

Russian Public Opinion: Mass Perspectives on the United States and China in 2010¹

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Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent rise of the Russian Federation, Russian foreign policy has changed considerably. Most recently, under the presidencies of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, Russian foreign policy entered a period of renewed assertiveness, growing disagreement with the West, and closer formal ties to China. At the same time, the world and its politics has changed considerably, as well. Even before the epic financial crisis of 2008 crippled the economies and tarnished the apparent invincibility of the Western powers, the world began to sense that the United States and the broader West had slipped into the incipient stages of decline from global prominence. By the middle of the last decade, American hegemony no longer seemed quite as inevitable, insurmountable, or indefinite, while China's rise became more inescapable and more breathtaking. Against the backdrop of these changes in Russian foreign policy and the international environment, this paper considers how the Russian people feel about the world around them and about the two most significant actors in it (the United States and China).

The Trajectory of Russian Foreign Policy

Since 1992, the Russian leadership's foreign policy thinking has followed a clearly discernible path, moving from a conception of Russia as a European country, great and powerful in the world because of its democratic credentials, to one of Russia as an independent force drawing strength from its military

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might and uniqueness. Christian Thorun summarizes this evolution by explaining that while Russia's leaders have consistently imagined their country as a great power since 1992, "the sources of greatness and the implications of greatness changed significantly" over the years (2009, 38). When Russia in the early 1990s conceived of democracy and its ties to Europe as the source of its greatness, it saw its primary interests in forming alliances and partnerships with the West. But as the 1990s progressed, Russia came to see itself standing apart from Europe and the West as an independent entity, great on its own terms. According to Anne Clunan (2009), this development in Russian thinking sprung, at least in part, from a psychological phenomenon among Russian elites. Driven by historical comparisons to earlier periods of Russian greatness and a need for a collective self-esteem boost provoked by the harsh and humiliating reality of post-Soviet Russia's economic and geopolitical situation, the political elite established national aspirations to regain what they felt was Russia's lost great power status. Russian elites came to discount cooperation, particularly with the United States, and chose instead to promote proud independent action that would set their country apart while highlighting instances of perceived aggression or threat. Within this new psychological framework, Russia eyed NATO expansion and the alleged attempt of the United States to monopolize power in the post-communist global order with great cynicism and suspicion, and began asserting itself ever more boldly in response (Thorun 2009, 39). Such thinking and action reinforced itself, and by the end of Putin's presidency and the occasion of Medvedev's succession, Russia viewed the international system as ever more hostile and dangerous, seeing its primary interests in establishing itself as an independent great power, supported by its military might, resource wealth, and cultural and historical uniqueness.

Such changes in thinking led to significant changes in rhetoric. Under Putin the Russian leadership began expressing great skepticism regarding Western attachments and steered the country onto a more independent course typified by an assertive, sometimes aggressive and confrontational, style (Thorun 2009, 39). Indeed, throughout the past decade the public airing of differences between Russia

and the United States grew so intense at times that it gave rise to fears of a new Cold War. In 2007, for instance, came Putin's now infamous speech in Munich where he charged the U.S. with "extremely dangerous" behavior, including overstepping its national borders and an "almost uncontained hyper use of force" (Putin 2007). In the face of such accusations and concerns, observers began warning of the return of a U.S.-Russia standoff.

To be sure though, the differences between Russia and the United States were and continue to be more than just rhetorical. The heart of the problem is that Russia, keen to reclaim great power status, claims the countries bordering it as a region of privileged interest, an interest Moscow maintains the United States repeatedly ignores. From the Russian viewpoint, the United States is now "seeking to establish its influence in the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and Central Asian regions, encircling Russia with a ring of...military bases," while consolidating its military and political leadership of Europe through the expansion of NATO (Berryman 2010, 232). The color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004, respectively, only added to Russian concerns and suspicions, heightened at the time by the United States' brazen unilateralism with regard to Iraq. "Even respectable political circles in Moscow" attributed the pro-Western uprisings to U.S.-led machinations and saw in U.S. foreign policy "a strategic offensive in Russia's own backyard" (Mankoff 2009, 123). Russian observers feared a calculated strategy of democracy promotion in Russia's neighborhood that would ultimately stoke a popular uprising and destabilize the regime in Moscow itself.

While the United States allegedly meddled in Russia's backyard, Putin retaliated. In the summer of 2008, Russia invaded Georgia, an instance of military action "in large part designed to counter what appeared to be mounting U.S. influence in the CIS" (Mankoff 2009, 123). In the face of loud and angry condemnations from Washington, Moscow's attack put the world – especially the United States – on notice that "Russia simply will not stand by and permit" its interests to be pushed aside in the Near Abroad (Kanet 2010, 211). One scholar has gone so far as to proclaim the arrival of "Russia's New

Monroe Doctrine,” an innovation in Russian strategic culture whereby Moscow, resting on resource wealth and a deep desire to expunge the humiliation of the 1990s, now feels confident enough to resort to “neo-imperialism and military interventionism towards its post-Soviet neighbors” (Skak 2010, 139). With the invasion of Georgia came the transformation of Russia’s neighborhood into its exclusive sphere of influence. It also clearly demonstrated the extent to which the U.S.-Russian relationship degenerated during Putin’s presidency: Russia’s increasing assertiveness made the United States uncomfortable, and the relationship between them became tense and distant.

As the U.S.-Russia relationship deteriorated over the last decade, interactions between Russia and China developed in substantial and positive ways. One factor in this was Russia’s domestic political environment where pressure to improve ties came from the industrial and oil and gas lobbies, as well as the military-industrial complex, all of which were keen to capture a sizeable and potentially lucrative Chinese market (Belopolsky 2009). This encouraged Russia to pursue closer ties and helped the country present a clearer and more coherent position to China, forming the foundation of a stronger partnership. Global power considerations also played a role. Since U.S.-Russia relations experienced their first tensions in the 1990s, Moscow has pursued, in the words of one scholar, a policy of “active balancing,” using cooperation with China as a means of moving toward global multipolarity and the diminished reach of American power (Belopolsky 2009, 93-94).

With compelling reasons to improve the situation, the Russia-China relationship has moved from strength to strength. The two sides finally resolved a forty year old border dispute in 2004 and began meeting at far more regular intervals. In fact, the leaders of Russia and China met eight times in 2005 and 2006 alone, as much as in the previous four years combined (Belopolsky 2009, 68). Additionally, the two countries initiated programs of cultural exchange including large exhibitions of the other country’s scientific, educational, and artistic achievements, and committed ever more seriously to stronger economic ties through trade delegations and targets (Ferdinand 2007, 850-851). Perhaps most striking has

been the level of political and military cooperation between the two nations which now forms the “backbone” of the strategic partnership (Rangsimaporn 2006, 495). Alongside arms sales and technology transfers, Russia and China also work together in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which some analysts see both as a potential “alternative bloc to NATO and the U.S. dominated alliance system,” and an alternative pole of global power (Sakwa 2008, 440).

Of course, like any international relationship, the partnership between Russia and China faces strains. Russian concerns over Chinese immigration, a power asymmetry in trade and energy, and competition for influence over the Central Asian republics pose problems for Moscow and Beijing. But the broad arc of progress in Russia-China relations, as well as the underlying sense of opposition to American global dominance, over the previous decade or more remains clear. “Pragmatic Sinophiles” now largely control Russian foreign policy and foreign policy discourse and, while talk of a formidable Sino-Russian alliance and an impending conflict with the United States seems overblown, relations between the two countries “have probably never been better” (Tsygankov 2009; Oliker et al. 2009, 116). Through increased economic engagement, cultural exchanges, and joint military exercises and diplomatic cooperation, the Sino-Russian relationship is “growing stronger” (Turner 2011, 57). It appears that Russia and China have come together – at least for now – in friendship, partnership, and a shared view of the world.

Recent Patterns in Russian Public Opinion

This paper aims to explore what the Russian people think of the world around them, and the United States and China in particular, against the foreign policy backdrop described above. As detailed here, over the last decade Putin and Medvedev asserted Russia’s place in the world as a power in its own right. Orchestrating a move toward China and simultaneously detaching Russia from the U.S.-led West, Putin and Medvedev have made clear that their country stands on its own, beholden to no other state.

Whether the Russian people today harbor attitudes that match the establishment's moderate anti-Americanism, cautious friendliness toward China, and overall assertiveness, is a question of great interest.

This is in part because even in illiberal democracies such as Russia, public opinion does matter. In 2002 William Zimmerman argued that Russian elites saw public opinion playing "a modest role indeed" in policy construction, but nonetheless agreed that it set "limits on what can be done" (2002, 39; 41). Moreover, he suggested that the 1996 presidential election turned, at least in part, on public assessments of Yeltsin's foreign policy positions. Unless one maintains that no connection exists between policy positions described before an election and behavior upon assuming office, one must conclude that "mass publics clearly influenced the direction, in broad outlines, that Russian foreign policy would take...by choosing to vote for Yeltsin and against the more anti-Western, confrontational Ziuganov" (2002, 39). Of course, Putin's reign in Moscow as president changed the nature of the Russian state considerably. Since 2000, "Russia has continually been moving away from democracy," and one must wonder to what extent the already modest influence public opinion exercised over the Kremlin in the 1990s continues to exist today (Hassner 2008, 10). Additionally, with the ever more entrenched position of Putin's political party, United Russia, in a desperately weak and uncompetitive party system, the importance of public assessments of foreign policy at election time may have diminished as well. However, even if public opinion's connection with policy-making in Russia today is loose and distant, it does provide part of the context for the political process in a country. For example, scholars view public opinion on questions such as NATO membership as important in informing "the generalized images that parties and candidates put forward at elections" (White et al. 2006, 187). Additionally, with both Putin and Medvedev potentially eyeing presidential runs in 2012, it seems logical that preserving high approval ratings remains important to them.

Certainly, in part for many of the reasons just explained, a number of academics have found value in studying Russian mass attitudes on questions of foreign affairs and the broader world. In *The Russian*

People and Foreign Policy, William Zimmerman (2002) conducted the most thorough investigation of Russian public opinion to date, exploring attitudes toward the United States, the Western world more broadly, NATO, and Russian policy and actions in the international arena. He found a public largely ignorant of international issues, but also rational and quite prudent. He uncovered hostility to NATO and its expansion into Russia's neighborhood, substantial suspicion and hostility to the United States, and interesting relationships between knowledge of foreign affairs and perspectives. Elites and the attentive public tended to share similar opinions but these opinions differed, sometimes sharply, from those held by the unaware.

More recently, researchers revisited the question of NATO expansion and Russian public perceptions (White et al. 2006), finding substantial disinterest and ignorance in responses to questions concerning membership and the threat the organization posed. Combined with Zimmerman's study, this paints a picture of a Russian public often unconcerned, uninterested, and unknowledgeable when it comes to foreign affairs. However, among those who offered responses, interesting patterns emerged. Respondents expressed cynicism and suspicion of NATO's objectives (a plurality in White's 2006 piece felt that NATO existed simply as a platform for Western expansion), and ranked it as one of the top security threats to their country. A RAND Corporation study (Oliker et al. 2009) utilizing 2006 and 2007 data collected by Russian polling firms such as Levada Center broadly echoed these findings. A substantial minority of 40 percent maintained that the organization posed a threat, especially if it expanded to include Ukraine and Georgia. In a regression analysis, White et al. (2006) also found that in Russia, support for European Union (EU) membership, knowledge of NATO, and perceptions of NATO objectives were predictive of support for NATO membership.

Other publications attempt to gauge sentiment towards the West by investigating attitudes regarding self-identity and the European Union (EU). The existing literature makes plain that a substantial majority of Russians do not consider themselves European, choosing instead to identify

themselves as Russian citizens, citizens of their own region, or as coming from their local area or settlement (White et al. 2010). Alongside this, evidence of significant ambivalence toward EU membership exists. In one 2008 survey, 56 percent of respondents replied “Don’t know” or elected not to respond when asked whether they supported Russian membership in the EU. Intriguingly, this figure stood more than twice as high in 2008 as it did in 2005. The number of Russians voicing support for membership declined 23 points over the same time period (White et al. 2010). This paints a picture of a patriotic Russian public resoundingly rejecting Europe as a source of their identity, and increasingly unsure of organizational affiliations with the continent. Having said this, no evidence exists that suggests substantial numbers of Russians find the EU threatening. Only 11 percent of respondents in 2006 harbored “rather” or “very” negative dispositions regarding the EU. However, 69 percent of respondents expressed no opinion (White et al. 2008). Brussels can take heart that, on this evidence, Russians do not view Europe particularly negatively. In fact, for the most part they seem to view Europe in no particular way at all.

This is not so for the United States. While the early 1990s witnessed general amity toward the Cold War’s victor among Russian masses, this gave way to increasingly suspicious and hostile opinions as the 1990s closed and the 2000s began (Zimmerman 2002). In a 2006 survey conducted by the Levada Center, 61 percent of Russians viewed American influence on the world negatively, and a little over half of the respondents believed the impact of the United States on Russia specifically was a bad one. This was more than double the number of respondents expressing positive opinions. Further, approximately three-quarters of Russians also disapproved of the United States’ use of its military power (World Public Opinion 2006). Oliner et al. (2009) noted that a third of Russians viewed the United States as a threat to Russian national security and economic well-being, as well as one of the world’s least friendly countries toward their own. In spite of this, the same study also observed 2007 polling data highlighting an ongoing desire among almost half of respondents to see closer relations with Washington. This picture seemed

quite stable throughout much of the past decade but more recent research suggests that already negative dispositions toward the United States found new lows in the wake of the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia (Andreev 2010). According to these findings, positive feelings for the U.S. stood at only 14 percent in September in 2008. This study uncovered impressive regional variations, too, with those most proximate to security threats from the Caucasus displaying the least goodwill toward the United States. With the author concluding that “a broad anti-American...political consensus has taken shape in Russia,” what certainly seems true is that the literature agrees the United States faces substantial suspicion, cynicism, and outright hostility from many among the Russian public (Andreev 2010, 14).

Broad scholarly agreement also exists regarding public opinion toward China. With the exception of one piece (Andreev 2010) which took a relatively unsophisticated approach and simply stated that Russians are warming to the country, most authors present a nuanced picture of public attitudes toward the Asian giant. It is certainly true that the Russian people exhibit quite a positive opinion of China, especially relative to the United States. In 2006, 57 percent of Russians saw a positive Chinese influence on the world, and not quite one in four thought Chinese foreign policy negatively impacted their country, a little more than half as many who felt the opposite (World Public Opinion 2006). Others show how few Russians perceive of China as an enemy (percentages cited in the present literature are consistently in the low single figures), and also report that approximately half of the public sees China as a friend, or even ally (Ferdinand 2007; Lukin 2003; Oliner et al. 2009; Shlapentokh 2007). But these same studies qualify their findings with warnings that Russians harbor more negative attitudes when questioned about specific issues regarding China, and that they worry about potential future threats from the country. Polls find low levels of trust in Beijing, as well as hostility toward Chinese immigration and Chinese involvement in Russian economic activities (Kerr 2010; Shlapentokh 2007). Thus, Russians appear uncertain about China. Superficially positive yet wary, Russians seem to typify the “cold public” Beijing finds so exasperating in its neighbors and other countries. No matter how elite interactions and relations progress

with a state, explains analyst David Kerr, the Chinese government continually faces cautious and sometimes hostile public attitudes, in his opinion driven partly by Chinese policy (2010, 136).

Despite the relative richness of the literature on Russian public opinion toward the United States and China, for the most part the studies available are now relatively old. The two most thorough explorations of Russian attitudes on foreign policy and China (Zimmerman (2002) and Lukin (2003), respectively), now sit almost a decade removed from their publication. Even more recent pieces tend to utilize survey data collected only in the middle of the last decade. As Vladimir Shlapentokh reminds us after reviewing work by social psychologists, “Attitudes can move quite quickly in one direction or another,” so a need exists for updating the present findings with the most recent data available, which this study does below (2007, 4). Additionally, in reviewing the present literature regarding China, it appears necessary to produce a paper which focuses more heavily on public attitudes. Many of the studies cited above simply touched on the topic of public opinion amidst a more detailed focus on Russian elite perspectives and behavior. This paper aims to consider Russian elites and their views more as context than focus.

In light of the trajectory of Russian foreign policy over the last decade, as well as the stability in public opinion patterns uncovered above, this paper expects to find a number of things in the data analyzed subsequently. Firstly, it seems likely that stable and deep anti-American attitudes remain prevalent in Russia despite the election of Barack Obama to the White House and the attempted “reset” in U.S.-Russia relations. In fact, this paper suspects that by 2010 a generalized anti-American sentiment among a substantial portion of the population has become the norm in the country, largely unaffected by broad changes in U.S. behavior or politics. Moreover, classic predictor variables such as age, education, and geography are not expected to substantially impact assessments of the United States. Just as Clunan views the psychology of Russian elites as critical in shaping Moscow’s suspicion of Washington and rejecting cooperation with the West, this paper suspects that the psychological impact of the Soviet

Union's demise and the economic calamities of the 1990s encouraged the population as a whole to see the world in threatening terms. In addition, with exposure over the last decade to Putin's assertive foreign policy, unfavorable disposition regarding the United States, and sometimes blistering rhetoric directed at Washington, it seems likely that many Russians, so fond of Putin, will reflect his tone and actions by expressing antipathy toward the United States. With Putin's apparent success in employing "moderate anti-Americanism," among other things, "to consolidate an 'acceptable' authoritarian regime," it appears that such thinking has indeed become widespread and powerful in Russia among portions of all segments of society (Krastev 2004, 13). Having said this, while a baseline of suspicious and cynical opinion toward the United States is expected to be present among a substantial portion of the population, this paper does predict that certain attitudinal variables (political orientation, general fear of an attack on the country, and support for Putin's assertive and sometimes confrontational foreign policy) will associate more strongly with such perspectives.

Relative to opinions regarding the United States, attitudes toward China are expected to be considerably more positive, albeit balanced with a sense of caution. Warm and friendly overtures from Moscow crafted a partnership between Russia and China over the last decade that at times flirted with resembling something more of an alliance. This may have impacted the state of Russian mass perspectives. Simultaneously, Moscow and Beijing launched a coordinated public relations effort in 2007 in the shape of the Year of China in Russia with the aim of boosting public perceptions of China. If it succeeded as the Year of Russia in China did in 2006 (it notably improved Russia's popularity among the Chinese), then a level of substantial positivity – perhaps unprecedentedly high – can be expected from the Russian people in 2010 (Lukin 2010, 22). Yet it is also expected that a sense of wary caution and suspicion balances this friendliness and positivity. China looms large on the Russian horizon and is likely to perturb many in a country which feels as if its power and might slips further each year. In addition, as mentioned above, Russian apprehension regarding China becomes more evident when surveys press

respondents for their opinions on Chinese immigration and Chinese interaction with the Russian economy. With increasing economic insecurity in the country in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, I have reason to believe that Russians who feel negatively about the economy may feel more threatened by the Asian giant and its economy than those who do not.

More importantly, I predict this association will exhibit greater strength in the economically challenged eastern regions of the country where this paper predicts Russians will also voice greater general concern and suspicion regarding China than elsewhere (in this exploration I hope to contribute to a sparse up-to-date literature on this subject). Indeed, scholars have maintained that one of the characteristics of the Russian image of China is that one can break it down into “subimages...held by the various Russian regions” (Lukin 2003, 313). That Russia’s eastern regions may harbor a subimage of China different to the rest of the country stands to reason. Not only did Moscow and Beijing fall out in the latter decades of the Cold War over border disputes in the Russian Far East (RFE), the memory of which may still run raw, but, as chronicled by Lukin (2003), the RFE has been troubled by its southern neighbor in recent times due to its economic might and alarming demographic trends. Underdeveloped, isolated, and losing its already small population, the RFE looks anxiously over its border, while local authorities and media outlets exacerbate the nervousness (Lukin 2003; Shlapentokh 2007; Troyakova 2007). For its part, China’s “insatiable appetite” for natural resources and raw materials causes it to cast longing glances across the frontier into the RFE, and while, of course, no serious prospect of a Chinese invasion exists, immigration into the region and substantial economic investment which outpaces that from Moscow caused at least one observer to warn in 2009 that the country may be taking over the RFE “by stealth.” It strikes this paper as highly likely that the fear that Russia may be “losing control by inches over the eastern third of the country” is shared by many in the region, and by many more than in European Russia (Blair 2009).

Russian Public Opinion Today

In what follows I present the findings primarily from a 2010 national survey of Russian public opinion, initially carried out for Professor Stephen White of the Department of Politics at the University of Glasgow. I also briefly utilize findings from a similar 2008 survey. White's surveys were conducted by Russian Research with the fieldwork itself carried out by the firm's regional partners within the country. The surveys followed international best practice and interviews were conducted face to face among a sample representative of the entire population aged 18 and over. The samples were designed using a multistage proportional representation method with random route as the method of selecting households. Each territorial-administrative unit within the country was represented in the sample proportionally to its population size. Russian Research conducted their own checks to ensure questionnaire completion, logical consistency in the data, and overall quality control. The 2008 survey was conducted between 30 January 2008 and 27 February 2008, $n = 2000$. The 2010 survey was conducted between 12 February 2010 and 1 March 2010, $n = 2017$.²

Attitudes toward the United States

I look first of all at general perceptions of the United States and the military and security alliance it leads, NATO. Looking at Table 1, it is clear that both the United States and NATO continue to be seen as a significant threat by a substantial minority of Russians. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who viewed both as threatening decreased somewhat from the 2008 level, reflective perhaps of the new government in Washington and a more conciliatory tone between the Obama Administration and Moscow. But it must be emphasized that the 2010 survey registered *small* declines in threat perception for the USA and NATO of only 5.4 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively.

² Methodology information taken from the Survey Technical Report which accompanied the 2010 survey, and from an appendix to a published work (White et al. 2010) which utilized the 2008 survey.

Table 1

	Perception of Threat	
	2008	2010
USA	46.3	40.7
NATO	36.8	34.7

Question wording: “What threat, in your opinion, might the following countries/organizations represent to Russia’s security?” The figures combine “serious” and “some threat” as a percentage of all responses to each option.

Table 2

	Hostile attitude toward Russia	
	2008	2010
USA	52	50.8
Germany	8.9	11.2
Israel	18.5	18.2
UK	25.2	21.1

Question wording: “Tell me please, which of the following countries are favorably disposed towards Russia? And which, in your opinion, are hostile?” Figures combine “hostile” and “somewhat hostile” as a percentage of all responses to each option.

Table 2 highlights further indications that general attitudes regarding the United States remain poor. Approximately half of respondents viewed the United States as hostile in 2010, virtually steady with the corresponding 2008 figure. In contrast, only one in ten Russians views Germany as hostile. Most striking, however, is the difference in perceptions of the United States relative to its closest and most vocal global allies, Israel and the United Kingdom. Both countries fail to draw a negative response from even half as many respondents as the United States. Apparently America stands head and shoulders above other countries in drawing Russian ire and suspicion.

It is the object of much cynicism as well. Table 3 displays Russian views on the true objective of U.S.-led NATO, revealing that a large plurality believe the organization to be a platform for Western expansion into the East. And Table 4 shows that a plurality of Russians blames American interference for the color revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. Evidently, there is a widespread recognition that the United

States plays a leading role in NATO, and a meddling one in the Russian neighborhood, plotting to overthrow governments in the Ukraine and Georgia and expand its influence through NATO into the East.

Ultimately, a consideration of these measures points to a couple of conclusions. First, the United States enjoyed almost no bounce from the election of Obama to the White House, with perceptions of Washington as both threatening and hostile registering only small declines between 2008 and 2010. Four in ten Russians still view the United States as a threat (more than do so for any other country) and half of Russians continue to see hostility emanating from Washington. In addition, a plurality of Russians clearly hold Washington responsible for instigating democratic revolutions in Kiev and Tbilisi, and conceive of U.S.-led NATO as a front for further Western expansion. This suggests that in the relation to the United States, a strong strand of cynicism runs through the Russian mind which only helps to further erode the country's standing. Importantly, these numbers do not stand far removed from those cited in earlier studies pointing to the apparent stability of such perspectives. Thus, it appears that Russian public antipathy toward the United States is now deeply held and constant regardless of substantial changes in American politics or the tone of the Moscow-Washington relationship. Indeed, the modern Russian public perception of the United States as hostile, threatening, and, through its machinations, responsible for destabilizing countries on its border, now appears paradigmatic.

Table 3

NATO Objectives	
Increase of international security	18.6
Platform for expansion to the East	34.4
NATO is a heritage of the Cold War	20.9

Question wording: "In your opinion, what are the NATO's real aims?" "Other," "Hard to say," and refusal to answer account for residuals.

There were some predictable associations between these measures. Unsurprisingly, those who blamed the United States for instigating the color revolutions were more likely to consider Washington hostile. Fully 58.5 percent of this group considered the United States hostile, a majority and the largest

proportion of any response group within that question to think so. Similarly, just shy of 50 percent of respondents who believed NATO's true objective to be expansion into the East felt the United States represented "somewhat of a threat" or a "serious threat." This stands approximately ten points clear of the next nearest response group. These associations often ran in the opposite direction as well: predictably, 58 percent of respondents viewing NATO's objective as increasing international security saw only a "slight" threat or no threat at all in the United States. Having said this, even among those who identified NATO's objectives more positively, and those who saw no American hand in the Kiev and Tbilisi uprisings, a remarkable percentage still viewed the United States poorly. For instance, 47 percent of respondents who felt the color revolutions reflected "the wishes of the people and their desire for freedom and democracy" viewed the United States as a hostile entity, while 35 percent of those who saw in NATO an objective to "increase international security" continued to maintain that the United States presented a threat.

Table 4

The color revolutions resulted from:	
Wishes of these people, their desire for freedom, democracy	21.1
Interference of other countries, primarily the United States	37.2
Both	25.3

Question wording: "In your opinion, the so-called colored revolutions in the former Soviet republics and socialist countries were most of all the result of..."

Evidently, while overall trends in apprehension appear as expected (cynical views of NATO and the American influence in Georgia and the Ukraine associate most strongly with perceptions of American threat and hostility), a notable and significant proportion of those holding more positive opinions worry about the United States, too. This suggests that a broader anti-Americanism exists in Russia – subscribed to by a substantial portion of the population – that stands independent of assessments of American foreign policy. While negative perspectives on U.S. involvement in the Russian neighborhood continue to drive

antipathetic reactions, it appears that a significant number of Russians look at the United States suspiciously as a matter of course.

Even closer associations existed between various attitudinal variables and perceptions of American threat or hostility. Table 5 shows that a majority of those who consider themselves left-wing viewed the United States threateningly compared to only a third of right-wingers (56.3 to 33.2 percent). Further, fully 69 percent of left-wing respondents identified the United States as hostile compared to 51 percent of right-wing respondents. Equally unsurprising perhaps, are the data pertaining to opinions on (entirely hypothetical) Russian membership in NATO and the EU. Majorities (or something very close to a majority) of those who supported or approved of NATO and EU membership for Russia looked at the United States benignly and saw it as a friendly country (and vice versa). As hypothesized, more Russians who felt supportive of Putin's often brazen and always assertive actions in the international arena believed the United States constituted a threat, but the difference with those who did not support Putin's foreign policy was not as great as expected. The difference narrowed further with perceptions of American attitude. The same table also lays out the strong but fully expected association between general fear of an attack and worries about a U.S. security threat and attitude. According to these findings, 63.2 percent of Russians who feel an attack on the country is probable in the next five years (a surprisingly large 25 percent of the population) views the U.S. security threat seriously, while an almost identical proportion considers the United States hostile. While the latter finding is largely unremarkable (after all, if a Russian fears an attack on their country, it seems logical that they would sense a threat from the United States or another large and powerful country), the others suggest a broader tendency. It appears that Russians who shun the modern international system and adhere to a belief in Russia as an independent power, or subscribe to a left-wing ideology (so often rooted in anti-Americanism), most often find the United States troubling or hostile. The significant minorities in the more expectedly pro-America response groups that nonetheless perceived the United States negatively must not go ignored, however. In

no instance across all response categories did the proportion of Russians who felt negatively fall below approximately one-third. This relatively remarkable statistic shows that even among those expected to display most sympathy for the United States, a substantial minority continues to express anti-American sentiment, reflective of the paradigmatic nature of Russian public antipathy regarding the world's sole superpower.

If attitudinal variables exhibited striking associations with the dependent variable, socioeconomic characteristics behaved far more modestly. After cross-tabulating a number of classic socioeconomic indicators and geographic location with views toward the United States, the evidence is remarkable for its lack of clear patterns (see Table 6). There is no appreciable difference, for instance, between younger and older cohorts in their assessment of U.S. threat, or between males and females. And while more residents of Asian Russia than European Russia viewed the United States as a threat, the difference was exceptionally slight at approximately 2 percent. This carried over, for the most part, to the question of U.S. attitude where there were larger, but still modest, disparities between younger and older age groups, as well as European and Asian Russia. Spreads of five and four points, respectively, separated these groups. Male and female perspectives still matched well with only 1.7 percentage points distancing them. Self-assessed income appeared as the only socioeconomic factor that significantly departed from this pattern, with high income Russians more likely to view the United States as a threat (47.1 percent versus 40.4 percent of low income respondents) and, strikingly so, as hostile (approximately 15 points separates high and low income Russians on this measure). A closer investigation of the data revealed that a lower rate of non-opinion responses among the high income group accounted for some of the difference here.

Table 5

	U.S. Threat		U.S. Attitude	
	Serious/Some	Little/No	Hostile	Friendly
High probability of attack in the next five years	63.2	33.6	62.5	32.5
Low probability of attack in the next five years	32.4	59.4	47.9	40.7
Left-wing political orientation	56.3	42.9	69	27
Right-wing political orientation	33.2	61.6	51	43
Approves of Russian membership in EU	35.6	59.5	42	50.2
Disapproves of Russian membership in EU	59.5	35.5	69.1	24
Supports membership in NATO	35.3	59	37.4	54.3
Does not support membership in NATO	46.8	48.4	61.4	31.4
Approves of Putin's foreign policy	42.2	49.3	51.6	38.1
Disapproves of Putin's foreign policy	35.7	51.9	47.9	37.7
Russia should find its own unique way	44	46.6	53.2	35.2
Russia should go along with European countries	34.3	58.3	44.9	45.6

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. "Hard to say" and refusal to answer account for residuals.

This was true for the difference between the education categories as well. Coupling these findings with those presented in the previous paragraph paints a picture of antipathetic opinions toward the United States existing in approximately equal measure across the country and across most socioeconomic groups, and only varying dramatically in line with attitudinal variations and income levels. From this I can conclude that stable, negative dispositions toward the United States seem to exist everywhere in Russia among significant portions of every socioeconomic group.

Attitudes toward China

With Russian perspectives on the United States in mind, I turn now to Russian opinion toward China, an arena of public thought I expect to find more positive than the last. Indeed, Table 7 highlights the proportion of Russians finding China threatening and hostile, and shows a marked improvement over attitudes toward the United States.

Table 6

	U.S. Threat		U.S. Attitude	
	Serious/Some	Little/No	Hostile	Friendly
Male	40.2	52.3	51.7	37.3
Female	41.2	47.9	50	38.6
18-34	40.4	50.8	47.4	40.9
35+	40.9	49.4	52.4	36.6
Primary Education	39.5	48	51.5	36.1
Secondary Education	39.9	50.5	49.3	39.8
Higher Education	44.1	49.5	54.2	34.7
Low Income	40.4	52.3	46.6	43.9
High Income	47.1	48.7	62	32.8
European Russia	40.4	50.4	51.5	37.6
Asian Russia	42.3	47.8	47.7	39.8

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. “Hard to say” and refusal to answer accounts for residuals.

While 40.7 percent of respondents viewed the United States as hostile, almost 10 percent fewer felt the same about China. Moreover, a full three-fifths of Russians felt that China posed little or no threat at all, impressive given widespread angst over China’s rise across the world. Strikingly, in my view, almost eight in ten Russians saw China as a friendly country rather than hostile, the viewpoint of barely 14 percent.

Nevertheless, with 31.1 percent of respondents still expressing fear of China – a relatively high figure – a sense of unease regarding the seemingly ever-ascendant China still seems to run beneath the surface. After removing transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and so on, China ranks as the third most threatening entity in the view of Russians behind only the much maligned United States and NATO. This offers some support for my hypothesis that while Russians do indeed view China positively, both relative to the United States and objectively, an undercurrent of concern runs through the Russian population and balances this broader positivity.

Table 7

Threat of China		Attitude of China	
Serious/Some	Little/No	Hostile	Friendly
31.1	60.7	13.5	78.5

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. Figure combines “hostile” and “somewhat hostile,” and “friendly and “somewhat friendly.” “Hard to say” and refusal to answer accounts for residuals.

Indeed, for all the positivity toward China, it also ranks poorly in Russians’ choice of who their country should form a partnership with. In fact, this question produced some of the more surprising results of the survey. Despite public positivity regarding China and a clear foreign policy aimed at closer ties with Beijing, only 7.6 percent of Russians in this survey felt that China should be Russia’s primary international partner. Rather, a full third, far and away the largest figure, thought Western Europe represented Russia’s ideal first partner, while 12.1 percent opted for the United States. One explanation for this may be that the cautiousness and sense of Chinese threat that exists among a significant minority of the Russian people kept this figure low. Understandably, Russians would feel anxious about establishing an international partnership with a country they find threatening. Inoffensive and unthreatening, Western Europe seems seem like the safer choice. Another explanation may lie in Alexander Lukin’s assertion that “Russians don’t think about China very much.” Instead, they see the center of the world in the West. That is, they know of the existence and the role of Western countries much better so, “if asked about foreign lands, the first thing they remember are the countries of the West” (2003, 201). Rather than some rational, thought-out choice by Russians to select Western Europe as a partner over other countries, it may simply be a function Russians’ familiarity with the Western world. As China becomes more prominent in the minds of Russians, and as long as relations between the two countries remain friendly, one could expect the proportion selecting China as Russia’s primary partner to increase. The data seems to hold an early and small sign of this in the shape a three point increase in this figure between 2008 and 2010.

Lukin’s argument leads to another logical conclusion: that Russians who do think about China a lot (those in Asian regions that border the country) will think differently than those who live in European Russia where China is far away and the Western world and its military and economic cooperatives (NATO and the EU) lie right across the frontier. The data appear to support this somewhat. Perhaps the most dramatic disparity comes between assessments of China as a “serious” threat in the Southern federal district versus Siberia and the Far East. While only 3.4 percent of the residents of the Southern district perceived China as a “serious” threat, 18.1 percent of Siberians and 16.7 percent of Far East residents did. Table 8 shows the broader picture.

Table 8

	Threat of China		Attitude of China	
	Serious/Some	Little/No	Hostile	Friendly
European Russia	29.5	62.7	12.4	80.3
Asian Russia	37.6	52.2	18.3	70.1

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. “Hard to say” and refusal to answer account for residuals. The federal regions of Siberia and the Far East make up Asian Russia. The remaining federal regions make up European Russia.

Relative to European Russia, approximately eight percent more residents of Asian Russia felt China posed a threat and more than ten percent fewer dismissed such a notion. Similarly, ten percent fewer held China up as friendly and a little shy of one in five believed it to be hostile, a six point increase over European Russia. Evidently, proximity to China and thus greater consciousness of the country and its activities moved attitudes in a negative direction. Interestingly, residence in Russia’s eastern regions also increased the likelihood of selecting China as the country’s preferred international partner. Across all of Asian Russia, 11.7 percent of respondents selected Russia, almost double the figure in European Russia (6.6 percent). Within the Far East alone, the Russian federal district with the greatest exposure to China, the figure jumps to approximately one in five.

The small sample size drawn from the Russian Far East makes determining exactly what drove this specific response a challenge. But a consideration of the broader region of Asian Russia and its larger, useable sample size allows us to investigate further. Russians from the Asian regions of the country who felt China posed little or no threat selected it as Russia's first choice partner at double the rate of those who viewed China threateningly. It must be noted that the response rates shown in Table 9 are small and that across Asian Russia as a whole, Western Europe still drew the single largest response for this question at approximately 30 percent. But this finding clearly indicates that those who do not see a Chinese threat on their border are more inclined to favor open partnership with the country than those who do. It seems reasonable to expect that a similar pattern exists within the Far East region itself, and that those who do not fear China as a threat see the potential of cross-border cooperation and partnership.

Table 9

Threat of China	Partner with China
Serious/Some	8.3
Little/No	15.5

Question wording: "With which countries, in your view, is it most in Russia's interests to have partnership relations?"

This leads to the important discussion of which variables associate with perceptions of Chinese threat and hostility. Table 10 displays the findings of cross-tabulations with socioeconomic indicators. In both European and Asian Russia, gender does not lead to any appreciable differences in outlook and, while older Russians seem more inclined to view China as a threat than younger Russians (perhaps because of memories of Moscow-Beijing tensions during the Soviet era), the difference is small at approximately four to five points. While income levels also showed a slight tendency to associate differently with the dependent variable, the direction of association was inconsistent and the differences in all cases small. Intriguingly, however, the table highlights a pattern among highly educated respondents consistently and markedly differed from those with lower levels of educational attainment. Somewhat

unexpectedly, eight percent more highly educated European Russians viewed China as a threat than did European Russians with a secondary education and the trend grew far more pronounced in Asian regions. There, a clear majority of highly educated respondents (53.2 percent) cited China as a threat, almost 20 points more than the next best educated category. It may be that the better information and more sophisticated analytical lens higher education offers encourages a longer-term and big-picture view of the world in which China's rise, demographic explosion, and need for resources juxtaposes with a sense of Russian decline, the Far East's dwindling population, and resource wealth. This may actually drive a greater perception of Chinese threat among the highly educated. At the same time, however, the proportion of highly educated respondents who viewed China as hostile did not differ significantly from other education groups or, indeed, from other socioeconomic categories. In fact, perceptions of hostility were, on the whole, much lower than perceptions of threat (and broadly steady across categories) in contrast to figures for the United States where both were high. It appears that Russians judge the level of Chinese threat independent of the level of Chinese hostility.

As with the analysis of public opinion toward the United States, I proceed here to consider the associations between various attitudinal indicators and the dependent variables. In European Russia, more of those identifying as left-wing rather than right-wing (approximately 44 percent versus 16 percent) viewed China as a threat, and the same trend held for those who saw the United States as hostile. As hypothesized, more European Russians expressing negative economic assessments viewed China as a threat, but the remaining attitudinal variable (assessment of Putin's foreign policy) exhibited no difference of note. Assessments of China's friendliness stood high across all categories in the European sample.

Table 10

	European Russia				Asian Russia			
	Threat of China		Attitude of China		Threat of China		Attitude of China	
	Serious/ Some	Little/ No	Hostile	Friendly	Serious/ Some	Little/ No	Hostile	Friendly
Male	29.9	63.8	12.7	79.9	39.2	51.4	21.0	71.3
Female	29.2	61.8	12.2	80.6	36.6	52.5	15.8	70.8
18-34	26.2	66.1	9.6	83.0	35.5	55.3	14.9	73.8
35+	31.1	61.1	13.7	79.0	39.3	50.0	20.2	69.4
Primary Education	25.9	63.3	9.9	79.6	25.0	61.7	18.3	70.0
Secondary Education	28.3	63.7	13.1	80.5	35.8	52.8	18.3	70.3
Higher Education	36.1	59.3	12.3	80.2	53.2	42.9	18.2	74.0
Low Income	29.0	65.5	14.4	80.2	40.0	52.0	13.0	77.0
High Income	32.8	62.1	14.2	81.0	35.5	63.2	19.7	77.6

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. “Hard to say” and refusal to answer account for residuals.

Table 11

	European Russia				Asian Russia			
	Threat of China		Attitude of China		Threat of China		Attitude of China	
	Serious/ Some	Little/ No	Hostile	Friendly	Serious/ Some	Little/ No	Hostile	Friendly
Left-wing	44.3	55.7	20.6	76.3	41.4	58.6	13.8	82.8
Right-wing	15.7	72.2	12.8	80.8	38.5	59	12.8	79.5
USA hostile	34.6	61.4	17.9	77.4	51.4	39.3	29.5	62.3
USA friendly	25.9	66.6	6.6	83.3	27.0	67.1	9.2	88.9
Economy bad	31.7	60.6	13.6	78.4	42.7	49.7	22.9	65.0
Economy good	21.8	75.0	13.8	79.8	30.8	65.4	11.5	80.8
Approve of Putin's foreign policy	30.0	62.7	9.6	84.4	39.5	52.6	17.5	73.6
Disapprove of Putin's foreign policy	28.9	67.0	25.2	67.3	35.7	57.1	22.9	67.1

Question wording: as in Tables 1 and 2. “Hard to say” and refusal to answer account for residuals.

Some interesting patterns became apparent in the Asian Russia sample. While the national sample exhibited a significant difference in opinion between left and right-wing respondents, this difference almost entirely disappears in Siberia and the Far East. There, almost equal proportions of respondents from both wings of the political spectrum felt that China posed a threat to Russia. Thus, not only is threat perception greater in the eastern regions of the country, it seems that, unlike perceptions of the United States, it cuts across political divisions. From a vantage point in Siberia or the Far East, the Chinese threat must appear greater to everyone, regardless of political orientation.

While that gap closed, other gaps widened. Unexpectedly, greater numbers of those who supported Putin's foreign policy found China threatening despite Moscow's clear warmth and closeness with Beijing. The same data also showed that the percentage of Asian Russians negatively disposed to the state of the economy who also viewed China threateningly rose to just under 43 percent, almost twelve points clear of the corresponding figure among more positive respondents, a two point increase over the disparity in European Russia. Certainly, this offers only limited support for my prediction that Asian Russia's greater economic ties with China, not to mention its more troubled economic situation relative to the rest of the country, would lead to considerably greater fear of China among those who felt that the Russian economy was in bad shape. But it does seem that the broader thrust of my argument was correct: among all Russians, more of those who felt economically negative rather than positive also viewed China as a threat.

Most dramatically, perceptions of Chinese threat rose significantly among those who sense American hostility. Indeed, the numbers largely reversed between the European and eastern regions: a large majority of European Russians (61.4 percent) saw little or no threat from China, while a majority of Asian Russians (51.4 percent) felt the opposite. Perceptions of Chinese hostility were also considerably higher (29.5 percent versus 17.9 percent). I expected Russians to reflect their leadership in viewing China as some kind of balance for American power and to see a choice in selecting one of these two global

giants as their enemy, and the other as their model. This falls in line with Shlapentokh's assessment which held that attitudes toward one "are a good (but far from absolute) predictor of the attitudes toward the other" (2007, 3). But perhaps this expected too much from the Russian public. As studies of American public opinion explain, the public, in the aggregate, is simply "not knowledgeable or sophisticated enough to hold coherent, well-reasoned foreign policy opinions" (Clawson and Oxley 2008, 332). Instead, they view the world in more simplistic terms: safety versus danger, security versus insecurity. I am left with the impression that this is the case here. In Asian Russia at least, it seems that attitudes toward one are indeed "a good...predictor of the attitudes toward the other," but not in the way Shlapentokh believed or I expected. Both views of American hostility and Chinese threat are linked and likely reflect a more general sense of insecurity. That is, when one feels anxious about the U.S. orientation to the world, one also feels anxious about Russia's, and especially Asian Russia's, place in it. This translates to concern to over China as well. While Russian foreign policy sees closer ties with China as a means of balancing American power, most of the Asian Russian public sees no such connection. Rather, a fear that the United States is hostile indicates a broader sense of insecurity that will also drive perceptions of Chinese threat.

Predicting Attitudes toward China

To close my investigation, I explored more deeply the most interesting dependent variable in this study: fears of a Chinese threat to Russian national security. While the Russian public expressed opinions regarding the United States that broadly reflected the nature of the official relationship between Moscow and Washington, Russians remained substantially suspicious and uneasy about China despite warm and close ties between the two countries. Earlier cross-tabulations suggested which segments of the population found China most troubling, but it seemed that a more detailed and sophisticated analysis might point to more powerful and meaningful conclusions as to the importance of various factors in explaining mass perspectives toward China. Additionally, in light of the fact that literature on the subject of Russian attitudes to China and its predictors is thin on the ground, this effort seemed even more

important. In line with the findings from earlier cross-tabulations, I hypothesized that high levels of education, residence in Asian Russia, a view of the United States as hostile, and a negative economic assessment would each exert a statistically significant effect on views of China as a threat.

My exploration led to a binary logistic regression analysis, the results of which are exhibited in the table below. The model produced was satisfactorily predictive, correctly predicting approximately 71 percent of the cases, and drew on a mix of socioeconomic and attitudinal variables. As Table 12 shows, age and income did not significantly predict perceptions of China as a threat, but geographic location did. Consistent with my cross-tabulations and hypothesis, respondents living in Asian Russia (Siberia and the Far East) were more likely to find China a security threat, significant at $p < 0.01$. Similarly, in accordance with my expectations, high levels of education significantly predicted fear of China, once again significant at $p < 0.01$. Perspectives on the attitude of the United States also pointed to anxiety over China. A belief that the United States is hostile was a strong predictor of fears of a Chinese security threat, impressively significant at $p \leq 0.001$. (Intriguingly, muted but nonetheless positive opinions of America's attitude toward Russia (feeling that the United States is "somewhat friendly") also exhibited significant predictive qualities, albeit to a lesser degree than the other variables.) Disappointingly and unexpectedly, when isolating and controlling for other variables in this model, a negative economic assessment was not a statistically significant predictor. Nevertheless, the model broadly supported earlier conclusions drawn from the cross-tabulations.

Conclusion and Implications

My analysis yields a number of conclusions. First, it seems that negative dispositions toward the United States are here to stay. Whatever influence Obama's election and the U.S.-Russia "reset" exerted on Russian public opinion, it was small. As expected, in 2010 a substantial number of Russians continued to view the United States as a threat, and half view it as hostile.

Table 12

	B (S.E)	Sig.
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	-0.467 (0.386)	0.227
25-34	-0.121 (0.356)	0.733
35-44	-0.043 (0.353)	0.904
45-54	-0.195 (0.356)	0.584
55-64	0.363 (0.378)	0.337
<i>Political orientation</i>		
Left-wing	0.408 (0.506)	0.420
Center	-0.401 (0.484)	0.408
Right-wing	-0.656 (0.505)	0.194
No interest in politics	0.055 (0.462)	0.906
DK	-0.042 (0.468)	0.929
<i>State of the economy</i>		
Very good	2.079 (1.112)	0.062
Good	0.489 (0.704)	0.487
Neither good nor bad	0.789 (0.676)	0.243
Bad	0.878 (0.678)	0.195
DK	1.238 (0.707)	0.080
<i>Income</i>		
Low	-0.067 (0.187)	0.720
High	-0.125 (0.208)	0.549
DK	-0.398 (0.463)	0.390
<i>Attitude of the USA</i>		
Friendly	0.181 (0.435)	0.678
Somewhat friendly	0.593 (0.265)	0.025
Somewhat hostile	0.960 (0.258)	0.000
Hostile	0.963 (0.299)	0.001
<i>Level of education</i>		
Higher	0.685 (0.236)	0.004
Secondary	0.214 (0.216)	0.320
<i>Region</i>		
Asia	0.498 (0.166)	0.003
Constant	-2.485 (0.919)	0.007
Adj. R-sq. (Nagelkerke)	0.088	
Percentage correctly predicted	70.7	
N	2017	

Furthermore, Russians feel cynical about American foreign policy, seeing Washington's hand in the color revolutions and Western expansionism in NATO's objectives. These figures hold largely steady across the country and many socioeconomic groups. Neither age nor gender notably co-varies with perceptions of threat or hostility, and public assessments hold steady in both European and Asian Russia. More obvious variations exist between education and income levels, as well as specific attitudes on a range of questions. Better educated Russians and those with a self-assessed high income more often find the United States threatening or hostile. Predictably, the same pattern holds for Russians subscribing to a left-wing ideology, fearing an attack on the country in the next five years, preferring that Russia tread a unique historical path, or opposing NATO and EU membership. Taking these latter variables together, a picture begins to emerge in which those who look negatively upon the United States are, to some degree, politically motivated, while also paranoid about security, opposed to membership in international organizations and alliances, and keen for Russia to follow a path of independence on the world stage.

In comparison, Russian public perceptions of China are more positive. Almost eight in ten Russians consider China friendly and nine percent fewer respondents consider China a threat than do the United States. Yet while Russians feel positively indeed about China's attitude toward them and fewer consider the country as threatening as the United States, a significant proportion of the population remains cautious of China: approximately 31 percent still worry about it in relation to Russia's security. Whereas assessments of an American threat went hand-in-hand with perceptions of American hostility, in the case of China, these measures appear to stand somewhat more apart. Russians seem to find it possible to believe in China's friendliness while still worrying about its threat to Russian security. Crucially and expectedly, however, positive sentiment ebbs in Asian Russia. More residents of Siberia and the Far East viewed China as a threat and as hostile than in European Russia and, when I cross-tabulated the dependent variable with a number of socioeconomic and attitudinal indicators, negative dispositions stood higher across the board.

These cross-tabulations revealed some interesting associations, as well. Older respondents were somewhat more likely to offer negative responses than younger ones, but high levels of education associated most dramatically with perceptions of Chinese threat and hostility. A clear majority of the best educated Asian Russians cited China as a threat, by the far largest proportion to do so across all socioeconomic indicators. Those with negative orientations to the economy were also more likely to view China as a threat, but the increase relative to European Russia was very small and not as a great as expected. Surprising, in my view, was the strong relationship between views of U.S. hostility and Chinese threat. In Asian Russia, a majority of those worried about America's orientation to the world also worried about China as a threat. These all seem to indicate that greater awareness and sophistication in dealing with the world around them (achieved through higher education), as well as economic and general global insecurity, correlate with a greater tendency to view China as a threat or, to a lesser degree, as hostile.

Looking more closely at the sources of fear and anxiety over China, I found that most of the variables identified in cross-tabulations held significant explanatory power. Higher education, residence in Asian Russia, and suspicion of the United States as hostile all significantly predicted fear of a Chinese security threat. Negative economic assessments, contrary to the findings of my cross-tabulations and theoretical supposition, did not demonstrate significant predictive qualities. In all, these variables combined to create a model which correctly predicted approximately 71 percent of cases in which respondents expressed anxiety regarding China as a security threat to Russia. Valuably, this model contributes to the existing literature by pointing to the sources of Russian attitudes. This paper attempted to isolate the importance of region, education, and views of the United States in predicting opinion and found evidence that contests others' arguments, updates findings, or highlights previously under-investigated variables.

Given public opinion's typically loose and distant connection with foreign policy making, it is unclear exactly how much any of this will impact official decisions and behavior in Moscow. But as

scholars such as White et al. (2006; 2010) and Zimmerman (2002) note, while mass attitudes may not directly drive decision-making, they may place outer limits on what governments can do, and they certainly provide part of the context in which politics plays out. Moreover, some even argue that in their foreign policy Putin, and now Medvedev, are, in part, responding to broad nationalism in the country when they focus “on the dangers to Russia presented by foreign enemies, of which the United States is virtually always listed first.” In this view, the Russian people’s resurgent nationalism and “almost paranoid concern for security,” coupled with the actions of foreign countries, “underlies Moscow’s current approach to the outside world” (Kanet 2011, 211). In light of this, it seems possible that with such stable and widely held negative perspectives regarding the United States, anti-Americanism within Russia’s political culture may remain a matter of course. Furthermore, it does not look likely that Russian public opinion will significantly constrain Moscow’s actions vis-à-vis Washington as it continues to find ways to assert itself internationally. If the example of the invasion of Georgia in 2008 (enthusiastically supported by the public) is anything to go by, not even military action remains off-limits. The implications for Russia-China policy are harder to judge. As long as an overwhelming majority of Russians continue to feel that China is friendly, it is safe to assume that Moscow will enjoy great freedom to continue engaging Beijing. But as China continues its upward trajectory, Moscow will have to acknowledge and account for the undercurrent of concern that runs through the population at large, and the more widespread and openly voiced worries of eastern Russia. It is plausible that the residents of Siberia and the Far East especially will demand greater assertiveness from Moscow as fears of a Chinese takeover of the region grow.

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