
The Geopolitical Orientations of Ordinary Russians: A Public Opinion Analysis

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Abstract: The authors examine some of the classic ideas of geopolitical analysis using a recent survey of Russian public opinion. Problematizing prevailing assumptions and binaries in geopolitical discourse, they pose a series of questions that provide measures of Russia's geopolitical orientations. Do more Russians think of their country as European or Eurasianist? If the United States is judged the most important state for Russian foreign policy, what country do most respondents view as the most appropriate model for Russia? Logit modeling of the ranking of state importance and preferences of countries as models for Russia show consistent and clear relationships with cleavages in Russian society along socio-demographic and ideological lines. *Journal of Economic Literature*, Classification Numbers: F01, F02, Z13. 5 figures, 2 tables, 44 references. Key words: geopolitical culture, geopolitical traditions, geopolitical imaginations, Russia, public opinion surveys.

In his memoir *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, former Soviet Foreign Minister, and subsequent President of the Republic of Georgia, Edward Shevardnadze wrote of a growing awareness among himself and others in 1985 that “sooner or later a new time would arrive in Europe, and that East and West would recover their original geographical meaning, taken from them by postwar politics” (Shevardnadze, 1991, p. 112). The foreign policy strategy of the Gorbachev regime was to “let places be what they are” and recognize a “common European home.” Dubbed the Sinatra Doctrine by the media, after Sinatra’s famous song “My Way,” the strategy was a remarkable acknowledgement of, first, the artificiality of the geopolitical order established by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and, second, that the states constituting the former Eastern bloc had geographical identities and geopolitical orientations that were distinctive and particular to them. Both notions had long been cornerstones of Western geopolitical thinking about Soviet control over Eastern Europe. Churchill’s famous “Iron Curtain” speech is premised on notions of primordial identity and artificial capture: “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended

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across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow" (Churchill, 1946). Churchill's geographic demarcation of the "iron curtain" proved incorrect, of course. Vienna, for example, became part of the "West" while Prague, a city to its northwest, became part of "the East."

The terms "ancient states" and "famous cities" evoke an organic geopolitical identity and orientation that is then locked out from its "natural home" and subject to Soviet control and domination. Other Cold War geopolitical tropes express these underlying assumptions. "Central and Eastern Europe" became the "Eastern bloc" in media parlance, a region "kidnapped" from its natural geographical place and orientation (Kundera, 1984). When its dictatorships fell in 1989, it was widely re-named as Central Europe and, over the last decade and a half, has "returned to the West" or simply to "Europe," which is considered equivalent to the European Union by most commentators in the geopolitical shorthand of our time (Ash, 1990).

As Cold War rhetoric fades, the inadequacy of its often simplistic conceptualizations of geopolitics is becoming more apparent. Was Soviet domination merely a brute geopolitical fact in Eastern Europe and (let us not forget) within the Russian Federation itself, or did it not put down roots and blend with local traditions in each of the states where it prevailed? Is the contrast between an organic primordial identity and an artificial one imposed by totalitarian power an adequate conceptualization of geopolitics? Indeed, can states be understood as having primordial and singular geopolitical identities and orientations at all? If so, what is that of Russia, now shorn from the Soviet Union? In this paper, we develop a conceptualization of geopolitics and an argument about *geopolitical orientations* through an examination of the Russian Federation just over a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Using public opinion data from a national survey we conducted in April 2002, we develop a conceptualization of Russian geopolitical culture and present empirical results on the prevailing geopolitical orientations of ordinary Russians. Our central argument is that states have complex geopolitical cultures, not primordial singular ones, and these cultures can be usefully divided into elite geopolitical traditions and popular geopolitical imaginations. These latter geopolitical imaginations contain distinctive and competing geopolitical orientations toward certain states and regions of the world. One can empirically measure and analyze these through public opinion surveys that ask questions like: "Is Russia a European or Asian country?"; "What countries are important to our state?"; and "What countries are models for our state?" We have compiled these data for Russia and we present our empirical survey results and discuss other public opinion data for comparison.

The present paper parallels another recently published in this journal (O'Loughlin and Talbot, 2004). In that earlier paper, the focus was on post-Soviet conceptions of what constituted the "Russian space" within the old borders of the Soviet Union, including perceptions of geopolitical and cultural distance between Russia and the former Soviet republics. While differences in responses between Slavic, Baltic, and Eurasianist geopolitical visions emerged as the key elements of the earlier paper, in this current article, we analyze the socio-demographic and ideological bases for the geopolitical visions and look beyond the former Soviet Union to world regions and world powers using a different national opinion survey. We begin with a brief theoretical discussion of geopolitical culture and related notions of geopolitical traditions, geopolitical imagination, and geopolitical orientations.

GEOPOLITICAL ORIENTATIONS WITHIN RUSSIA'S GEOPOLITICAL CULTURE

A critical re-thinking of geopolitics has been under way for more than two decades (Ó Tuathail, 1996; Dalby and Ó Tuathail, 1998). Geopolitics has been broadened, deepened, and made more complex as a concept as intellectual developments in political geography have taken a “cultural turn” (Painter, 1995). One example is Dijkink (1996), who has discussed many of the questions raised above. He defined the term “geopolitical vision” in a particular way: “any idea concerning the relation between one’s place and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 11). This is an exceedingly broad definition and Dijkink promotes it as equivalent to Edward Said’s notion of “imaginary geography” or the prevailing culture of knowledge about places and geographical relationships in a given state (Said, 1993; Gregory, 1994). A geopolitical vision, Dijkink writes, requires “at least a Them-and-Us distinction and emotional attachment to place” (p. 11). He seeks to specify the concept further by arguing that geopolitical visions are characterized by border-producing practices, lists of friendly and hostile nations, conceptions of model countries to follow or to reject, and a distinctive sense of national mission. Dijkink explores the weave of these notions in a series of interesting chapters on the geopolitical visions of different countries but his elaboration of his core concept remains broad and undeveloped.

Ó Tuathail (2003) has argued for a re-conceptualization of Dijkink’s initial formulation as the concept of a “geopolitical culture,” reserving the term “geopolitical vision” for the normative agenda of political actors.² This concept is more precisely specified than that of Dijkink and is theoretically tied to a series of sub-concepts and conceptualizations. Ó Tuathail (2006) has elaborated these as the following (see also O’Loughlin et al., 2005):

- **Geopolitical Culture:** the practices that make sense of a state and its identity, position and role in a world of states. All states, as territorially embedded entities with distinctive histories and geographies, have geopolitical cultures. These cultures are formed not only by the institutions of a state, its historical experiences and geographical embednesses, but also by networks of power within society, debates over national identity, prevailing geopolitical imaginations, codified geopolitical traditions, and the institutional processes by which foreign policy is made in the state. The category “geopolitical culture” is an encompassing one within which the concepts below can be more precisely identified:
- **Geopolitical Imaginations:** the prevalent images, conceptualizations, and discourses in popular culture and among the general population of where that state is positioned and located within the world’s community of states. Geopolitical imaginations are a mix of popular culture, geopolitics and the geopolitical orientations of a state’s population. To what “civilization” or community of states do the media and inhabitants of the state believe it belongs? How do people situate their state and its identity in a world of competing identities? Geopolitical imaginations are the “low culture” foundations upon which more codified geopolitical perspectives are built.

²An example of the latter concept would be President Putin’s geopolitical vision within Russian geopolitical culture.

- **Geopolitical Traditions:** the range of relatively formalized and competing schools of geopolitical thought that comprise the “high culture” of a state’s geopolitical culture. Each tradition is a canon of thought on state identity, the national interest, and normative foreign policy priorities.
- **Geopolitical Discourses:** These are the public articulations and narrative codifications of the elements that make up a geopolitical culture. Three related genres of discourse are identified in critical geopolitics: (a) formal geopolitics or highly codified and professionalized narratives about foreign policy; (b) practical geopolitics or the narratives used by politicians and practitioners of foreign policy; and (c) popular geopolitics or the narratives about world politics that find expression in popular opinion and popular culture industry products (cinema, magazines, cartoons).

In this paper, we are particularly interested in geopolitical imaginations, for these were generally the basis for essentialized claims by nationalist proponents about the “true” identity of “captive” states. Poland, for example, was held to be a Western Catholic state oriented more toward the Vatican than the Kremlin. The Baltic states were held to be more Nordic than Eastern or Soviet. Ironically, there was a perverse version of this reasoning in the Cold War discourse of some commentators on the American right. The Committee on the Present Danger from the U.S. political establishment in the Reagan years characterized the Soviet Union itself as a “captured” entity, charging that its foreign policy was merely imperial Russian expansionism in a new guise (Dalby, 1990). Ahistorical essentialism characterizes this geopolitical discourse: places are characterized by durable cultural essences, and states either express this (natural states) or are “captured” (artificial states) by geopolitical powers.

We believe that the operation of geopolitical imaginations within a geopolitical culture is much more complicated than these national caricatures in geopolitical argumentation. Not only is the “high” geopolitical culture of states characterized by varied and formalized geopolitical traditions, but so also, its “low” geopolitical culture is distinguished by distinctive types of geopolitical imaginations. What distinctive types of imaginations we can find and measure remain empirical questions. One can examine a country’s popular media (for popular geopolitics; see Sharp, 2000) or, as in our case, one can examine public opinion attitudes. For our purposes here, a geopolitical orientation is determined by examining popular attitudes toward where a state is perceived to be geographically positioned, and further by which states are perceived as friendly/unfriendly, and which countries can serve as models for the country being studied. We hypothesize that geopolitical orientations are likely to vary within a country’s population depending on educational attainment and socio-economic status, by gender and age, region, and the size of a settlement. In Russia, geographical, social, and ethnic diversity, as well as deepening uneven regional development, are also possible powerful factors conditioning geopolitical orientation. We can further hypothesize that, during the Soviet era, strict ideological control contributed to an apparent homogenization of geopolitical imaginations. The Soviet regime was at the center of an official community of “brotherly nations” and defined itself in opposition to “imperialist” Western powers. Soviet modernity was the model “ordinary modernity” for the states of the “second world” (Taylor, 1996).³ In the last decade, in the wake of the Soviet collapse, we can also hypothesize that Russian

³Within the Soviet Union, East Germany was particularly admired as a model of Communist modernity.

geopolitical orientations have become much more differentiated and reflect better the nature of the Russian Federation's regions and the socio-demographic characteristics of its citizens. With these concepts and hypotheses in mind, let us examine the orientations that characterize the Russian public a decade after the fall of the USSR. We are aware that a more comprehensive analysis requires an analysis of the relationship between "high" and "low" geopolitical culture, which is the relationship between the geopolitical traditions that mark the political life of a state and the geographical imaginations found in its popular culture and among ordinary people (Smith, 1999; Lebedeva, 2000; Trenin, 2002; Zimmerman, 2002). We have examined this in our other publications (O'Loughlin et al., 2004a, 2004b).

SURVEY DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Our data were collected in April 2002 in a representative national survey of 1500 persons over the age of 18 in 202 sampling points across Russia, supplemented by an additional 300 Muslim respondents (150 each from the Central Volga regions of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and from the North Caucasian Muslim republics of Karbadino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia). Our national sampling strategy followed the design of the Public Opinion Foundation (*Fond Obshchestvennoye Mneniye*, FOM) and has been used for hundreds of national political and social polls over the past decade. The actual choice of respondents is made through a random selection of addresses within the rural villages, towns, and cities that serve as "key precincts"⁴ for the polling firm. A total of 10,700 contacts were attempted to achieve the completed sample of 1,800. The major reason for this low rate was the difficulty of establishing contact with targeted respondents due to reasons of lack of access to the apartment or house, the respondent absent from the home, or incorrect current addresses for respondents. The survey has a margin of error of 3.5%.⁵

The addition of the Muslim sub-sample to the survey was designed to produce sufficient socio-demographic variation within the Muslim respondents in the survey so that we could examine the cross-tabulation of attitudes, regions, and socio-economic composition for this important population, now constituting 18–20 million or about 13% of the total Russian population (Hunter, 2004, p. 44; see also Walker, 2005). In previous papers (O'Loughlin et al., 2004a, 2004b, 2005), we have shown a significant difference in the geopolitical attitudes of Muslims between the two regions of the Central Volga and the North Caucasus. Generally, Tatars and Bashkirs are more "Western" in attitude than their co-religionists of Karachevo-Cherkessia and Karbardino-Balkaria, who tend to be more traditionalist in religious beliefs and practices and more clientelistic in political behavior (Hunter, 2004). Because our survey was motivated by the need to examine the attitudes of Russian citizens to the U.S.-led "war on terror" and to the new U.S. military presence in the heartland of Eurasia (Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan) as well as the argument of President Vladimir Putin about the equation of Chechen fighters with "Islamic terrorists," we deemed it very important to have an overweighting of Muslims in the sample to see if there were significant differences between them and other Russian citizens on these questions.

Our figures and results reported in this paper are based on weighted estimates that account for the disproportionate sampling of Russians and Muslims. While there are obvious advantages of adding more Muslim respondents, it makes the estimation of statistical models

⁴I.e., representative of the diversity of Russian locales.

⁵For additional survey details, see the technical appendix in O'Loughlin et al. (2004b).

a little trickier. The estimates are adjusted using the relative weighting of the sub-samples compared to the overall populations of these groups, Russians as a whole, and the Muslim populations of the two North Caucasian and two Volga-Urals republics. Our calculation of the sample weights followed the usual procedures for disproportionate stratified samples. Without these modifications, the regression estimates will be incorrect, as the examples in Lee et al. (1989) clearly demonstrate. The sample weight is the inverse of the selection probability and the assignment of the sub-sample weight to each stratum (Russians and Muslims) makes possible accurate statistical estimates for particular sample designs that are interested in population or regional comparisons. We used *Stata 8.1* for all of our analysis, using the *svyset* option in this statistical package which set variables, survey weights, and primary sampling units for survey data. The variance estimates in such multistage sampling designs are unbiased or biased toward more conservative estimates with larger standard errors.⁶

As already noted, our survey included three questions: (1) where is Russia located; (2) which country can serve as a model for Russia; and (3) which countries or regions are important to Russia? We deliberately left open the notion of “model” and “importance” because some respondents might interpret the concepts in political terms (openness, democracy, fair government), some might focus on cultural traditions, history, and/or tourist attractions, while others might wish to give priority to economic models that would potentially generate significant income growth. Unlike the question on identity (European, Asian, etc., in Fig. 1), which allowed only one option, each country or region was offered separately as a binary choice (country important, not important, no answer; country can be a model, cannot be a model, or no answer). Thus, we can track responses for individual countries to see how they are viewed as similar in the conceptions of Russians and which populations within Russia tend to group themselves in their choice of models and countries of importance.

IS RUSSIA A EUROPEAN, EURASIANIST, OR ASIAN COUNTRY?

A classic discussion in Russian geopolitics starts from the century-old debate about whether Russia is a European state, an Eurasianist state that stems from its geographical position on the Eurasian heartland, or an Asian state, related to its vast range from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean. A large literature has amassed on this subject, including works examining the advocacy of specific geopolitical objectives and works that look at the resonance of the different perspectives in Russian political opinion (Bassin, 1991; Kerr, 1995; Zamyatin, 1998; Smith, 1999; Kolossov, 2001; O’Loughlin, 2001; O’Loughlin et al., 2005).

As a point of entry into our study of Russian geopolitical orientations, we began with the choices offered by this literature. While simplistic binaries often conceal more than they reveal, they provide the framework within which geopolitical discourse takes place. We asked our respondents if Russia was a European country (definitely and mostly were options), an Asian country (again definitely and mostly as options), equally European and Asian, or none of these choices. We could not ask if Russia was a “Eurasianist” state, because that term is not well-known among the electorate; a political party of that name led by the most prominent “Eurasianist” proponent, Alexander Dugin, received a derisory 0.28 percent of the national vote in the Duma elections of 2003. Thus, the hybrid choice “equally

⁶Full details of this procedure and the corrections necessary for weighted samples are available in the *Stata 8* guide (Stata, 2004).

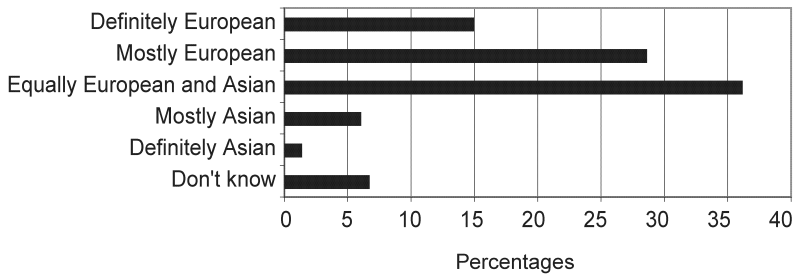


Fig. 1. Responses to the question, “Is Russia a European or an Asian country?” The bars indicate the ration of respondents who selected each region.

European and Asian,” while not ideal, comes as close to the concept of Eurasianist as is possible in the simplified language that we offered to respondents in the survey.

This middling hybrid “Eurasianist” option emerged as the most popular of the choices offered in our survey, at 36 percent, followed by the “mostly European” choice at 29 percent. However, if we add the “definitely European” percentage of 15 percent, the European option has an accumulated total of 44 percent. The Asian options only gained the support of 7 percent. Thus, one interpretation of these figures is that “Westernizers” (*zapadniki*) constituted a plurality of the Russian electorate at the time of the poll in April 2002. We should remember that “Westernizers” is both a geographic and ideological self-placement. While there is undoubtedly a large overlap in these two conceptions, it is also highly plausible that one could believe that Russia is “equally a European and Asian country” because of its huge size and geographic range from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok while still maintaining that it is a “Western” country in its historical ties, its economic models, its cultural links, and its political values. Contemporary Russian politics since 1991, in both its geopolitical choices and its electoral outcomes, has revolved around the binary choice of a “Western” option, promoting greater contact with and integration into the European and American realms and a “non-western” option that sets Russia up as an opponent to the West, including close ties with the Asian giants of China and India, and implacably opposed to U.S. domination of world affairs. Additionally, the “Western” option pursues a capitalist model of economic growth that promotes foreign investment in Russia, while political life should be transparent, open, and democratic. After reaching its apex during the early years of the Yel’tsin presidency (1991–1996), the “Western” model has taken a backseat to the “statist” model of President Vladimir Putin, which combines a return to traditional Russian values of community, a strong state, and suspicion of Western geopolitical motives. However, as we shall see below, the attitudes towards individual Western countries are highly variable, with Germany and France much preferred over other European states and the United States.

One interesting feature of the graph in Figure 1 is that the prevailing binary in Russian geopolitical culture is not between West and East, or Europe and Asia, but between West and a bridging hybrid category. The Asian option is clearly unappealing and thus, the self-placement contrasts a “European” with a “Eurasianist” one in a repetition of the pervasive structuring of where Russia places itself that has been evident since the mid-19th century (Neumann, 1996; O’Loughlin and Kolossov, 2002). The proportions in the graphs are approximately equal to the electoral percentages of the parties who espouse these orientations. The Communist party and other leftist blocs have garnered about one-third of the vote in post-Soviet elections, while centrist and center-right parties (including the pro-Presidential

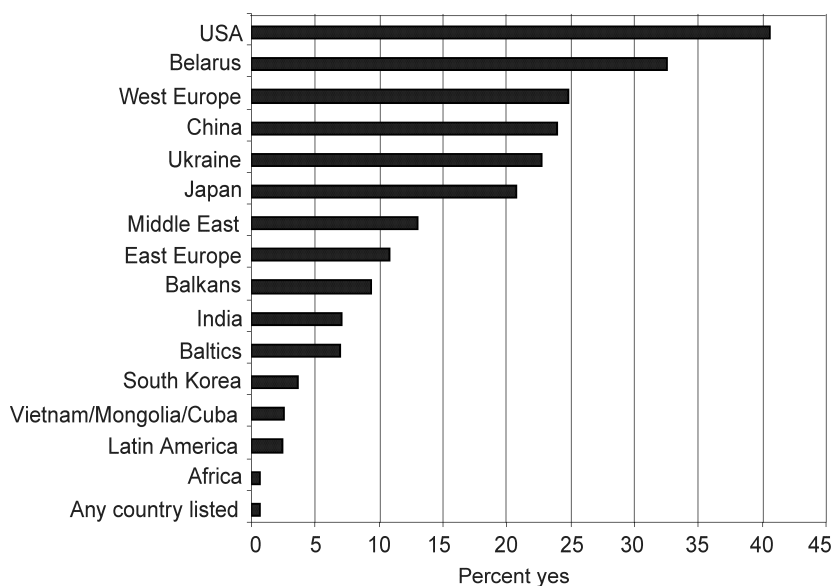


Fig. 2. Responses to the question, “Is <country or region> important for Russian foreign policy?” The bars indicate the ration of respondents who answered affirmatively to each country name.

party, *Yedinaya Rossiya*) have consistently managed to come out ahead, and in recent elections have managed to achieve well over half of the vote.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE IMPORTANT FOR RUSSIA?

Our question about the importance of different countries and regions was repeated 16 times for the 1800 respondents in the sample. Figure 2 shows the relative rank-order of the geographic prompts based on the ratio of respondents who agreed that the region or country was important. Though we analyzed the responses for all the 15 countries surveyed, we report here only the most important results for the largest and most strategically-important states. While we examined all the socio-demographic and ideological predictors for significant association with the responses on country importance, we only report the significant associations in constrained models. These regression models with significant relationships at the 5 percent level of confidence for the *t*-values associated with the predictors are shown in Table 1.

At 42 percent, the United States emerges as the overall most important state in April 2002 in the eyes of Russians, with high values also for other strategically proximate states (Ukraine, Belarus) or economic giants (Western Europe, China, Japan). There is an evident distance-decay effect with distance from Russia, as poor Third World regions score low on the overall strategic measures; Africa, Latin America, and the former Soviet allies of Mongolia/Cuba/Vietnam receive low scores (less than 5 percent agreeing that they are important for Russia). At a time when Russians are coping with significant domestic adjustments to a new economic order that has generated dramatic polarization into strata of social well-being, foreign events and the foreign policy of Russia have generally diminished in importance among its citizens. Moreover, as Kolossov (2003a, 2003b) has shown, Russians’

Table 1. Constrained Logit Model Coefficients for Selected Country and Regional Importance^a

Predictor	USA	W. Europe	Japan	E. Europe	Ukraine	Belarus	Mid East
Success possible	-.152 (-3.0)	-.017 (-15.5)		-.453 (-6.8)	-.471 (-4.6)		-.443 (-9.4)
Possible to live	-.100 (-8.8)			-.231 (-5.5)	-.114 (-3.9)		-.248 (-9.8)
Income sufficient	-.047 (-5.2)	-.238 (-9.6)	-.112 (-4.7)	-.177 (-18.2)	.099 (5.2)	.147 (9.0)	
Communists	-.086 (-4.9)			-.103 (-34.1)	.158 (9.9)		
Size of settlement		-.197 (-10.2)		-.049 (-11.9)	-.150 (-28.2)	-.224 (-16.6)	-.344 (-16.2)
Region	.186 (95.4)		.076 (4.8)	.298 (22.4)		-.184 (-29.8)	-.137 (-43.6)
Female CPRF	-.226 (-3.1)		-.516 (-5.0)	.262 (11.5)			
Eurasianists	.365 (-8.3)	.739 (-17.2)	.441 (4.7)	.297 (4.8)	-.231 (-6.0)	.092 (3.6)	-.154 (-4.7)
Westernizers	.885 (-16.0)	-.382 (-4.8)	-.747 (-11.0)	.267 (6.4)	-.293 (2.8)	-.208 (11.8)	
Military					-.296 (-3.3)	.439 (19.3)	-.293 (-3.1)
Government and scientists					-.180 (-5.9)	.175 (6.7)	
Unemployed	-.332 (-9.3)	-.237 (-9.4)	-.299 (-3.4)			.579 (13.4)	-.666 (-12.9)
Pensioners			.114 (4.7)		.225 (7.9)	.321 (12.0)	
Industrial employment	-.009 (-9.4)		-.006 (-5.9)	-.022 (-23.6)	.009 (9.0)	.014 (22.2)	
Age	-.154 (-6.4)				-.081 (-3.4)	-.052 (-6.4)	1.025 (11.2)
Married		.302 (17.7)		-.391 (-6.4)	-.236 (-3.5)		.996 (17.3)
Divorced				-.390 (-13.8)			.896 (27.0)
Single							.239 (10.2)
Muslim							.742 (6.3)
N. Caucasus	1.178 (3.3)						
Ural-Volga Muslim	-.181 (-4.3)						
Putin approval	.511 (19.5)		-.259 (-4.3)	.394 (4.1)	.423 (9.4)		-.363 (-31.3)
U.S. right	.233 (13.9)	.330 (10.1)	-.151 (-3.5)		-.229 (-12.1)		.417 (5.0)
Foreign policy interest	.299 (9.2)	.245 (5.3)	.255 (5.1)	.475 (9.4)		.272 (7.6)	.146 (3.9)
Russia economic development	.791 (8.8)	.128 (19.4)	-.064 (-8.0)		-.103 (-22.4)		
Constant		2.218 (15.6)	-.2037 (-6.8)	-.619 (-2.9)	-.1.881 (-5.3)	-.1.606 (-17.5)	-.1.248 (-31.9)

^at-values are indicated in parentheses.

information about foreign countries is often partial, biased, stereotyped and heavily influenced by mass media, especially television images (see also Zarubezh'ye, 2002).

The primacy of the United States is not surprising. Our survey was conducted six months after the September 11 attacks at a time when the U.S. was engaged in a war in Afghanistan, when it was building up its forces in Central Asia, and was beginning its mobilization for the attack on Iraq less than a year later in March 2003. The high ranking of the United States should not be confused with any preference or liking for it. As is well documented by longitudinal opinion polls in Russia, the U.S. typically ranks only 6th on the list of countries with which Russians "sympathize" (<http://bd.fom.ru/geo/show>; accessed January 9, 2006), although there was a noticeable groundswell of sympathy for the U.S. consequent upon the September 11 terrorist attacks.⁷ From 32 percent in early 2001 to a value of 38 percent in late September 2001 and a peak of 46 percent in early February 2002, to a low of only 17 percent only a few weeks later in early March 2002 (the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics with its controversies about athletic drug use and favoritism for American competitors) to the more usual level of 27-32 percent in late 2005, the ratio of Russians who find the US to be a "friendly" country to Russia shows a lot of variation and instability.⁸ The independent Levada-Center (formerly VTsIOM, now a different pro-governmental agency) has monitored perceptions among Russians of relations with the U.S. since the early 1990s, and reported that the difference between the percentage of Russian citizens having a positive and a negative attitude toward the USA reached its lowest points in May 1999 and April-May 2003 (respectively, -21 and -40 percentage points) and had registered several peaks (about +50 percentage points) between September 2001 and August 2002. In late 2005, it fluctuated between +31 and +36 percentage points (<http://www.levada.ru/russia.html>; accessed January 9, 2006). The positive-negative ratio is highly susceptible to individual events in world affairs (e.g., American actions against Saddam Hussein, perceived U.S. control of the Olympic judges, etc.), which move attitudes well above or below historic norms.

Western Europe was ranked third in our survey after Belarus (discussed below). In contrast to the U.S., whose importance is recognized but is somewhat viewed skeptically, Western Europe is more favorably viewed but was not perceived, at the time of our April 2002 survey at least, as the most important region for Russia. We should note that recent survey data suggests a more complex and evolving picture that has important implications for future Russian orientations, foreign policy, and possible treaties. Levada Center polls between 2001 and 2004 reveal that 27-30 percent of respondents believed it necessary for Russia to orient its foreign policy toward cooperation with the United States, while 49-54 percent believed such cooperation is essential with West European countries (Germany, France, Great Britain, and others). In a February 2005 FOM survey, five times more respondents held that partnership with the European Union (EU) was more important for Russia than with the United States (27 percent to 5 percent, respectively). FOM, Levada-Center, and VTsIOM surveys from 2001-2005 regularly reveal that about half of all respondents want Russia to enter the

⁷See the graphs of the tracking opinions in www.levada.ru or in www.fom.ru.

⁸The latest FOM survey on this theme conducted in September 2005 showed that the United States was perceived as a "friendly" state by 29 percent of respondents (51 percent thought it was "hostile"), which is a very low level compared with most other countries of the world, including West European ones (see <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/tb032305>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d023534>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/tb020606>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d020930>; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/Russia_USA/tb033604; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/Russia_USA/d041311; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/Russia_USA/tb053715 accessed January 9, 2006.

European Union, and most would vote for entry in a hypothetical referendum. Affective sympathy with European countries is explained not only by geographical proximity but by a widespread belief that the way of life, culture, and values of Europeans (which almost half of our respondents would share since they believe that Russia is a European state) and Americans differ very considerably. Answering the question whether they prefer Europeans or Americans, 58 percent preferred the former, and only 6 percent the latter (18 percent said that they regarded both positively). Similarly, 58 percent of Russians (70 percent in Moscow and St. Petersburg) think that their culture and way of life are closer to Europeans than to Americans, and only 7 percent associate themselves with American values.⁹ It should be noted that this pro-European sentiment does not necessarily imply anti-Americanism and is not correlated strongly with anti-Americanism. Russians do not think of Europe and the U.S. as bipolar choices. In the same February 2005 FOM survey, 46 percent of respondents preferred that Russia develop cooperation with *both* the United States and the EU. Those who are in favor of Russia's membership in the EU would quite logically like to see a rapprochement between their country and the U.S. Only 4 percent support the idea of membership in the EU and a separation from the United States.¹⁰

The socio-demographic and ideological variables significantly associated with the "important country" responses are shown in Table 1. The table includes logit regression models with significant relationships at the 5 percent level of confidence for the *t*-values associated with the predictors. Those respondents ranking the United States and Europe as important to Russia share the same predictive profile. Similarly, the two Slavic neighbors of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, also share the same socio-demographic predictors. By contrast, Japan, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe are more *sui generis* in their respondent profiles. A parallel classification of the states of the former Soviet Union according to the preferences and perceptions of Russians in a different national survey from 2003 showed that Belarus and Ukraine stood out from the other twelve former Soviet republics for their perceived closeness to Russia in culture and in the interest of Russian citizens in developing closer links to them (O'Loughlin and Talbot, 2005). As descendent polities from the historical Kievan Rus state, the three eastern Slavic countries are more tightly linked by cultural and linguistic ties than any other region or country in our study. In 2004, 79 percent of Russian citizens remained convinced that Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians are three branches of the same people (<http://www.levada.ru/files/1124718453>; accessed January 10, 2006).

Based on our previous work on Russian geopolitical culture and Tsygankov (2004), we hypothesized that the perceived importance of Western Europe and the United States would be positively related to the characteristics of survey respondents who are disproportionately Westernizers (*zapadniki*). Typically, these people tend to be more educated, reside in metropolitan areas, live in the northern part of Russia, are wealthier, and vote for liberal and conservative (non-Communist) parties. Furthermore, adults with a self-reported interest in foreign policy, those who approve of President Putin's foreign policy (at the time of our survey, still generally supportive of the Bush Administration's "war on terrorism"), and those who believe that Russia has a significant potential for economic development are expected to also show positive correlation with the high ranking of Western Europe and the U.S. The

⁹See <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=54&article=2129>; accessed January 10, 2006.

¹⁰See http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/tb052315; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/of050902; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/d050923; <http://www.levada.ru/interrelations3.html>; <http://www.levada.ru/russia.html>; all accessed January 10, 2006; also, Fedorov and Polikanov 2005.

reverse (negative associations) is expected for non-Westernizers, which also includes the more traditional Muslim population of the North Caucasus.

These expectations of the Westernizers' profiles are supported by the results portrayed in Table 1. Negative relationships with key indicators of the respondent's perception of the quality of life in contemporary Russia are particularly useful; among these are the variables summarized as "success possible,"¹¹ "income sufficient,"¹² and "possible to live."¹³ Furthermore, positive relationships of the importance of the U.S. and the Western European region to Russia with those who classify themselves as Westernizers (those who believe that Russia is a European state), Putin approval (approve President Putin's foreign policy), Russia as an economically developed state, and with interests in foreign policy support our expectation that the Western-oriented population of Russia is well-demarcated in public opinion polls about the position of Russia vis-à-vis other countries and regions of the world.

As already noted, at the time of the survey in April 2002, the U.S. attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan and the search for Osama bin Laden was in full swing. Initially strongly supportive of this military action, the Putin Administration began to back away from it during 2002, especially after the State of the Union speech in February by George W. Bush that castigated Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the "axis of evil" and heightened the prospect of further U.S. action against perceived terrorist states. On the key question of whether it was correct that the U.S. attacked the Taliban regime, Russians split: 44 percent were in favor, while 40 percent were against. As Table 1 indicates, respondents who believed that it was correct that the U.S. attacked the Taliban ("U.S. right") also thought that both the U.S. and Western Europe were important to Russia in world affairs. In contrast to these positive relationships and consistent with classification of Russians into Western liberals and statist harking back to the Communist tradition, Table 1 shows negative relationships with respondents who voted for the Communist party ("Communists"), as well as women supporters of the CPRF ("Female CPRF"), the older populations (the age relationship shows that the younger were more likely to designate the West as important), pensioners, and respondents who were in the military.

Perhaps the most interesting finding concerns the Muslim subpopulations represented in the sample. As we have two subpopulations divided by region (the Volga-Urals and the North Caucasus), we find the more urbanized and wealthier Muslim populations in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan are much likely to believe that the West is important for Russia, while the more rural and poorer North Caucasian Muslim sample holds the opposite view (Table 1). This finding is consistent with earlier results about the general geopolitical attitudes and beliefs of Muslims in Russia (Lehman, 1997; O'Loughlin et al., 2005).

Both Japan and Eastern Europe are situated between the West (Western Europe and the U.S.) and the post-Soviet states of Ukraine and Belarus in the minds of the Russian respondents in our survey. For Japan, the profile of the respondents who think this economically powerful country is important for Russia is similar to those who picked the West as important. The only noticeable differences from the regressions for Western Europe and the U.S. are the pensioner and the ideological preference variables; for these indicators, the coefficients are more similar to those who ranked the Middle East as important. Japan is not as

¹¹The question read, "Is success possible in Russia today?," and was scaled from 1, definitely possible, to 5, definitely not possible.

¹²"Is your income sufficient for your needs?," scaled from 1, definitely sufficient, to 5, definitely not sufficient.

¹³"Is it possible to live in today's Russia?," scaled from 1, definitely possible to live, to 5, definitely impossible to live.

prominent, and probably not as controversial, as a geopolitical focus as the other two capitalist regions because of its separation of economic and political affairs, especially its reticence to deploy its troops abroad. In general, Russians are critical of the use of military force to resolve international disputes (O'Loughlin and Talbot, 2005).

For Eastern Europe, the model shows some similarities to those of the U.S. and Western Europe. Unlike those two regions, however, the importance of this neighboring region to Russia is supported by women voters for the Communist party; most of this group are elderly and, frequently, not very well informed about foreign policy matters; their geopolitical worldview was formed at a time when this region was indeed perceived as vital to the USSR. Another possible speculation is that they might still consider this region an important buffer to Western intrusions into the Russian heartland, a tradition that emanates from older Russians' experiences during World War II and promoted by Josef Stalin as a basis for border re-making in 1945.

As we would expect from our classification of Russian voters, the importance of Ukraine and Belarus is an expression of close human and cultural contacts (millions of people in Russia have relatives there) and of traditional Soviet thinking that is reflected in the Eurasianist philosophy and orientations, as well as a pan-Slavic tradition that dates well back into the 19th century (O'Loughlin and Kolossov, 2002). The overwhelming and stable majority of Russian citizens want a deeper rapprochement with Belarus (80 percent in 2000, 85 percent in 2003). In November 2004, 76 percent of respondents were in favor of the creation of the Single Economic Space by Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (<http://www.levada.ru/files/1124718426>; accessed 10 January 2006).

As might be anticipated, some small unexpected results emerge in the regressions. For example, those who support Vladimir Putin's foreign policy think that both the Western regions and Ukraine and Belarus are important for Russian foreign policy. One would therefore expect that the members of the military, for example, would think that Ukraine is important to Russia, but the significant negative relationship (Table 1) indicates the reverse. In general, Belarus shows more consistent relationships for respondents with more traditional Soviet attitudes. Village residents (presumably engaged in agricultural pursuits), for example, think that Belarus is important, as do the unemployed. These two groups are among the most impoverished of contemporary Russian populations, and find it difficult to maintain an adequate standard of living (Levada, 2000; Zubarevich, 2005). The cleavage in Russian society between those who have benefited from the end of Soviet communism and the introduction of Western-style capitalism and those whose secure jobs in the Soviet system have now disappeared is reflected consistently in public opinion results that demonstrate attitudes towards politics and geopolitical preferences.

The Middle East is the most complex of the regions and countries that we used as prompts to analyze Russian orientations. Again, the temporal context of the survey is necessary to understand the results for this outcome variable. Even after the condemnation of Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the conservative Islamic regime of Iran in President Bush's State of the Union message in February 2002, only a small minority of Russians in our survey supported a U.S. attack on Iraq (15.4 percent) or Iran (14.5 percent). Traditionally an ally of the Arab states in the long-running conflict with Israel, Russia's relationship with the Middle East rates as relatively important in the average voter's mentality, as seen by a rating of 13 percent. Besides, as in most other countries of the world, current events in the Middle East are very often mentioned by the mass media, making it well known and increasing its importance in the eyes of an average citizen (Kolossov, 2003b).

Similar to the results for Western Europe and the U.S. in respect to most of the socio-demographic predictors, the Middle East's variable importance for Russians seems to depend especially on the different attitudes along two dimensions—the age cohorts and the Muslim—non-Muslim populations. For older respondents, the Middle East remains an important region after the end of the Cold War struggle for influence in that region, and as might be expected because of the continued prominence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Muslims rate the regions as important significantly more than non-Muslims. However, a distinguishable and significant difference between the Islamic populations of the North Caucasus (25 percent rate it as important) and the Ural-Volga sub-sample (only 13 percent rate it as important) also emerges. In this region, and for other key foreign policy questions, regional disparities among the Muslims of Russia demolish any conception of a unified group orientation.

Consistent with the perspectives for the major cleavages in Russian geopolitical culture that can be seen from the responses to the question of whether Russia is European, Asian, or a hybrid, we have identified the main dimensions of support for the importance of foreign countries and regions for Russians. Generally, respondents with a “westernizing” orientation agree that the major poles of the U.S. and Western Europe, as well as Japan and Eastern Europe, are important. By contrast, Ukraine and Belarus are listed as important for Russia by more traditionalist respondents who either look back to the era when these states were integral to the Soviet status in world affairs or who might be characterized as modern Slavophiles. This result can also partly be explained by the common perception of both Slavic states as not yet completely separated from Russia. The importance of the Middle East is less consistent and tends to draw varied support from across the geopolitical spectrum. While it is certainly plausible that a respondent could list a country as important for idiosyncratic reasons, it seems more likely from our study that places are important in respondents' visions because of their size, economic wealth, strategic location, proximity to Russia, and/or cultural affinity. Such representations match well the proclivity of Russian citizens to promote their country's alliance with the strongest countries (Kolossof, 2003a).

Almost all respondents could distinguish locations on their relative importance and we expect that these relative standings will vary as Russia's relations with foreign countries evolve. We did not find strong regional differences (e.g., respondents in Siberia being more likely to list China as important). However, other polls revealed that inhabitants of the Russian Far East believe China a “friendly” country significantly less often than in other regions (respectively, 58 percent and 67 percent) and, consistently, are more prone to anticipate worsening of China's relations with Russia in the future (20 percent against 15 percent for the rest of Russia). These higher values are certainly related to fears of Chinese economic expansion and immigration from this country to the sparsely populated eastern regions of Russia. These fears are the negative side of dominant media representations about China as a demographic and economic giant and of admiration of her dynamic growth in recent years (Kolossof, 2003a). Although 74 percent of respondents consider Russian-Chinese relations as “normal” and “quiet,” or even “friendly,” and 28 percent have a more positive attitude toward China over the past decade, Russia's large neighbor ranks second in the “negative” list of countries representing a threat to national security (17 percent) after the United States (30 percent). The highest-ranking of countries representing a threat to Russia's economic development is the same: the United States is first (33 percent) and China second (19 percent) (<http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=54&article=2129>; <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=54&article=2149>; accessed January 9, 2006).

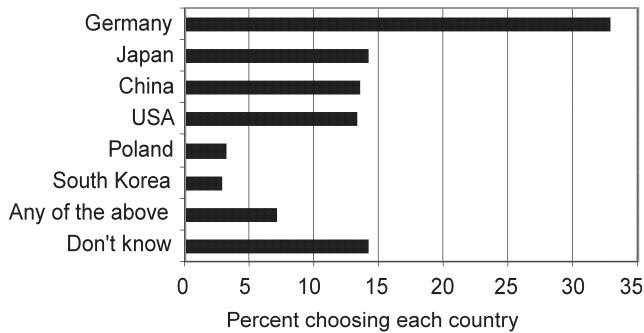


Fig. 3. Responses to the question, “Which of the following countries offers the best model for the economic development of Russia?” The bars indicate the ration of respondents who selected each country option.

WHOM SHOULD RUSSIA EMULATE? “MODEL COUNTRY” ORIENTATIONS

Our survey posed the following question about normative models for Russia to respondents, “Do you consider the experience of development of which country listed on the card, more than the others, could be useful for Russia?” The options from which the respondent could pick were Germany, the United States, China, Japan, Poland, South Korea, any of the above, or don’t know/refuse to answer. In our choice of model countries, we offered three Western options (Germany, Poland, and the U.S.) and three Asian options (China, Japan, and South Korea) and allowed respondents to consider countries that emerged from the debris of war to economic prominence (Germany, Japan) and countries that achieved rapid economic growth in recent years (China, South Korea, and Poland). The United States remains the icon of Western-style economic development, as well as a proselytizing power about the universality of its values and institutional forms. We did not probe why respondents picked a country whose experience might guide Russia, but analysis of the socio-demographic and ideological correlates allows useful insights into the dimensions of the choices.

In Figure 3, we show the summary responses for model countries, with Germany the clear leader, having more than double the ratio (32 percent) of the next-highest, Japan (14 percent). Recent research by Russian geographers (reported in Kolossov, 2001) has clearly shown the prominent role that Germany plays in Russian popular geopolitics. There is an ironic historical continuity in this regard, because East Germany was admired for its economic achievements in Soviet times. More Russians wish to visit Germany than any other country, and in many surveys Germany is the country most admired for its economic achievements. Germany was first of a list of countries “provoking sympathy” in 55 regions of 63 sampled within Russia.¹⁴ Russians know more about Germany than about other large countries, and for over a decade it has been the most important trading partner of Russia (in imports and in total trade volume) and the first foreign investor in the Russian economy. It is geographically the nearest large EU country to Russia, well-connected by air directly with

¹⁴The exceptions were the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, Yaroslavl’ Oblast, and Kalmykia, where the rating of France was slightly better, and four Far Eastern regions, where Japan is more popular than West European countries (<http://bd.fom.ru/geo/show>, accessed January 9, 2006).

two Russian capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and also with a number of regional centers (Kolossoff, 2005). Compared to countries like France, Italy, and United Kingdom, whose achievements are cultural, historical, literary, and landscape-iconic in the minds of Russians, Germany is consistently viewed first of all as a successful economy that was developed in the face of wartime destruction and through dint of the collective efforts of Germans. Since at least the late 1980s, memories of World War II do not determine representations of Russian citizens about Germany. In 2005, only 6 percent of respondents manifested a negative attitude to this country while 21 percent had a negative attitude to the U.S.

Furthermore, 70 percent of respondents considered Germany a country “friendly” to Russia (in 2001, it was 62 percent), and only 13 percent believed Germany “unfriendly,” in dramatic contrast to the 46 percent who considered the U.S. to be “unfriendly.” In addition, two-thirds of respondents thought that, unlike the United States, Germany plays a positive role in today’s world. Significantly, attitudes toward Germany were even better among more educated and wealthy people living in large cities and were only slightly worse among the elderly respondents who would have experienced the events of World War II.¹⁵ In choosing Germany as the country whose experience might best serve as a guide to a Russia moving through the growing pains of post-Communist economic transition, our respondents may be comparing the similarity of the post-World War II upheaval with that of the past 15 years in the former Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War or that of East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Although the United States, China, and Japan received about 14 percent each of the respondent votes on this question, it is not clear if their separate experiences were acknowledged by the respondents, or whether the respondents possessed only a general understanding of their economic growth without knowledge of the details. The two most recent examples of economic growth, South Korea (since the 1970s) and Poland (since 1989) each were selected by about 4 percent of the respondents. As much smaller economies with more recent and certainly less well-known growth than the other four options to ordinary Russians, it would be expected that these two countries would have smaller responses. And almost 15 percent of the respondents would not or could not choose any of the options, perhaps indicating confusion, ignorance, or a belief that Russia’s experience is *sui generis*.

As with the question examined earlier about which country is important for Russia, we developed a series of logit models for the responses to this question about a model country. As before, we are using the modified logit modeling available in *Stata 8.1* for multi-stratified weighted sampling. The results for the four countries with the largest ratios are shown in Table 2. As two major Western economic powerhouses, we would expect that Germany and the United States would have a similar support profile among Russian respondents, but, as can be seen from Table 2, this is not the case. The two countries show nearly consistent reverse signs across most categories. Why is this so? One obvious version would suggest that Germany offers a social market economic model as opposed to the pure capitalist model of the U.S., with which many Russians have had a negative experience since the early 1990s. The United States likes to think of itself as the economic and political hegemon of the beginning of the 21st century and, for many Russians, poses a continued threat to Russia’s

¹⁵See <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/tb051613>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/tb051612>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/of051604>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/d051629>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/d051625>; <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/countries/Germany/d051615>; and <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=54&article=2129>; all accessed January 10, 2006; also see Rudakov (2005).

Table 2. Constrained Logit Model Coefficients for Selected Country and Regional Models^a

Predictor	Germany	China	Japan	USA
Success possible	-.297 (-4.5)	-.391 (-5.2)		
Possible to live	-.183 (-2.9)	-.228 (-6.2)		
Standard living	.092 (11.5)		-.092 (-4.1)	
Income group			-.018 (-7.5)	-.059 (-4.2)
Income sufficient			.131 (20.4)	
Communists	-.014 (-14.8)		-.217 (-37.4)	.149 (8.0)
Size of settlement	-.055 (-14.2)	-.213 (-6.6)	-.259 (-11.2)	
Region	-.148 (-36.9)	.160 (16.8)	.177 (26.6)	.054 (55.9)
Female CPRF	-.229 (-4.5)		-.207 (-4.6)	
Eurasianists	.370 (9.2)	.232 (8.5)		
Westernizers	.549 (14.9)		.130 (6.2)	.225 (4.1)
Asianists	.159 (3.6)			
Military	.490 (8.0)		-1.028 (-15.5)	-.814 (-14.5)
Government and scientists	.259 (39.4)			-.291 (-7.7)
Unemployed	.325 (15.4)		-1.565 (-17.3)	
Pensioners			-.437 (-12.6)	
Industrial employment	.354 (11.3)		-.291 (-9.7)	-.284 (-26.7)
Agricultural employment			-.225 (-4.5)	
Service employment				
Age		.024 (73.8)		-.017 (-24.8)
Married		.445 (19.6)		.257 (6.2)
Widowed				
Single		.409 (4.7)	.393 (10.3)	.422 (25.9)
North Caucasus Muslim		-.635 (-5.7)		
Volga-Ural Muslim				-.331 (-5.7)
Putin approval	-.084 (-4.6)	-.261 (-4.5)		.576 (9.4)
U.S. right	.179 (6.5)	.057 (16.1)		
Foreign policy interest	.114 (3.7)			
Russia is a strong state	.054 (4.8)	.115 (7.3)		
Russia economic development		.257 (9.4)		-.187 (-6.2)
Russia's political influence	-.091 (-6.5)	-.201 (-5.3)	.127 (7.5)	
Constant	-.646 (-3.3)	-2.995 (-10.6)	-.701 (-7.2)	-1.690 (-8.6)

^at-values are indicated in parentheses.

autonomy and status in world affairs. Thus, it might represent a model to be avoided. Noticeably, there are far fewer significant correlates for the U.S. than for the other countries.¹⁶

Most Russian citizens believe that the United States exerts mostly a negative role in the world: the percentage of those who share this opinion has fluctuated around the 50 percent

¹⁶As is the case in Table 1, only relationships significant at the 5 percent level of confidence are listed.

mark for the past five years. The respondents expressing negative feelings toward American hegemony declare that the U.S. likes to impose its will on other states (21 percent), whereas others characterize its foreign policy as “aggressive,” specifically mentioning the war in Iraq. A small minority of respondents (4 percent) speculate that the U.S. has a negative influence on different aspects of life in Russia, from the economy to culture and the state of public morals (http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/international_relations/of041208, accessed January 11, 2006).

This consistent negative attitude toward the United States reflects not only the effects of socialization under communist times but also historic habits of thought that are characteristic of Russian geopolitical culture. Despite the collapse of the Soviet system, most Russian citizens retain the perception of their country as a fortress besieged by a “hostile encirclement.” This representation has its roots in the pre-1917 (Bolshevik Revolution) past, but has been particularly strengthened during the period when the Soviet Union officially proclaimed a strategy of “world revolution” during the Cold War. Most Russian citizens (42 percent in both 1994 and in 2005) “fully agree” or “mostly agree” with the statement that Russia has “always provoked hostile feelings in other states” (39 percent disagree; Levada, 2000; http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/frontier/rossiya_i_stran_mira/truck_West/of050902). Therefore, foreign influence or involvement in domestic affairs is associated with the erosion of national/ethnic identity and is perceived as a threat. This statement is based on a supposition of a strong opposition to the formation of the monopolar world and to American hegemony.

Real or mythical economic and political autonomy constitutes a superior value for Russian public opinion. Citizens are against Russia’s interference in the affairs of other countries but show irreconcilable opposition toward what they perceive as a violation of the sacred principle of national sovereignty. Part of the population is still nostalgic about the status of great power lost as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. They ranked the return of this status as third on a list of expectations from the new president (Putin) in January 2000—well before a number of real problems like, for instance, Chechnya (<http://www/romir.ru/2000/expectations.html>, accessed January 9, 2006). They consider economic might and social well-being as the main criteria of a great power. Geopolitical theories are by no means popular among the general public (O’Loughlin, 2001).

A closer examination of the responses to the choice of the United States as the best economic model for Russia yields many interesting socio-demographic distinctions (Figs. 4A and 4B). Overall, only 13.1 percent of the sample picked the United States as the best model and this is the comparative figure (average) for the bar graphs in Figures 4A and 4B. The single largest ratio is 25 percent for Yabloko voters. A social democrat party of the centrist-left political spectrum led by Gregoriy Yavlinskiy, this party has consistently promoted a pro-Western orientation for Russia since the early 1990s. Combining a liberal democratic position in the realm of political and social rights with a generally pro-market economic ideology, its closest counterparts are the social market advocates of Western Europe, such as the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Yabloko’s supporters have traditionally been concentrated in the large metropolitan and other urbanized areas and are disproportionately better educated and wealthier than the average voter. In contrast to the Yabloko profile, the smallest ratios picking the U.S. are for the population with the lowest education, at 6 percent. However, there is not a simple and unidirectional correlation between social status and the choice of the U.S., as is evident for the bar graphs for the income groups. Both the poorest and wealthiest groups have higher than average ratios.

The most consistent variable that predicts the choice of the U.S. as an economic model is whether the respondent agreed that the US could attack Iran because of its alleged support of

terrorism.¹⁷ Clearly there is a Westernizing–non Westernizing scale present in this ideological domain. The profile of the respondents who picked the U.S. as an economic model is highly consistent with the general geopolitical orientation that has been well developed in Russia since 1991 but that was present even in Communist times. Although all of the countries show fairly predictable profiles, the choice of the United States as an economic model seems to be predicated in part on a political or ideological basis as well.

As anticipated from our classification of Russian geopolitical culture, Westernizers are consistent in their choice of both Germany and the United States as a model economy. Germany is significantly related with the self-classifications of respondents of themselves as Europeans and with respondents who live in the West of Russia and in large metropolitan centers. It is also consistent with political preferences. Both Communist party voters and women CPRF voters show a negative relationship with the choice of Germany. Further, and consistent with the socio-economic profile of left-wing voters, the choice of Germany is significantly negative within the poorer segments of contemporary Russian society and with old people, disproportionately supporters of the CPRF. In the case of the German model, they are likely to have more negative memories of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

For both the United States and Germany, if respondents approved of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy, they tended to choose these Western superpowers as model states. Consistent with Putin's assertion of Russia's place in the world and, at the time of our survey in April 2002, his alignment with the U.S. in the "war on terror," respondents who think that Russia is a significant player on the world stage chose the U.S. and Germany as models. Unlike the respondents who picked Germany, Muslims in Russia disproportionately declined the choice of the U.S., as might be expected by the timing of the survey, when the U.S. had invaded Afghanistan and was discussing the option of invading Iraq. Another important difference between the two Western states is the relationship with the respondents who are in the Russian military; they disproportionately choose Germany as a model but not the United States.

The results for China as a model are similar to those for Germany, with an important regional difference within Russia. Those respondents in the West of the country tended to choose Germany as a model, whereas those in Siberia tended to look to Japan and China. Muslims in the North Caucasus republics in the sample, however, showed a lower than average choice of China as a model state for Russia. Although we might expect some similarity between China and Japan in terms of the profiles of those who picked them, the results in Table 2 do not support this. The respondents who choose Japan are mostly characterized by occupational groupings. It is the poorer and less-skilled segments of the sample who did not choose Japan, as the coefficients for the unemployed, rural workers, industrial workers, and pensioners in Table 2 demonstrate. Since these groups are the backbone of the Eurasianist option, the results suggest that Japan as an economic model holds little appeal for these groups whose lives and skills were more substantial in the Soviet economy.

Our study of the choices that Russians make in their model economy clearly demonstrates that these distinctions are meaningful and related to deeper geopolitical orientations and motivations. Since the break in Russia's economic model from the Communist-era economy, two obvious economic poles have been present for over a decade, associated with political movements and also with external relations. The state-managed economy and political

¹⁷A similar profile is seen in the responses to questions about possible attacks on Iraq and North Korea, the other members of George Bush's "axis of evil."

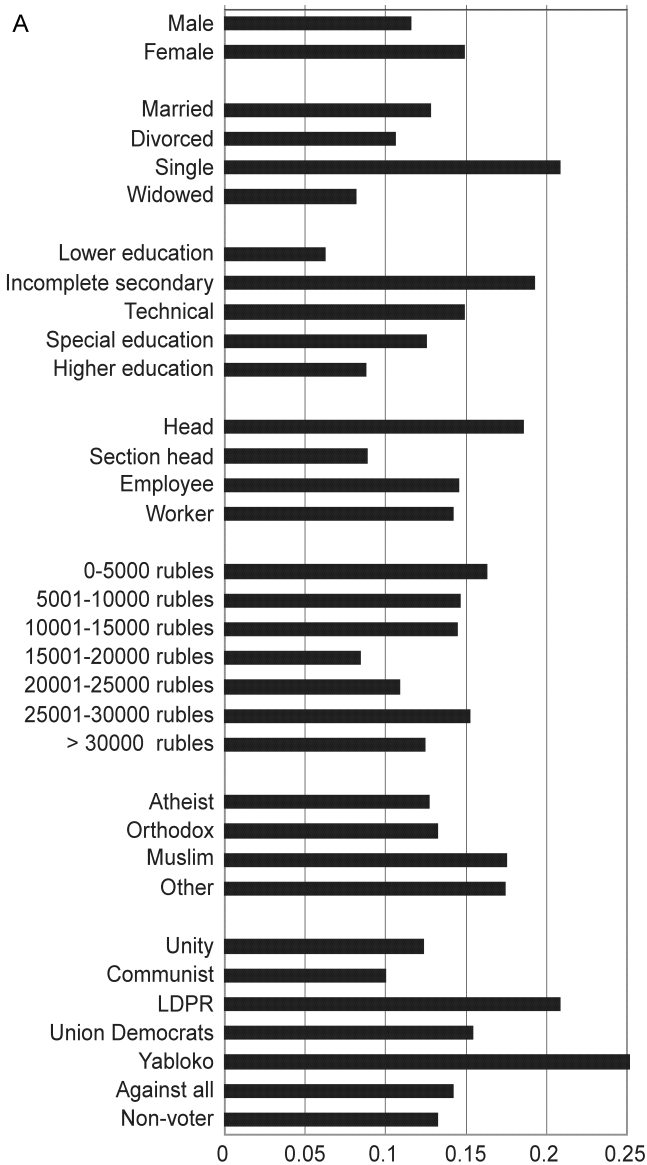


Fig. 4. Distribution of support across socio-demographic categories for the choice of the United States as the best economic model (see text for details).

model, now promoted unreservedly by the Putin administration, has a more extreme version in state socialism but mixes some privatization with state oversight and controls. It is also associated with restrictive political freedoms and a strong dose of nationalism. Politically, it is represented by the dominant political party of the past five years, Yedinaya Rossiya (O'Loughlin et al., 2005). Other options offer an avowedly Westernizing model with liberalism dominant in both economic and political realms and an Eurasianist model, now associated increasingly with the Communists and other leftists. Though our surveys show about

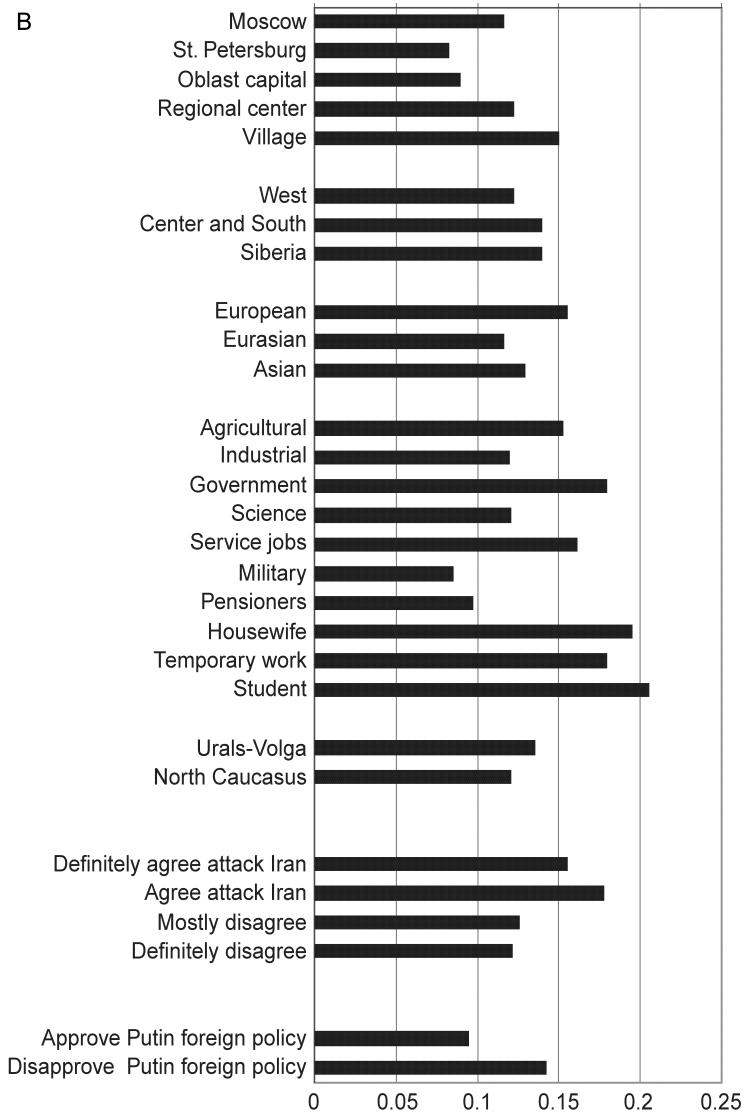


Fig. 4. Continued.

one-third of Russian voters can be characterized as supporting this pure Westernizing model, the political parties espousing these positions have been losing ground over the past half-decade. Tracking these trends that link domestic politics to geopolitical models and orientations is necessary to understand and anticipate future Russian trajectories.

CONCLUSION

Do states have an “original geographical meaning” as implied by Shevardnadze’s comment and much Cold War discourse? In this paper, we moved quickly beyond the commonplace, but simplistic, notion that states, by virtue of their location and historic-geographic

conditions, have a singular and mono-logical geopolitical essence. States have geopolitical cultures and these are stratified and heterogeneous. They can be studied from many different perspectives. In this paper, we have chosen to study one aspect of popular geopolitical imaginations, namely geopolitical orientations through the use of public opinion responses to questions on self classification, “important” and “model” countries. These responses can be cross-tabulated and modeled with socio-demographic and ideological data to build up an inductive picture of the competing geopolitical orientations characterizing a state society. While this research can and should be replicated for other countries, our experience with this research has led us to consider some refinements in how to go about the study of geopolitical orientations.

Dijkink (1996) made a useful start in his characterization of the geopolitical visions of many countries and showed their historical antecedents. Our experience with Russian geopolitical imaginations and orientation suggests that, while historical antecedents are important, imaginations and orientations are often fluid and highly susceptible to how current world events are framed by mass media. There are always segments of the population who hold onto traditional beliefs, but for many, even most, nearly instantaneous media coverage of major world geopolitical events can have dramatic impacts, including abandonment of long-held beliefs. Thus, public opinion surveys must be repeated in a regular fashion to track these changes. Most geopolitical discussions are inevitably condensed and simplified in ways that resonate with ordinary people. We constructed simple questions as a point of entry into the more complex dimensions of geopolitical imaginations. By repeating questions on a similar theme, we tried to inductively construct a profile of the socio-demographic and ideological groups that hold certain orientations in Russian geopolitical culture. Our argument is not that socio-demographic position or ideological beliefs determine geopolitical orientations. States do not have fixed and overdetermined orientations; rather, they have geopolitical cultures within which coalitions for particular orientation articulations are constantly forming and reforming in response to the daily drama of international affairs.

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