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Stephen M. Brown
University of Wollongong, sbrown@uow.edu.au

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Post-Communist Russia and anti-Americanism: Has the West lost Russian public opinion?

Dr. Stephen Brown
School of History and Politics
University of Wollongong

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Post-Communist Russia and anti-Americanism: Has the West lost Russian public opinion?

Abstract

Post-Communist Russia's place in the international system has constituted a matter of intense academic interest since the end of the Cold War. In 2006, the relationship between the West and Russia cooled markedly in response to changing political alliances among the successor states of the former Soviet Union and Russia's alleged use of its oil and gas resources for political purposes. Richard Pipes has warned that the West should not trust Russia because both its political elites and public opinion are hostile to Western values. This paper will argue that public opinion in Russia has been, and remains, mostly favourable towards the United States, Europe and the liberal democratic political system associated with the 'West' and that anti-Americanism, a discourse considered to be widespread in Europe, remains relatively weak in Russia. While many Russian politicians and ideologues have urged Russians to view the West as both foreign and hostile, a majority of the general public has steadfastly resisted. Sympathetic to Europe and unenthusiastic about new wars, Russia's general public has proved a surprisingly resilient ally both for a pragmatic Russian foreign policy and for the West.

In the late 1990s, Russia appeared increasingly irrelevant in international terms. Shrinking economic output, low oil prices, an ailing president, and declining influence over neighbouring states conveyed the impression that Russia was a fading force in world affairs (White 2002, 183). In 2006, the picture is very different and Russia's international importance appears stronger than at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the current favourable conjuncture of economic growth, high oil prices, an energetic president, and the success of Russia in forging partnerships in Asia and Europe has revived fears that Russia is 'leaving the West' and that it might even rehearse the role of a despotic empire that is a threat to its neighbours and world peace (Trenin 2006, Edwards 2006). Fresh warnings that a revitalised Russian imperialism was on the march came in early 2006 at a regional summit of East European leaders. At that meeting, United States Vice-President Dick Cheney criticised Russia for using its energy resources to blackmail its neighbours, while Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili accused political forces in Moscow of 'imperial nostalgia' (BBC 2006). The most recent American Council on Foreign Relations report on Russia (Edwards 2006) has described Russia as undergoing 'de-democratisation'; this report concluded that, alone among the European countries, Russia was moving away from democratic norms.

Two widely divergent discourses are now commonplace in academic and popular commentary about Russia: one suggests that Russia is in transition to democracy and has adopted a pragmatic and 'pro-Western' orientation in its foreign policy; the second suggests that Russia is at a crossroads, a phony democracy likely to fall prey to authoritarianism and to seek to ally itself with like-minded, non-democratic regimes in order to balance the West. Criticism of Russia's progress towards democracy is usually directed at elite decision makers in Russia. At the same time, such criticism is likely to reinvigorate an equally pessimistic discourse about Russian public opinion. Pessimistic assessments about Russian voting behaviour first emerged in the early 1990s when, following a brief flirtation with the democrats of the early post-Communist era, it was noted that Russian voters preferred politicians described as nationalists, conservatives, and so-called 'state-builders' at the expense of pro-Western liberal reformers. Some commentators feared that Russia might follow the example of the Weimar republic, the post-World War-One democracy whose failure prepared the way for Hitler and the Nazis (Brubaker 1996, 140). Such fears did not recede even after Russia's support for the American-led 'war on terror' after 11 September 2001. Yegor Gaidar, the liberal Prime Minister in the first Yeltsin government, was one of many commentators who evoked the spectre of Weimar when he described the parliamentary elections of 2003 as a disaster that had created 'a radical nationalistic wave with consequences difficult to predict' (Kumpilova 2004).

Before the mid 1980s, Russian public opinion was a mystery to Western researchers, who suffered from an almost total lack of information aside from the testimony of émigrés. Since the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, the reverse is true; those interested in tracking and interpreting Russian public opinion are spoilt and sometimes overwhelmed by the remarkable amount of information available. Alongside the monitoring of the attitudes of ordinary Russians by international as well as Russian research institutes, there is also close scrutiny of the statements of government officials, as well as substantial commentary upon the written and spoken words of nationalist agitators, political advocates and intellectuals. The problem now is not the absence of data concerning Russian public opinion, but how this data should be interpreted. While Zimmerman (2002) has provided a comprehensive account of the

evolution of Russian public opinion during the 1990s, analysis of the Russian public's view of international affairs remains a work-in-progress.

This paper takes as its starting point one of the most pessimistic accounts of Russia put forward in recent years. In 2004, Richard Pipes (2004) argued the case that Russia represented a real danger to the West because Russian elites and public opinion shared the same authoritarian, anti-Western and imperial values. Pipes cited polls that suggested that only 10% of Russians would actively resist a communist coup and that most Russians desired the reconstitution of the Soviet Union (2004, 15). According to Pipes, 'Many Russians still see themselves as surrounded by foes and that, in descending order, the threats are: "industrial-financial circles in the West," the United States, NATO, Russian "oligarchs" and bankers, democrats, and Islamic extremists' (2004, 14). Russians, it seems, viewed force as the preferred option when dealing with foreigners; when asked how they would like their country to be perceived by other nations, 48% of Russians said 'mighty, unbeatable, indestructible, a great world power', while only 3% wanted to be perceived as 'peace-loving and friendly (2004, 14). According to Pipes, Russians were still fighting the Cold War; 78% of Russians insisted that Russia must be a 'great power' (2004, 14). When asked 'Do you feel European' only 12% responded 'yes, always', while 56% replied, 'Practically never' (2004, 15). According to Pipes (2004, 13):

> having lost its sense of national identity after 1991, Russia is struggling to create a new one based on a blend of tsarism, Communism and Stalinism. People's identification with strong government - at home and abroad – is a central part of this effort. And a strong government means military prowess that foreigners will respect or just fear'.

For Pipes, it was not just a matter of opinion polls. He complained that political scientists often lacked a sense of history and implied that the depressing record of the tsars and the Soviet system needed to be considered in any discussion of present-day Russia.

Pipes is certainly right to urge that current assessments of Russia should be subjected to the reality check of the historical record. However, his conclusions about Russian popular opinion are not well supported by the evidence of opinion polls or history. The case put in this paper is that, when placed in a comparative perspective, Russian public opinion is best viewed as fitting within a broader European pattern of

opinion about the United States, that Russians are disinclined to view force as an acceptable tool of foreign policy, and that the Russian public's reluctance to vote for nationalist political parties hostile to the West is in keeping with the broader pattern of Russian history.

In making his case, Pipes cited fourteen opinion polls published in *Izvestiia*, a newspaper that for the most part has a reputation for being liberal and pro-Western. As Pipes has pointed out, much of the polling can be traced back to three reputable organizations, and principally to the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, directed by Iurii Levada (2004, 10). The Levada Center has conducted literally hundreds of polls and these can be compared to the research into the opinions of the Russian public carried out by Western research organisations and their Russian collaborators. The case to be made here is that the methodology employed by Pipes, that is, citing opinion polls and the historical record, can be employed just as easily to show that a majority of Russian public opinion does not conform to the gloomy picture that he has painted.

Pipes (2004, 11) asserted that Russians do not trust their state, are asocial and apolitical, imagine that they live in trenches surrounded by enemies and regard democracy as a fraud. This is worrying because the case is often made that democracies are less likely to resort to war to achieve foreign-policy objectives. It is certainly true that surveys suggest that there was much less enthusiasm for democracy in 2005 than there was in the early 1990s. The 1991 Pulse of Europe survey found that 51% of Russians trusted democratic government to solve the country's problems while only 39% indicated a preference for relying upon a strong leader. In 2005, 28% of Russians expressed confidence in democratic government; 81% of Russians expressed the view that a strong economy was preferable to democracy (Pew 2005).

Here it is worth making the point that it would seem likely that the term 'democracy' is more discredited than the concept itself. The most recent Council on Foreign Relations report on Russia (Edwards 2006) noted that there were good reasons for distinguishing between the authoritarian tendencies of elite decision makers and the seemingly democratic instincts of the ordinary public. The report noted that:

> Although the Russian public is often described as uninterested in politics and deferential to authority, poll results show attitudes much like those of other European countries. The respected Levada Center has found that 66 percent of

> Russians feel the country needs an effective political opposition and 60 percent believe the media should be one of the forces playing such a role.

As will become clear from what follows, there are good reasons for thinking that Russians resemble Europeans not just in their attitudes towards democracy, but also in their attitudes towards international issues. Thus, the attack upon the United States in September 2001 prompted not just offers of cooperation from the Russian elite, but strong support for such a policy from the public. O'Loughlin (2002, 19)) noted that there were few risks for Putin when he chose to bandwagon with the United States after 11 September 2001 given that three quarters of Russians polled supported the concept of an alliance between Russia and the United States to fight international terrorism. According to O'Loughlin (2002, 5), Russians distinguish between two geopolitical scripts, the first articulating a 'fear of an American diktat in Russian domestic affairs' and the second articulating an admiration of 'Western economic, technological and social achievements'.

Those who have seen a danger from the right in Russia have had no difficulty in uncovering potential nationalist threats to Russia's democracy. In the early 1990s, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the Red-Brown alliance between Communists and nationalists, and President Yeltsin himself, who forcibly closed down the Russian parliament in 1993, all appeared to represent a threat to the democracy promised in 1991 (Service, 1998). From the mid 1990s, the anti-Western element in Russian politics coalesced into what is often labeled the Eurasianist movement, a generic term for those in Russia who see the West as an enemy. The original Eurasianists of the early twentieth century comprised intellectuals who saw their mission as rediscovering 'a distinct civilizational space for Russia'. Eurasianist ideologues have traditionally emphasized the Asian heritage of Russia and the common culture that links Slavs and Turks; they extol the achievements of the Mongols as a unifying force and as an inspiration for an eastern alliance against the West; they argue that Orthodoxy is an Eastern religion and see the West as a source of rivalry and exploitation (Laruelle, 2004, 116). In the 1990s, Yevgenii Primakov, Yeltsin's prime minister and foreign minister, advocated policies that were often described as Eurasianist (Lynch, 2001, 9). In 2001, Communist Party leader Zyuganov reaffirmed that, in the view of his party, Russia was a 'Eurasianist' country.

Arguably, the most noteworthy feature of Eurasianist politics has been its singular failure to capture the imagination of Russian voters. Radical nationalism was not a significant force in Russian elections in the 1990s even though the state became steadily more authoritarian (Tuminez 2000, 16). Nor did Eurasianism inspire homeland nationalism among the Russians allegedly marooned in the 'near abroad', that is, Russia's new post-Soviet neighbours. For all the fears of conflict resulting from the fact that twenty-five million Russians now lived outside of Russia, there was a striking absence of nationalism in the Russian diaspora, no fifth columns in Kazakhstan or Ukraine, and little ethnic mobilisation of Russians in Tatarstan or the Caucasus (Lieven 1999, 67). The only exception was Moldova where the Trans-Dnestr region carved out a de-facto independent existence with the support of Russia, although this seems to have been a case of Russia supporting a local initiative (Lynch 2001, 12). As for a geopolitical reorientation of Russia away from Europe towards the Turkic world, this remains a matter of speculation and fantasy. As Lieven has put it, the Slav-Turk union urged by the Eurasianists seems particularly unlikely given the 'traditional Russian contempt and hatred for the Turks' as the successor state to the Ottomans (Lieven 1999, 68).

A number of polls taken in the fifteen years since the collapse of the Soviet Union have indicated that as many as three quarters of Russians were nostalgic for the Soviet Union as a great and powerful country. This evidence should be viewed in context (White 2002, 192). There is overwhelming evidence that the Russian public add the qualifier that they do not want territorial realignments if that would involve a war. It is easy to find appeals to Russian nationalism in Russian history over the last century and a half that point to the possibility of expansionist tendencies. Pan-Slavism emphasised Russia's duty to support the Serbs and other embattled Slav peoples in eastern and central Europe, and was a potential source of war against the Ottomans. One hundred years later, in 1999, there were calls for Russians to support the Serbs in their conflict with NATO. Yet Russians have not responded with any enthusiasm to such calls. The most striking recent evidence of Russian indifference to Pan-Slavism came in 1999 when NATO bombed Serbian territory in the dispute over Kosovo between March and June 1999. In a poll of nearly two thousand people taken in January 2000, Levada asked Russians whom they sympathized with in 'a conflict in Serbia between Serbs and ethnic Albanians living in

Kosovo'? As Table One shows, Levada found that, less than a year after NATO's bombing of Serbia, more than three-quarters of the Russians polled responded that they had 'no sympathy for either' or were 'not interested at all'.

Table One

Levada Poll taken in January 2000

'Q. Last year there was a conflict in Serbia between Serbs and ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. Do you sympathize with?'

Serbs	19
Albanians	3
No sympathy for either	42
Not at all interested	36

Source: Levada poll carried out Jan 19-29, 2000. URL< http://www.russiavotes.org/>
Section V: International Security, Russia's Place in the World, Table Three. Consulted 03/07/2006.

Russians have tended not to view violence as a preferred option even when their co-nationals are under threat in the 'near abroad'. As Table Two shows, the same Levada poll taken in January 2000 found that, in the event of their co-nationals in the former Soviet space coming under threat, Russians, by a majority of four-to-one, favoured negotiation over military action.

Table Two

Levada Poll taken in January 2000

'Q. If Russians in the near abroad were under threat from the government there, the Russian government could respond in different ways. Which of the following actions would you support?'

Negotiate	94%
Use Economic Pressure	64%
Resettle People of Russian nationality in the Russian Federation	72%
Military Action	20%
A Policy of Non-Interference in the affairs of other countries	36%

Source: Levada poll carried out Jan 19-29, 2000. URL< http://www.russiavotes.org/>
Section V: International Security, Russia's Place in the World, Table One. Consulted 03/07/2006.

Like other European publics, Russians claim that they are critics of American foreign policy, and not hostile to the American public. As the Pew Global Attitudes Project (2005) has found, Russians believe that they are able to discern positive and negative features among Americans:

> 61% of Russians have a positive impression of Americans. Majorities in Russia associate Americans with the positive characteristics "hard-working" (72%), and "inventive" (56%); yet just 32% say the term "honest" applies to Americans. Majorities of Russians also describe Americans as "greedy" (60%) and "violent" (54%), and a relatively large minority calls Americans "immoral" (42%).

Pew (2006) has tracked the phenomenon of 'anti-Americanism' over time and across the world. Anti-Americanism is a term that is applied to a vast array of attitudes belonging to individuals who range from those harboring deep-seated prejudices against American 'values and way of life' to those who are merely critical of aspects of American foreign policy (Singh 2006, 29). There is no space here to answer the question of why Russians hold the views that they do; the point to be made is that Russians do not appear to be especially 'anti-American' when compared to public opinion in Western Europe. As Table Three shows, the opinion of Russians about the United States has tended to follow the pattern evident elsewhere in Europe as measured by the Pew Global Attitudes Survey.

Table Three
Pew Global Attitudes Survey 1999-2006
'Favourable Opinions of the United States'

	1999/2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Great Britain	83	75	70	58	55	56
France	62	63	43	37	43	39
Germany	78	61	45	38	41	37
Spain	50		38		38	30
Russia	37	61	36	47	52	43

Source: Information compiled from *Pew Global Attitudes Project. 2006* 'America's Image Slips, But Allies share US Concerns over Iran, Hamas. 15-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey', URL<www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/PAG_report_2006.pdf >. Consulted 03/07/2006

It is true that at the end of the 1990s, the Russian public's love of the United States had reached its nadir. In 1999/2000, only 37% of Russians expressed a 'favourable opinion about the United States', according to Pew. This polling was conducted in the wake of the 1998 financial crisis and after the NATO bombing of Serbia, which was opposed by Russia, and when anti-Western rhetoric had received more legitimacy under Prime Minister Primakov, known for his criticisms of the United States. This outcome can be compared to Pew's finding that 78% of Germans held a favourable opinion about the United States in 1999/2000.

Since then, Russian public opinion has followed a trajectory common to much of the world. After the attacks of 11 September 2001, Russians expressed their sympathy for the United States and tended to support the American-led crusade against Islamic extremism (O'Loughlin 2002, 19). In 2002, favourable opinion about the United States in Russia climbed to 61%, the same level as in Germany. As the invasion of Iraq loomed in 2003, favourable opinions about the United States, as measured by the Pew surveys, plummeted in Russia and in many other countries. In Russia, favourable opinion about the United States in 2003 fell to 36% and in Germany to 45%. Thereafter, Russian opinion about the United States has risen much faster than in Germany, France and Spain. Favourable opinion of the United States in Russia was 52% in 2005, a figure that almost matched that of Britain (55%) and was higher than that recorded in France (41%), Germany (43%) and Spain (38%). According to Pew, in 2006 Russia (43%) maintained its lead over France (39%), Germany (37%) and Spain (30%).

Levada's polling has produced similar results when asking the question, 'How on the whole do you feel about the United States?' Russians were required to choose between the following five answers: 'Totally Bad', 'Mostly Bad', 'Totally Good', 'Mostly Good', and 'Don't Know'. Table Four shows that, according to the polling carried out by Levada, the low point for Russian 'feeling' about the United States coincided with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This was the only occasion when the combined 'Mostly Bad' and 'Very Bad' assessment of the United States represented a majority of those polled. In every other year, Russian opinion was more positive than negative about the United States. As is the case throughout much of the world, it does not seem to be American values that alienated Russian public opinion. Rather, perception of

a ‘unilateralist’ American foreign policy appears to be the issue for Russians, as well as for many others around the globe.

Table Four
Levada Polls 2001-06
‘Q. how on the whole do you feel about the United States?’

	2001	2002	2003	2004	March 05	Oct 05	Dec 05	06
Very Good	6	4	3	5	6	4	3	3
Mostly Good	53	55	35	48	59	57	54	50
Total Good	59	59	38	53	65	61	57	53
Mostly Bad	21	26	37	26	22	22	25	30
Very Bad	7	7	18	10	6	8	7	9
Total Bad	28	33	55	36	28	30	32	39
Don’t Know	13	8	7	11	7	9	11	8

Source: Levada Center surveys, 1999-2006. Section V: International Security, ‘USA and NATO’, Question 1. URL< http://www.russiavotes.org/> Consulted 03/07/2006.

Pipes (2004, 15) has suggested that Russians see themselves as situated outside of European civilisation; opinion polls, he noted, showed that only 13% of respondents placed Russia as part of ‘European and Western civilisation’. Other commentators have discovered, sometimes to their surprise, that Russians are much more favourably inclined towards ‘Europe’. The survey commissioned by White, Mc Allister, Light and Lowenhardt asked the general public of four post-Soviet states (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus): ‘Do you think of yourself as a European?’ (White et. al. 2002, 189).

The researchers expressed surprise that, as Table Five shows, 52% of Russians sometimes or often thought of themselves as European, a figure higher than in Ukraine, and noted that:

> Oddly, perhaps, Russians were the most likely to think of themselves ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ as Europeans, although a quarter of the population lived,

geographically speaking, in Asia; and they were least likely of all four groups to have difficulty answering the question.

Table Five
White, McAllister, Light and Lowenhardt
'Do you think of yourself as a European?'

	Belarus	Moldova	Russia	Ukraine
Often	16	9	18	8
Sometimes	34	25	34	26
Rarely/Never	38	56	47	57
Don't Know	12	10	2	8

Source: White, S, I McAllister, M Light and J Lowenhardt. 2002. 'A European or a Slavic Choice? Foreign Policy and Public Attitudes in Post-Soviet Europe', *Europe-Asia Studies* 54(2): 181-202.

In 2000, Levada asked Russians whether they 'feel European' and achieved similar results to those reported by White et al., as Table Six demonstrates.

Table Six
Levada Poll taken in 2000
'Q. Do you consider yourself European?'

Not at all	19
Probably Not	29
Probably Yes	35
Definitely Yes	18

Source: Levada poll carried out Jan 19-29, 2000. URL< http://www.russiavotes.org/>
Section V: International Security, Russia's Place in the World, Table Four. Consulted 03/07/2006.

According to Levada, 53% of Russians answered 'Probably Yes' (35%) or 'Definitely Yes' (18%) to this question. While nearly half the sample responded negatively, that is, 'Not at all' (19%) and 'Probably Not' (29%), there seems little reason for claiming, as Pipes does, that a majority of Russians view themselves as outside of 'Europe' or Western Civilisation.

This European orientation of Russians confirms the wider pattern identified by the surveys undertaken by Kolossov, who, on the basis of surveys conducted in 2000 and 2001, concluded that 'Russian public opinion may be more willing to support cooperation with the West than many people might think' (Kolossov 2003 121). According to Kolossov, 'there are no general anti-Western feelings in Russian society'. In March 2001, 83% of respondents declared that they were in favour of improved relations between Russia and the European Union and the United States. At the peak of the crisis in Kosovo in 1999, 59% of respondents, including half of those who voted for the Communists,

declared that they supported an improvement in relations with the United States. Only 14% of respondents thought that Russia should join a coalition against the United States (Kolossov 2003, 141).

Finally, the point that needs to be made is that the relative weakness of nationalism in post-Communist Russia is consistent with longer-term trends in Russian history. Scholars of nationalism have noted that nationalism, in its classic western European form at least, is very weak in Russia. There was little civil society or nationalist propaganda under the tsarist and Soviet systems; the tsarist policy of 'official nationality' was state driven and top-down, while the Soviet government attempted to create a 'new Soviet person' as a replacement for particularist and nationalistic sentiment.

As Lieven has put it, Russian identity was subsumed for most of the modern era in a broader imperial, religious or ideological identity (Lieven 1999, 55-56). Tolz (2001, 70-73) has pointed out that for Russia, the process of nation building has been complicated in that:

> the early creation of an empire (well before the process of Russian nation building began), the empire's land-based character and the resulting high level of mutual cultural influences and assimilation between conquerors and conquered to some extent blurred the feeling of difference between the imperial people and other subjects of the empire.

For Rowley (2000, 24), if Gellner's definition of nationalism as a political principle demanding that 'the political and the national unit should be congruent' is accepted, Russia is conspicuous for its failure to develop nationalist movements. Captured by an imperial discourse, Russian political movements –Slavophiles, Westerners, Pan-Slavs and Eurasianists- developed a 'conceptual universe that had more in common with the universal, absolutist religious categories of medieval Christendom than with the particularist, relative and secular categories of modern Europe'. Even the term 'nationalism' is a pejorative one in Russia, associated with minority separatism such as the independence struggle of the Chechen rebels.

The absence of nationalism was an outcome deliberately engineered by tsarist and Soviet authorities. The two regimes did not have much ideology in common; an aversion to nationalism was one area of agreement (Suny 1993, 23). Soviet leaders built a multiethnic state as an antidote to nationalism, especially Russian nationalism. By

encouraging minority culture - local languages, publications, schools, museums and promotion of minority nationality leaders - the Soviet Union followed a conscious policy of affirmative action (Martin 2001, 82). But it never allowed this to develop into political activity on the part of nationalists, whether Russian or non-Russian. While from the late 1930s, Russian language and culture were celebrated under Stalin, Russian nationalism was subordinated to the cause of the Soviet state.

Nationalism, both Russian and non-Russian, was present at the break-up of the Soviet Union, but historians have mostly taken the view that it was a response to the Soviet collapse rather than a cause. Suny (1993) has argued that the Soviet Union collapsed because national elites, often with shallow roots among ordinary citizens, took advantage of the Gorbachev-inspired crisis at the centre of the Soviet system. It is likely that Russian democracy has suffered precisely from the retarded development of nationalism in Russia. As Gill has put it, Russia lacked the 'vigorous nationalist movement to provide an umbrella under which other sorts of civil society forces could develop' (Gill 2006, 74).

Brubaker (1996, 140), among others, has emphasized that the end of empire presents opportunities as well as difficulties. Germany in 1918 was well placed to take advantage of the Versailles Treaty in geopolitical terms. To the east lay mostly new and relatively weak states and a pariah in Soviet Russia. It was reasonable to expect that Germany would have evolved into the political and economic centre of Europe. Hitler and the Nazis squandered this opportunity by resorting to an excessively aggressive foreign policy. Russia too might reasonably expect to be an important political and economic centre for the post-Soviet space. Russian diplomacy is aimed at establishing a multi-polar world while reestablishing Russia's political and economic influence within the former Soviet space.

As Brubaker (1996, 140) pointed out in the mid 1990s, an important difference between post-Communist Russia and Weimar Germany is that Weimar politicians were intent on changing the borders imposed by Versailles while Russian politicians have treated the matter of borders with much less urgency:

> There is a rough elite consensus on the need to restore Russia's status as a world or at least continental power; but there is no consensus that this necessarily requires

> border adjustments, let alone the wholesale reincorporation of newly independent states.

This prediction that there would be little pressure for a redrawing of borders from within Russia has proved correct. For Brubaker, this came about because territory mattered less to contemporary politicians living in a world that prizes economic hegemony than it did to inter-war states in Europe. At the same time, it should be added that there is no pressure from Russian public opinion to reverse the post-Communist settlement of 1991; quite the reverse is true given the clear opposition of public opinion to wars over territory.

The case being put forward here is not that Russians are overwhelmingly enamored of the United States. Polls consistently show that Russians are fearful of and opposed to NATO expansion and specific American actions such as the invasion of Iraq. There are indeed substantial numbers of Russians who are hostile not just to American foreign policy but to the 'West' in general. On the other hand, historically, Russia has not been a hotbed of nationalism; Slavophiles and Eurasianists have found it hard to mobilize support in the general public and have never done well in elections. Overall, opinion polls confirm that a majority of Russians look at the world pragmatically and have attitudes that appear to lie within the mainstream of European opinion.

Russian public opinion matters to this debate not because the Russian public is especially knowledgeable about foreign affairs or because it has a direct impact upon the elites, which, in Russia and elsewhere, jealously guard their privileges in formulating foreign policy. President Putin has proved enormously popular and won more than two-thirds of the vote at the presidential elections of 2004. Yet, until recently at least, Putin's foreign policy projected a patriotic, but pragmatic image, and his administration, for the most part, acted accordingly (O'Loughlin 2004, 19). In many ways, this pragmatism was a continuation of the foreign policy practiced under President Yeltsin by Foreign Ministers Kozyrev and Primakov (Lynch 2001. 24-26). Of course, many factors are likely to be at work in shaping a pragmatic foreign policy, such the relative weakness of Russia and the diplomatic professionalism of the foreign-policy elite. Nonetheless, it seems clear that such a pragmatic foreign policy has at the very least been facilitated by the pragmatism of Russian public opinion. Given the major divisions that quickly emerged within Russia's foreign policy-making elite (McFaul 1999) it is, at the very least,

plausible that Russian public opinion acts a restraint upon the elites in preventing the emergence of a more aggressive foreign policy (Kolossov 2003, 121). While relations between Russia and the West underwent considerable strain in early 2006, there seems little reason to fear the realisation of Pipes' nightmarish scenario of Russian elites and public opinion acting in concert to oppose the 'West'. Russian public opinion has, on the contrary, proved a resilient and valuable ally of the West in the era of the 'war on terror'.

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