).

### **Seeking gains for Russia**

Most media reactions, however, were not necessarily about the threats and imminent dangers to Russia as a result of the events on September 11<sup>th</sup>. After a few days of emotional responses, the media began to focus on rational assessments of the political and economic impact on Russia. One of the earliest suggestions made by the commentators was about the vulnerability of the world's infrastructure and the inability of countries to guarantee their own national security using the old methods. In a live interview on the *Russia TV* network, devoted solely to the terrorist attacks in the U.S., Dmitry Rogozin, chairman of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee said that recent events showed that the United States before September 11<sup>th</sup> paid attention to the wrong threats. He emphasized the need for the United States to rethink the missile defense program because the enemies could strike this country by nontraditional means. The U.S. missile defense program, as Rogozin concluded, was the wrong way to deal with the security challenges of the modern world especially in the face of terrorist threats (Gornostaev, 2001).

Most published comments, however, dealt with 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 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 11<sup>th</sup>, Dmitry Rogozin, whose name was mentioned earlier, said that that the events in the U.S. could make a positive impact on western attitudes toward Russia's policy in Chechnya (*Russia TV*, 09/11). Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the presidential spokesman on Chechnya, referred to the Russian campaign in this breakaway region as part of the overall struggle against international terrorism. Nikolay Patrushev, Director of the Russian Federal Security Service also said that the West must rethink its views on Chechnya (*ORT*, 09/15). Many Russian politicians—including those who had earlier urged a more moderate stance in Chechnya—have 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, changed his position. In an interview with Moscow newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets* on September 13, Nemtsov was clearly skeptical about negotiations and insisted on the toughest measures against terrorist of all kinds. Alexander Dugin, leader of the Euro-Asia movement said in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on September 13 that Russia should use the momentum, put aside concerns about human rights and

rush headlong against the Chechen resistance. Nikolai Kovalev, former director of the Russian Federal Security Service, deputy chairman of the committee of the State Duma for Security, expressed hopes that the western media would stop using double standards and would finally consider Russian fighting in Chechnya as a struggle against international terrorism (Kovalev, 2001, 12/06). Scores of columnists and television commentators began to use harsh remarks about Chechnya and insist on tough measures against the terrorists (Russia TV, 09/13; Leontiev, SMI.RU, 09/15; Solovei, 09/21; Safonov, 10/23; Reuters, 09/23). The reports also reminded that Russia had repeatedly claimed in the past that there was a connection between the international terrorist groups on one hand and Chechen terrorists on the other.

While citing missile defense systems and the situation in Chechnya in association with September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Russian media started to discuss the direct and indirect benefits that the country should receive for its support of the United States and the war on terror (Osipov and Palshin, 2001, 10/02), or what benefits Russia should ask for (Markov, 2001, 10/23). Vladimir Zhirinovskiy said to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (09/13, 2001) that the U.S. administration should start negotiations with Russia and write off Russia's foreign debts. He suggested further that the Kremlin—in the face of international terrorism—should reactivate the KGB, triple servicemen's salaries, and raise the salaries of the special forces by five times. The military, he mentioned in another interview, should be built up to 3 million men (Zhirinovskiy, 2001, 09/14). At the same time, while Russian defense minister Sergei Ivanov emphasized the importance of profitable arms deals with the 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 in the war on terror (Nikonov, 2001, 10/27).

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). Various commentators immediately acknowledged that Russia should become an equal partner of the United States and play a major role in any international coalition of the countries. To secure Russia's participation, NATO should stop its expansion eastward, the Americans should drop their plans to develop a strategic defense system, and Russia should not be criticized for its Chechen policies. These three suggestions were repeatedly mentioned in publications (Pavlovskiy, 2001, 10/24). There were also voices, including Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov (ITAR-Tass, 2001, 09/17) who maintained that the tragic events in the U.S. could

stimulate the development of a new world order, in which Russia would actively participate in a stronger U.N., a non-ideological NATO, a more humane World Trade Organization, and an efficient G-8 (Bogaturov, 2001, 09/28). Some authors recommended the creation of a new antiterrorist alliance, modeled after the anti-Hitler coalition of the 1940s, this time on the basis of NATO. If such a coalition was created, Russia was anticipated to take a leading role along with the United States (Markov, 2001; Uzelac, 2001). Commentators also brought to attention that the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> situation gave Moscow a chance to draw closer to the United States. In some reports, Russia was called to revise its foreign policy and defense doctrines and provide more positive and cooperative foreign policy. If Russia did not approach the West, the reports warned, the country would face huge debts, hostilities by its southern borders, and fierce competition from China (Vasiliev, 2001; Khamrayev, 2001; Alexeyev, 2001).

### **Support of the unfolding campaign in Afghanistan**

Although the immediate plans of the Washington Administration were not clear yet, the Russian media began to publish commentaries about a forthcoming military action against Afghanistan almost immediately after September 11<sup>th</sup> (Pavlovsky, 2001). President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov made several statements about the importance of balanced and intelligent decisions. They did not rule out, however, that the United States would use force in the fight against terrorism (Interfax, 2001, 09/15). Some of the media's predictions were gloomy about Afghanistan's future, predicting the imminent destruction of an entire country by the U.S. armed forces, if it is confirmed that the Taliban government aided terrorists (Ovcharenko and Umerenkov, 2001). Other predictions estimated the "price" the Kremlin would demand for its involvement in the conflict, as it was done in a radio interview by the head of the Foreign and Defense Policy Council, Sergei Karaganov (Radio Ekho Moskvyy, 09/17).

Cautious voices sounded louder by the end of September 2001. Military and civilian experts, while expressing an overall positive opinion about a forthcoming retaliation from the United States, warned about potential problems and casualties (Arbatov, 2001). Moscow Region Governor Boris Gromov, the top military commander in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation in the mid-1980s, ruled out any deployment of infantry in Afghanistan for fear of heavy casualties (RIA, 09/18). These opinions reflected generally the views of the public. In October, different sources published reports about the split public opinion on the potential air

strikes against Afghanistan (Shusharin, 2001, 10/26). 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.

Later in the fall and winter of 2001, the comments acknowledged the success of the international coalition. Some politicians even began to take credit for the successful U.S.-led campaign, as did Alexei Arbatov, Vice Chair of the Duma Committee for Defense (Federal News Service, 2001, 11/26). In a similar fashion, a few articles praised American technological advancement and made sarcastic, self-depreciative remarks about looting that would have been widespread if the Russian army, not the United States, were to lead in a military operation of this magnitude (Bitsoyev, 2001, 12/28).

### **Critical reactions to the unfolding campaign in Afghanistan**

After the Kremlin promised to support the military campaign in Afghanistan and possibly elsewhere (*Russia TV*, 09/15), many articles and interviews published in September-October began to spell out possible limitations to what Russia and other countries could do. Early in the fall, several Russian officials had clearly ruled out the use of Russia's ground forces in any foreign military engagement. Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov told *Russia TV* that the Kremlin was not planning to participate in any military action against terrorist bases in Afghanistan (ORT, 13 September). Anatoly Kvashnin, head of the general staff of the armed forces, said it was highly unlikely that Russian troops would take part in an anti-terrorist operation (Ulyanov, 2001, 09/19). Assurances of the governments of several former Soviet countries to participate in American-led actions against international terrorism were criticized in the media.

These reactions were another indication that some powerful officials were somewhat reluctant to witness any military action conducted by the United States. Military officials and national-security bureaucrats were unhappy about NATO troops in Central Asia. The "open letter" of a group of the generals and admirals of the Russian armed forces published on November 10, 2001 criticized Putin's policies as too pro-Western. Left-wing political parties and groups did not welcome even a hint at the new pro-Western orientation of the Kremlin. Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov warned about a possible war with the entire Islamic world, which could begin in the wake of the U.S.-planned actions (Interfax, 2001; 09/24). The leaders of the Russian parliamentary factions of the Unity Party, the Communist Party of Russia,

the Peoples' Deputy Group and the Liberal Democratic Party all stood firmly against any form of Russian military participation in the evolving anti-terrorist coalition (Ulyanov, 2001). Russian conservatives too felt defeat in Putin's newly declared political course. Their dream to rebuild Russia's independence, while keeping distance from the West, and strengthening the country's military power was apparently rejected by the president (Shlapentokh, 2001). Some business groups saw a potential loss of business with many partners in the Middle East or Central Asia. On top of that, some feared that Moscow's good-neighborly relations with the Arab world would be wrecked (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2001, 09/25). Other voices predicted a depressing scenario for Russia's security as a result of the war in Afghanistan, which could spark off another wave of terror (Primakov, 2001; Kovalev, 09/14).

Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznev expressed a common objection in a television interview. He declared on September 18 that Russia should distinguish between governments and simple people and not deliver blows to entire nations for the sins of the few ([www.ortv.ru](http://www.ortv.ru), 09/18). Some extremist and nationalist politicians displayed their direct hostility against the West. For instance, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of the LDPR said that the only way for Russia to become a great power again was to stop supporting the United States, sign a deal with the Taliban, and create a new powerful alliance with the Arab world (Khamrayev, 2001; *NTV International*, 10/02). Of course, there were individuals who vehemently supported the new foreign policy of cooperation. 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*." But the moderates, representing a solid majority of the Russian political elite, were divided between the supporters of the course announced by president Putin and its critics.

The media's reaction to the events in Afghanistan was cautious too. One of the most common themes was a convenient objection to violence. A well-known political commentator wrote in the *Moscow Times* in October that U.S. air strikes were killing large numbers of ordinary Afghan civilians; the Northern Alliance, an opposition to the Taliban government, was incapable of effective offensive action; the situation was a terrible strategic impasse, and the United States seemed caught in the middle of it (Felgenhauer, 2001, 09/20; Felgenhauer, 2001, 10/25). It was common for the media to doubt the effectiveness of the military actions and to suggest that Russia should stay away from the conflict (Shelia, 2001, 10/11). Overall, according to the media analysis, unilateral military actions against the Taliban regime were supported in

fewer than 15 percent of the articles. An emphasis on multilateralism (such as a military coalition) was strongest in October but waned in December. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was among the most pacifist-oriented newspapers: basically all of its publications related to the events appealed to sobriety of judgment, self-restraint, and non-violent solutions. Pro-communist *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 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, both supporting and opposing the war.

In evaluation of the U.S. actions in Afghanistan, outcomes such as strengthening America's power, its political and economic influence in the region or in the world were suggested by a plurality of articles (48 percent). Desire to stop terrorism was mentioned in 15 percent of publications, whereas revenge was referred to in 21 percent of articles. *Sovetskaya Rossiya* mentioned the power-driven U.S. motivation in practically all publications during the period under observation; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and *Zavtra* did the same in most of their articles; whereas *Moskovsky Komsomolets* was particularly insistent about punishment as the prime motivation. The media largely ignored the arguments about the necessity to defend freedom, democracy, humanity, and Western civilization. The vast majority of assessments were negative, including statements about the U.S. actions harming civilians (30 percent), and causing anti-American feelings. There was practically no mention of the positive outcomes of the war.

### **Criticism of American foreign policy**

Only about 11 percent of the newspaper materials were associated with positive features attributed to the U.S. and Americans. About 72 percent of descriptions were negative, including those that depicted the U.S. and its people as weak and shaken (18 percent), greedy (5 percent), belligerent and oppressive (20 percent), indifferent and selfish (11 percent), and unfair, hypocritical (9 percent). The number of accusatory descriptions increases through October and December, and the number of sympathetic descriptions decreased.

There was no shortage of comments about the U.S. bullying behavior, arrogance, and overconfidence. One type of argument held that the attacks against the United States were, in part, caused by America's own sense of superiority (Fochkin, 2001, 09/13) and its attitude toward international law (Markov, 2001, 09/22; Kagarlitsky, 2001, 10/30). Another type of comment underlined the false sense of unity that the Americans have about the world following

them (Arbatov, 2001; Tretiakov, 2001). The White House's argument that the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> must be considered an attack on the whole world was rejected (Tretiakov, 2001). The prominent Russian political scientist Gleb Pavlovsky, head of the Fund for Effective Policies, referred to the "traditional" U.S. demonstrative retribution, which the Americans used to resort to time and again to show the world how tough they were (Pavlovsky, 2001). Moreover, some publications suggested that the war on terror was an excuse to start a campaign 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 (Pankov, 2001, 09/18).

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 military took serious casualties (Aushev, Interfax, 09/17). Colonel General, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Yuri Baluyevsky said, while expressing a positive attitude about the U.S.-Russia strategic cooperation, that the ability of rogue states, including Afghanistan, to create weapons of mass destruction is exaggerated and, therefore, military strikes against such countries are not justified (2001, 12/09). State Duma Deputy Andrei Kokoshin, who was also former secretary of the Russian Security Council, said during a radio interview that the United States should change its arrogant attitude and turn to cooperation with the international community (*Mayak*, 2001, 09/12). Other reports questioned the ability of the American people to persevere under adversity. For example, Yulia Latynina a journalist with *ORT* called Americans intellectually lazy and incapable of fighting to the bitter end. She said that the U.S. government always removes its soldiers from the places that were too frightening to them (2001, 09/19).

The most negative opinions came from nationalist and communist newspapers, which accused the United States of barbaric actions, hegemonic policies, and disrespect to the international law (Zyuganov, 2001, 09/13). However, a distinct anti-American sentiment was also present in a range of articles appearing in "liberal" publications, which for a decade were in strong opposition to nationalist and communist publications. In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, at least three of such newspapers, *Izvestia*, *Obshchaia Gazeta*, and *Novaia Gazeta*, published several poorly-substantiated, openly-prejudiced, anti-American articles, which practically

gloated over the tragic events in America and suggested that terrorism was a necessary redemption for America's arrogance (Shlapentokh, 2001).

In general, articles, interviews, and columns that supported the U.S. actions in Afghanistan and approved of the anti-terrorist campaign were most likely to be published in late September. Voices that discussed a balanced opinion about the events in Afghanistan in October-December 2001 were practically silenced by the critics.

## **Conclusion**

The initial reaction of most Russians to the tragic September events in the United States was concerned and sympathetic. The media undoubtedly identified Islamic radicals as the perpetrators of the attacks. Conspiracy theories involving Israel or the CIA and their alleged participation were quickly dismissed. Nevertheless, after the initial emotional shock caused by the TV footage and pictures of the falling buildings was over, the reactions in Russia began to change later in September and in the fall of 2001. Although the official policy appeared unchanged, the media's assessments became increasingly ambivalent and critical. If we look at the numbers, the overall picture reflects a practically "even" distribution of both favorable evaluations of the United States (33 percent), and unfavorable (34 percent) opinions, and an equal share of mixed attitudes (33 percent). In September, favorable comments were somewhat more frequent (39 percent) than negative ones (25 percent), but the tendency reversed in October (22 percent positive and 48 percent unfavorable) and in December (only 9 vs. 37 percent).

Each individual's opinion is unique and generalizing about how an entire nation reacts to an international event is difficult. However, if we look for the general tendency, we will find that there was a substantial difference between how the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were perceived and explained in the United States and Russia. For most Americans, and numerous polls support this assumption (Shirayev and Sobel, 2004), the U.S. military responses in Afghanistan and other places were inevitable actions to the grave threats to America imposed by terrorists. For most Russians, on the other hand, the military responses launched by Washington were primarily a reflection of Washington's longing for global domination realized in the opportunity to gain ground in South Asia and in former Soviet republics. America was often described as a proud and strong nation. Nevertheless, in so many cases, America was also depicted as a faceless,

arrogant, and greedy monster, an image far too familiar to those who lived in the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

As several Russian commentators admitted, most Russians, while responding to the tragic events of 2001, were sorry for Americans as individuals but were not particularly sorry for America as a country. As a matter of analogy, in the 1970s, one of the officially promoted ideological doctrines in the Soviet Union was that the Soviet people did not, in fact, dislike the American people but they despised America's rotten capitalism and democracy. Remarkably, fifteen years later, during Perestroika, most Russians maintained that they were neither against the American people nor were they against America's social system. The imaginary pendulum of attitudes swung again in the last decade. There is always hope against hope that this pendulum of Russian people's attitudes would swing back again in the 2000s and the Russians, who were bitter or prejudiced in 2001, would tomorrow regret and ridicule themselves for the things they said yesterday. Actually, they had already done this so many times in the past.



### **Editorial remarks**

Why did the media and opinion polls in Russia reflect such an ambivalent and critical view of the United States and its foreign policy? As we do in each chapter, let's look at institutional, political, and psychological factors that might have contributed to such reactions.

Unlike in the Soviet Union, the Russian people in 2001 had a much broader access to information, including independent media, the Internet, and satellite television. The Kremlin could no longer dictate what people thought and how they interpreted international events. Moreover, President Putin, since taking power in 1999, had maintained a pragmatic foreign policy aimed at partnership with the United States. Since 2001, the Kremlin and the White House shared similar attitudes on several policy-related issues, including the fight against terrorism, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, trade, and regional stability. Obviously, the Kremlin would not support every action initiated in Washington and there were points of disagreement. Nevertheless, official relations between the U.S. and Russia in 2001 and 2002 were warmer than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Despite the official policies, a majority of opinion leaders in Russia remained genuinely committed to their anti-Western attitudes. The political climate in Russia in 2001 was such that pro-American attitudes were widely regarded as non-patriotic. The anti-American card was eagerly played by nationalist groups and the Communist Party, the members of which maintained a genuine hatred, cultivated since the Cold War, for western democracy and free-market capitalism. International developments contributed to the arguments of the Russian political opposition, including NATO's expansion, U.S. promises to walk away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the perceived unfair trade policies, and, of course, the unfolding military campaign in Afghanistan.

The most significant factor contributing to ambivalent and critical views of the United States seems psychological and rooted in Russian political culture. As in the late 1980s, a substantial proportion of Russians in the beginning of the 2000s associated America, more than any other place on earth, with prosperity and advanced technologies. Overall, Russians respect American economic success and are impressed by its democratic form of government. But they tend to be concerned about U.S. international ambitions. Surveys taken by the Public Opinion Foundation between 2001 and 2003 also showed that the Russians' attitudes about America are significantly influenced by "immediate" events and their coverage in the media. Most Russians remain proud of the country's victory in World War II in 1945. These reflections on their country's history give many Russians a sense of moral superiority over Americans. But more and more, in Russia, nostalgic feelings of superiority and security have been replaced by a sense of personal and national insecurity. Many ordinary people maintain the view that the United States represents a general threat to Russia's national security, a threat that has significantly diminished since the end of the Cold War, but still remains a viable menace. Surveys conducted by leading polling organizations showed that many Russians, up to fifty percent, believe that since America was so quick to bomb Afghanistan, there is a strong likelihood that they might patrol the streets of the republics of the former Soviet Union. Most people in Russia held an opinion that superpower America is capable not only of making statements but also of undertaking decisive unilateral actions. Russia, meanwhile, remained a passive bystander. In the face of Russia's own relative weakness, this perceived American ferocity is feared and distrusted. Although the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> brought Russia and the United States closer together for a short time, the war on terror has served to drive the two nations somewhat further apart.

### **Suggested additional literature**

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