

How Russians and Americans View Each Other, Themselves, China and Iran

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WorldPublicOpinion.org, together with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, hosted a discussion on May 31, 2006, about the findings of its new poll of Russians and Americans. The following is an edited transcript. The findings were presented by **Stephen J. Weber**, Associate Director of WorldPublicOpinion.Org.

Commentators:

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Stephen Weber: In six weeks, the G8 will be meeting in St. Petersburg. The prospect of this event plus the apparently cooling relations between Moscow and Washington has prompted a great deal of discussion about future relations between the two countries. President Putin also has moved to the front of the world stage, addressing several of the most significant issues of 2006: dealing with Hamas, following their electoral victory in January, negotiating with Iran and, to some degree, with the European 3 and the U.S., as well about Iran's developing nuclear program and addressing energy and energy security.

WorldPublicOpinion.org seeks to bring the voice and values of the public to the international policy discussion so I'd like you to reflect today about what contributions the voice of the American and the Russian public make to our understanding of this international policy discourse. Together with the Levada Center, an independent public opinion research institute in Moscow, WorldPublicOpinion conducted parallel polls of Russian and U.S. publics.

We examined how Russians and Americans looked at Iran's development of its nuclear program and what should be done. We also posed questions on a broader set of issues on Russia and U.S. relations, each public's perceptions of the two countries and we also included some parallel questions on China to provide greater context to public opinion in Russia and the U.S.

In Russia, the Levada Center used its national probability household sample to interview 1,000 Russians and they did so in mid-April. WorldPublicOpinion used Knowledge Network's online panel to conduct its national sample of the American public. This panel is probability based, designed to represent all U.S. households, including the population without online access. The confidence intervals for most of today's findings will be on

the order of 3 to 4 percentage points. However, in this survey, and in most surveys, the important issues are not going to revolve around small statistical differences but rather things like: What do these questions mean? And, what do the findings mean and what is their importance for policy? Fortunately, for these difficult questions, we have an excellent panel of experts on Russia and U.S. relations:

For poll results on Russian and American views of Iran [click here](#)

For poll results on Russian and American views of each other, themselves and China [click here](#)

Steven Kull: I actually had an earlier incarnation in the 1980s studying the Soviet Union and conducted a study of Soviet thinking, which resulted in a book called *Burying Lenin*. Based on the writings of the Soviet leaders and the interviews that I was doing at the time, I made the case that Marxism-Leninism had been in disarray for some time but it was really the alternative ideology and thinking that really displaced Marxism-Leninism. And this new thinking really embraced the Universalist vision that was established in the post-war period. And central to this thinking was the idea that international legitimacy rose from multilateral consensus expressed largely through the United Nations. It also embraced the idea of a democratic process being the source of legitimacy for domestic government.

So a real question now has been: Is this all washed away? Is this still alive? Are Russians going off on another tangent? Are they returning to authoritarianism? Where could this lead in terms of ideology?

We have been doing some polling in Russia. Over the last year and a half, we did two polls together with Globescan for the BBC. We've also looked at polling for some other organizations. And I'd just like to point out a few findings that I think are relevant to this question.

The first is that it does appear that at least a majority of Russians are still pretty much on board with the Universalist vision. I think probably the most striking question was one for the BBC that we did that asked about the prospect of the U.N. being significantly more powerful in world affairs, would that be something positive or something negative. And 57 percent said that they thought it would be positive. Only 11 percent said it would be negative. There were quite a few opt outs.

Now, they're not entirely enthusiastic about the U.N. performance. Only 38 percent were positive on that. [...] But the principle of the U.N. playing a bigger role in the world is still very popular. A plurality favored the idea of adding more members to the U.N. Security Council. And, also, we asked, well, how do you feel about the idea of the U.N. Security Council having the power to override the veto of permanent members, including your country? Well, Russians were divided. They weren't opposed. They were divided with about half not even answering. Americans, by the way, were positive on that.

Now are Russians recoiling from democracy? Well, clearly there has been major economic and political disarray since the collapse of the Soviet Union and there is a lot of evidence that their enthusiasm for democracy has been in some decline. But when asked, do you think it's important for Russia to be a democratic country, 61 percent say that it is important. Only 21 percent say it's unimportant. And this view that it is important rises with education. At the lowest level of education, it's 41 percent rising all the way up to 78 percent at higher levels of education. It also rises with income. It's also higher in Moscow. An important question is what do Russians think other Russians think. And 59 percent assume that most Russians think that it's important that Russia be a democratic country.

Now, how do Russians feel about an authoritarian system? The Eurasia Barometer asked: For our country, the most suitable thing is to be a democratic country? Or to have something more rigid and centrally planned? Well, 50 percent went for democratic government, 35 percent for something rigid and centrally planned. On the question of the NGOs, and all that they might be up to, which has concerned some in the Russian government, that doesn't seem to be a widespread view. Only 6 percent of Russians in the BBC poll had a negative view of NGOs. Fifty-three percent had a positive view.

We've also had some conversations on this question with our colleagues at the Levada Center. The way they interpret it, which we concur with, is that there may be some tendency right now to a kind of Chilean model. The idea that maybe we need to tighten up some, maybe we need to have more centralized control for a while. And that way the Chinese model looks attractive. But it does not appear there's been some kind of ideological shift. The Chilean model is one that's really explicitly temporary and it's ultimately an affirmation of that in the long-run we need to come back to something that's more democratic.

We're now going to hear from our panelists and I think we'll start with Andrew Kuchins. Andrew is the director of Russian and Eurasia Program here at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and he's on the faculty of Georgetown. Previously he was the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center and his most recent publication is *U.S. Russian Relations: The Case for an Upgrade*. He's currently writing a book that's quite relevant to our discussion today: *China and Russia: Strategic Allies, Partners or Competitors?*

Andrew Kuchins: Steve thanks very much. First of all, let me thank Steve and Steve, collectively known as Steve squared, and PIPA for co-sponsoring this event today and for providing us with this really interesting data. Now let me make a caveat. I am by no means an expert on survey research and global opinion. Far from it. So my goal is basically to try to appear before you as an idiot savant rather than as just an idiot.

I'll make a couple of observations. There are three points that strike me as puzzles that need further explanation or further research. And make a further point about Iran.

The first point is fairly obvious. That this data is very interesting but it would be extremely interesting if we were to look at it in time series and be able to compare these

views with views five years or ten years ago in the American and Russian publics. There is some data that might be useful for this but I think Mike and some of the others might be more familiar with it. The other point I'd make is that, wow, it would be really great if we had the data on the Chinese and their views on these things. I mentioned this to Steve Weber just before we started and I know that is more difficult to come by. But these two points will come up in a couple of questions that I raise about the data itself.

The first thing that strikes me in looking at this comparison of American and Russian public opinion is how ambivalent Americans are about almost everything. And how sure the Russians are about almost everything. Americans are ambivalent about their president, Americans are ambivalent about use of force, Americans are ambivalent about the role of Russian foreign policy, Americans are ambivalent about the role of Chinese foreign policy. The only thing Americans are not ambivalent about is that the American system of government is superior to the Russians' and the Chinese and probably everybody else's if you had other data available. Of that we seem to be quite sure.

The Russians, on the other hand, are very sure that their president is the right guy—85 percent. They are very sure—80 percent—that Russia is playing a positive role in the world. They are very sure, surprisingly sure, and I'll say more about this in a second, about the role of China in the world and quite positive about it. And they're not so ambivalent about so many things. I just point that out, and I think it may suggest differences in political culture between Americans and Russians.

The three puzzles that strike me in this data. The first one I've referred to: The Russians being so positive about China and Chinese foreign policy. I find it a little bit surprising that the view is as positive as it is. And I would be very wary of extrapolating from this piece of data that Russians view China as a more promising international partner in the longer term.

This is certainly something I'm going to be looking into and thinking very hard about in the next year or two as I get further into this book project. But I have a lot of skepticism about that and, on this question in particular, I think it would be useful to have time series data. How durable is this positive view about China? How much has it changed over time? How much of it can be correlated to the negative perception of the Bush administration and U.S. foreign policy in the world? Because I think that for the Russians it's the view of what the United States does that drives how they view China. So I am a little bit dubious about just how firm this is.

On the one hand, it's easy for me to understand why they think this way. For one, they're fed a fairly steady diet on TV, especially, about how wonderful the Sino-Russian relationship is. How positive it is. They see very few images about positive cooperation with the United States, etc. I spent two and a half years in Moscow, just getting back at the end of last year, and I apologize for repeating this to some here in the audience, but that was striking to me. Again, the Sino-Russian military exercises, Sergei Ivanov, the Defense Minister, he's the first news story every night, smiling ear to ear. You would

have thought that the Russians and the Chinese had just discovered the wheel or something. They seem so excited about this.

Very little positive about the U.S.-Russian relationship. That's understandable. The other thing that's understandable, of course, is that the Chinese and the Russians do share a lot of similar views about international relations. They share concerns about the unilateral, hegemonic role of the U.S. in the international system. They both promote in principle a multi-polar system. They were opposed to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty. They both opposed the NATO expansion. And also, an important note, that has become of more importance recently, they both hold very strong views of sovereignty and the importance of national sovereignty and about the unallowability of other states or international actors to impinge upon national sovereignty. All that is understandable and would drive a more positive view by the Russians of the Chinese.

But there are some real countervailing factors, also. First of all, there's the attractiveness of culture. U.S. culture, Western culture more broadly, I think, is far more attractive to the Russian public than is Chinese culture. There's a strong respect for Chinese culture but it's not attractive in the way that U.S. culture is. This is something that Igor Zevlev and I discussed in Beijing about ten days ago. The Sino-Russian relationship is quite positive at the elite level but it's weaker at the societal level. But this data is quite interesting and it would bear some further exploration.

The second puzzle for me in looking at this is the American view of Russian foreign policy and Chinese foreign policy and use of force. Actually, I think the discrepancy between American and Russian views of potential Chinese use of force is pretty easily explainable. We can imagine the possibility of the United States and China using force against each other over Taiwan. The prospect of a U.S.-Chinese war is, it's a possibility. I don't think it's a possibility with the Russian Federation. I think it's a lot less realistic. So U.S. views of Chinese use of force as being much more negative, that seems understandable to me.

What's a little more puzzling is the American views of Russian foreign policy. There's the question: Is Russia having a mainly positive or mainly negative influence on the world? Positive, 40 percent. Negative, 53 percent. Over the last few years, do you think the effect of Russian foreign policy on the U.S. and its interests has been positive? [Positive] 51 percent, negative, 38 percent. Now that's not a huge difference but I think it is statistically significant and it's puzzling to me. I don't quite understand why that is the case. One possible explanation I came up with in thinking about this was that, well, since the Iraq war has become so unpopular for Americans, knowing that the Russians oppose the Iraq war may be the first question which is preying a bit more [...] so it could relate to the Iraq war.

The other question, though: Is Russia having a mainly positive or negative influence on the world? I don't understand quite why there is that discrepancy there. There's no discrepancy on the questions about Chinese foreign policy, they're consistent. On Russia, they're not. I don't quite understand that. That would bear some explanation.

The final puzzle for me. And maybe the most interesting one, actually: Are the Russian views of political systems? Here, just to review quickly those numbers, they're remarkably consistent. Fifty-four percent of Russians have a very favorable or somewhat favorable view of the American system. Forty-seven percent have a very favorable or somewhat favorable view of the Russian system. Fifty-six percent have a very favorable or somewhat favorable view of the Chinese system.

Now those systems are all very different, yet the Russian view is very close in that they have the same degree of positiveness about them. It reminds me of the old story of the wise Rabbi. To paraphrase: A says this and the wise Rabbi responds, "Yes, you are right." And then B says that and the wise Rabbi says, "Yes, you are right." And then C says, "But how can that be? What B said contradicts A." And the wise Rabbi says, "Yes, you are right."

How can the Russians have similarly positive, moderately positive views of all three political systems? Well, they must have some sort of sliding scale there. Maybe they think: the Chinese system is a good system for China. The American system is a pretty good system for America. And that the Russian system is an okay, not great, but okay system for Russia. But all around the same number. That is interesting to me. I think it would bear teasing out what actually is going on there with the Russians.

The other comment I would make about that is that in their conclusions about democracy, which countries are more democratic, the Russian and American ratings of democracy were significantly different. That Russians rated Russian democracy and Chinese democracy as being about equally democratic, I found that surprising. I turned to Igor and I said, if more Russians went to China, I think they would vote differently.

But I would not say it is representative of the Russians being hard graders on themselves. I think the Russian rating of democracy as being south of the mean, less than five, somewhere in that territory, is about right. What I think is wrong is that they're easy graders on China. And that they rate the Chinese democracy too highly. Here it would be really interesting to see what the Chinese think about Russian democracy and American democracy. And I think the numbers would be different. And I think, actually, if you compared what the Chinese think about Russian democracy today and what the Chinese thought about Russian democracy ten years ago, well, they'd think that Russian democracy today is a lot better than Russian democracy was ten years ago. Or their system of government is much better. In fact, when Igor and I were in Beijing ten days ago, I heard this term, the "Beijing Consensus." It's the antidote to the Washington Consensus. It's a different political, economic, social model and even has implications for how you approach international relations. That sounds like a pretty confident country, talking about that, right? And they said quite specifically that the Russians have learned from us, they are learning the Beijing Consensus. Be interesting to have those numbers.

Final comment on Iran. The numbers on Iran really struck me as right on. There's no puzzle there for me to explain. That the Russians don't want to see Iran become a nuclear power, understandable, and similar to us, very close. That the Russians believe that Iran

is seeking to become a nuclear power, also quite similar to us. Difference, though, in the degree of worry about it. Russians are a lot less worried. Also not surprising. The Russians, as Steve pointed out, view Iran somewhat differently. I think it would be interesting if you were to contrast what the Russians thought about, let's say, Pakistan being a nuclear power. My guess is that the Russians would be somewhat more worried about Pakistan being a nuclear power than Iran. Interesting to see.

Finally, of course, the big difference on sanctions, economic sanctions. That's not surprising. The Russians view economic sanctions as getting on the slippery slope toward military action, which they are categorically opposed to. But we may be able to find some agreement on sanctions.

Steven Kull: Thank you. Next we are going to hear from Igor Zevelev, who is the Washington bureau chief of Novosti Press. He's been the chief researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow. And he is also the author of *Russia and its New Diasporas*.

Igor Zevelev: Thanks, Steve. As often happens when it comes to statistics, what it means may depend on who is doing the interpreting. It is hard to make cross-cultural comparisons and it may be even more difficult when the question involves perceptions of other nations. Opinion trends may shift radically in unstable societies in a short period. The most striking and general impressions one got from studying the Russian polling data in the 1990s is that Russians became a confused people in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The collective attitudes of many groups combined contradictory ideas and perceptions. Many perceptions and opinions are not well articulated and remain contradictory even today, in 2006. However, having said all that, the biggest surprise to me, when I read the data, was that there were no big surprises and very few contradictions.

I would like to make three points. First, the perception of Iran and its nuclear program. Both Steve and Andy already said that Russians and Americans perceive the problem very similarly. And there are two interesting exceptions. One, the difference in Russian and American attitudes toward economic sanctions and another exception is their threat assessment.

I totally agree with Andy that Russians do not see a nuclear armed Iran as that great a threat as Americans. Russians view a nuclear-armed Iran as an unpleasant fact but one that Russians can live with, as they live with a nuclear armed Pakistan. And the public and the elite have very similar approaches to this problem and their threat assessment is similar in Russia. This explains a lot when we think about Russian official position on Iran.

The second point I would like to make is on perceptions of China. China, as we saw from the data, is a positive example for Russians, and, of course, not for Americans. The Russians have a more positive attitude towards many aspects of this country and Andy

suggested an international relations perspective: probably, they keep the United States and its hegemony in the world in mind when they think about China.

But I would add something to that. I think there may be another reason for this discrepancy between Russian and American perceptions of China. I think for domestic Russian discourse right now, political stability and order, economic growth and modernization, are much more important than democracy. And when they think about China, they think about the 10 percent annual growth, they think about their modernization, they think about their reduction of poverty and they do not think that much about democracy, while Americans tend to pay a lot of attention to that aspect. For many Russians, democracy is associated with chaos, collapse of the state, material gains of the very few in the nineties.

I also think that there is yet another factor that may make Russians think more positively about Chinese model. I think that most Russians believe there are many models of development, there is more than one model of development, while most Americans expect each country to become a liberal democracy eventually. And that also may explain the difference in perception of China.

Finally, my third and last point is on perceptions of each other. The most important, though not unexpected, result of this study to me personally is the perception of President Putin. American public has more favorable opinion of Putin than the American elite and the press, and, as Steve also mentioned, this block of the town. Thirty-six percent of Americans believe that Putin is good. At the same time, 85 percent of Russians hold a favorable opinion of Putin.

The discrepancy of American and Russian opinions of Putin, per se, is not that interesting. The most interesting thing about it is that many Americans who do not favor the Russian president think that Putin's major fault is backpedaling in democracy. It's only natural to assume that Russian citizens should be concerned about it much more than Americans. But paradoxically as it may seem, the Russians, whom Putin allegedly oppresses, support him. And as Steve mentioned, other polls indicate the same trend.

So, thinking theoretically, there may be two explanations. First, it may be argued that the state of democracy and personal freedoms in Russia is not as bad as many Americans think it is. The data of this particular study does not support this argument. It shows that Russians are tough graders, as Steve said, and do not give Russian democracy high scores. However, this is, I believe, important: A plurality of Russians sees the country as becoming more democratic. It would be interesting, by the way, to see what is the reference point: In comparison with the Soviet Union? In comparison with the nineties? What is the reference point? It's very important. So this is the first explanation, but it is not supported by this data.

The second explanation of why Russians support Putin is that Russians are less concerned about democracy today than about stability, growth, and restoration of Russia's great power status. Putin is viewed as a leader who brought stability, growth and

international influence to Russia. Well, I personally think that both arguments, both hypotheses, that I mentioned can hold. There are many elements of truth in both. But this is a topic for another discussion. I think, though, that this difference between Russians' and Americans' perceptions of Putin and his record creates tension, which is reflected in the current state of U.S.-Russian relations.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the research and I'm looking forward to seeing more data collected by you in cooperation with Levada Center.

Steven Kull: Thank you. Last, we're going to hear from Michael McFaul, who is a senior associate here at the Carnegie Endowment and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, as well as a faculty member at Stanford University. He has numerous books, among them: *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* and *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian post-Communist political reform*.

Michael McFaul: Thank you, Steve. Congratulations on your panel and more generally for the stuff you do. I'm glad to be on your distribution list. I, too, do public opinion polls in Russia. We have for about a decade with my partner, Tim Colton, and now Henry Hale. For those of you with any influence at the NSF or the National Council if you could lobby on our behalf, because we do this every four years. We're the only group that has done it every four years around the election cycle. We ask a lot of election questions and, if we don't get the funding, we're never going to have that time series data that everyone wants. In fact, it's quite atrocious that every year we're under the threat of not having that. I think it really shows where Russia has fallen. Understanding Russia has become less of a priority for Americans. That's something I'm going to talk about in a minute.

I'm going very briefly to things that were striking to me. Again, not the obvious, because I think a lot of this is familiar. [...] First, on the Russian political system. It's very important to understand that we have to disaggregate the opinions about the practice of democracy, or the practice of governance, versus opinions about the norms of the practice. This was very important in the nineties. When you asked people about the way democracy was being performed, of course you got very low numbers, sometimes single digit numbers, in terms of how democracy was performing. But that's because Boris Yeltsin identified himself as the democrat. And Russians, under this guise of democracy, this leader who called himself a democrat, were living through a social revolution. So disaggregating that, when you lump them together, I don't find that very interesting. Of course people were dissatisfied with the performance of their government in the 1990s. It was a truly chaotic time.

When you ask questions—leaving aside attitudes about favorability or unfavorability or performance—and those things are very much intertwined—Americans are somewhat different and other countries too—but when you ask just straight up questions about democratic practices, especially if you don't use the word “democracy” in Russia, which has become a kind of pejorative word, there's lots of support for democracy.

Should your leaders be elected? Absolutely. Eighty percent. It's not even 61 percent. Should there be checks and balances? Absolutely. Should the press be independent? Absolutely. Striking numbers. We can go through them, if you want, in questions.

So when people say that Russians want a strong hand and flirt with the Pinochet model, I really don't believe it. These numbers have been quite stable through very chaotic times in Russia. Moreover, you can't ask the question about Pinochet, it's not fair. Because nobody knows what happened in Chile under Pinochet in Russia, they don't.

You have to ask the question much more precisely. Do they want the military to rule Russia? That's what dictatorship is. Or the KGB? Or the Communist Party? And three-quarters of the Russian population are firmly: No, we don't want the military to run the government. That's what dictatorship is.

So, just as you can't be abstract about democracy, I think you have to be clear about dictatorship. There, I think, the opinions are very clear. What is also clear is that democracy is simply not a priority for the majority of Russians right now. So they have views on it, and I think the views have been rather stable through very different times from the nineties to now. But, as a priority, it's way, way down the list in terms of things that one cares about.

Given that, the question about the favorability or unfavorability that you have in your survey is kind of striking and odd to me. Because I would expect that number to correlate with the popularity of the government. But here there's a big gap. Putin's at 85 percent in this survey, much higher than in other surveys, as is George W. Bush. He would die to have 45 percent right now. But that gap is a puzzle for me. How do you understand the fact that only 47 percent have a favorability rating for their political system but yet rate the guy who's run it for six years at 85 percent?

Two explanations: one is he's not democratic enough. I'm skeptical about that. I don't believe that. That unfavorability rating, it's filled with some who are worried about democracy. But, as your poll shows, that number is really quite small in Russia. There's got to be an explanation for that gap, but I don't know what it is.

I have a hypothesis that, in fact, Putin is so popular because nobody can think of an alternative. And that also comes with autocracy, by the way. John Kerry gets to go on the radio. Al Gore gets to make movies and go around the country talking about it. Mr. Putin's alternatives are not getting that kind of coverage. And so that may be one possible explanation. But it demands an explanation. Those numbers should be more closely correlated. [...] This is not about Russians thinking they're just as democratic as the United States, as your poll shows rather conclusively. I think that's also quite interesting and demands further explanation.

Second, the positive assessments on the economy, also—big gap—I mean 85 versus 31. This is the guy that's supposed to be overseeing the Russian [...] economic miracle and yet there's a fifty point gap between Putin's popularity and their evaluation of economic

performance. Interesting. I think we need to understand how that can be true. Again, I think it might have to do with the lack of alternatives, the lack of criticism of Mr. Putin in terms of his role in the economy. That number looks low but compared to 1995, 31 percent is a giant, giant number. So that number is going in the right direction. People are much more favorably inclined, still a plurality, not a majority, but the number is going in a positive direction, rather acutely. But it's still a big gap when you compare it with Putin's favorability rating.

Third, just to note it, I don't think anyone in this room will be surprised, but the support for the United States as a model, the negative numbers here, that really is a giant jump from ten or fifteen years ago in terms of the kinds of numbers you would have had in Russia. I think we can all explain that but I see that as tragic. But the trend line is very clear. Those numbers were very, very different in the early nineties.

Also, on the favorability numbers. I do think it's important to realize that there's a reason. I don't think it's fair to compare it to Bush. If Bush could control all the television stations, all the media, and have the first 22 minutes every night to talk about all the good things he was doing and we didn't have to hear about massacres in Iraq and we didn't have to hear about Abu Ghraib, I think his numbers would at least be higher than 33 percent. Let's bring some political context to those numbers.

Briefly, on the foreign policy numbers. Andy talked about the puzzle about Americans' somewhat positive relationship to Russia but somewhat negative about the Russian system of government. I think this actually means that Americans have no idea what Russia is doing in the world. When we asked our questions on this, we asked that question first. You can't have an opinion about Mr. Putin, if you don't know who Mr. Putin is. Putin, I guess, would get some numbers. But when I saw the numbers about Hu Jintao, 90 percent of Americans recorded an opinion about Hu Jintao. I can't believe that. That's not data. I think if you asked the first question: Who is the leader of China? Most people could not answer that question. Interestingly, the Russians in this way were a little more honest. The 50 percent non-respondents rate on China was very clear. Americans feel that they have to have an opinion when you ask them. The Russians just say, "I don't know."

I think that's the way to understand the variations on the Russians. [...] Russia, as a subject for Americans, especially when talking about foreign policy, is just something not on the radar screen. So I'm not surprised by the fact that they're confused, they're somewhat indifferent, when they do express an opinion. My guess would be that if you did some cross tabs on it, or some regressions on it, that's all driven by their negative view of Russia as a whole and therefore the other negative stuff is about that and it's about democracy. It's not actually about what Russia is doing vis a vis Iran. My guess is that most people have no idea what the Russian proposal on Iran is, I betcha half the people in this room don't. And therefore to have an opinion about that is just asking too much of any people, American, Russian or otherwise. So I think those numbers show indifference about this stuff. They just don't know. And on China, I would say the same thing.

Now , two last points on U.S. policy and then Russia-China. U.S. on Iran, diplomacy versus bombing, three to one margin. Other polls show that. But when you ask a different question, the ABC poll recently did this: Iran with a nuclear weapon or bombing? Then it's fifty-fifty. So let's be clear. When you get a binary choice: diplomacy or war? That's an easy one, right? Of course, more diplomacy. But when you get the other choice, the binary choice: Iran with nuclear weapons or bombing? Surprisingly to me, that number is about 44 or 45 on each side of that.

Then, on Russia and China, just to echo some of the intuitive things that Andy was saying, and he knows that relationship better than I do. But I think your data tends to be nuanced in two different ways. One is the soft power way that Andy talked about, so I won't go into that. [...]. But when you ask Russians: Where would you rather send your child to go to school, Beijing or Palo Alto? I know the answer to that question. On all the soft power questions, it's clearly Russians are much more enamored with America and tourist questions, I've seen too. But that we all know.

What's more interesting is the enemy question. And Levada themselves have asked this question. I think it was in March of 2006. [...] When they asked: Which country do you think Russia is more likely to go to war with? Not favorability, unfavorability, but actually: Who do you think we're going to have war with? A very concrete thing. Seventy-five percent said China. And only 25 percent said the United States. [...]

I think in the long run when Russians really think about who is really going to be, truly in an antithetical way, I think this fear of China, which other opinion polls have shown for a long time, this is something I think is stable, that hasn't changed over time. With the caveat that, as Igor said, elite opinion on this has changed rather radically in the last decade and elites control media and so maybe you can square the circle here, I don't know. But Levada numbers when you ask about enemy are quite striking and, therefore, I think, not as worrisome in terms of this "Beijing Consensus." I actually think that's much more ephemeral than the current polling data show. Thanks.