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## Russian Attitudes toward the West

In the late 1980s the vast majority of Russians supported pro-Western economic and political transformation. Although the transition to a market economy and democracy has eventually delivered economic benefits, most Russians are now skeptical about Western economic and political values. In this chapter, we use polls and microeconomic data to understand what determines Russians' attitudes toward the United States, the West, private property, free market economy, democracy, and other hallmarks of Western polity.

Russians' negative attitudes toward Western values are strikingly uniform across economic and social strata—and across time (they have increased over the last four years but not substantially). While the oldest and youngest Russians are more anti-Western than those in their 30s and 40s, all age cohorts are quite negative. On a positive note, however, despite most Russians' dislike of the West, many incorporate Western pragmatism in their everyday economic lives.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has undergone an unprecedented political, economic, and social transformation. The original goal was a transition to a Western-style democracy and market economy. Given the enormous challenges inherent in such a transition, it is not surprising that the transformation has not proceeded according to the initial plan. Nonetheless, although Russia's democracy and market economy are imperfect, the country is certainly more democratic and more capitalist than the Soviet Union was. What is unexpected is not the slow pace of progress but the change of destination. Both Russian policymakers and the majority of the population no longer view the Western model as

the goal, and this change in orientation and expectation is important as it moves Russia away from rather than toward the Western model.

Why and to what extent are Russians negative about the West as a partner and as a model for Russian society? We summarize the results from recent opinion polls and large-scale datasets on values, attitudes, and perceptions.<sup>1</sup> To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first microeconomic analysis of these data. Thanks to these large-scale surveys we are able to go beyond analysis based on regular opinion polls (surveying 1,000–2,000 Russians) and investigate the relationship between attitudes toward the West and age, income, family, and social status, among other factors.

We find, first, that Russians' attitude toward the West is almost uniformly negative across all economic and social strata. There are some differences between rich and poor, young, middle-aged, and old, but these differences are not important compared with the breadth and depth of the negative sentiment, which applies to the West generally and to the Western social model, democracy, and markets. These attitudes are substantially more negative in Russia than in any other surveyed transition country.

Second, there is no reason to believe that the negative sentiment will fade with time. The idea that Russians will grow closer to Western values as their country grows richer and experiences generational change does not seem to be consistent with the data. Young Russians dislike the West more than their middle-aged Russian compatriots. Although every year of economic growth has brought more prosperity to Russia, Russian and Western perceptions are only diverging further over time, as Russians' approval of markets is sinking, not rising.

Third, Russians dislike the Western socioeconomic model and the United States in particular, even as they rely on Western economic values in their everyday life. Surveys show that Russians are über-capitalists, placing significant value on wealth, power, and achievement—they are in fact more capitalist than most other European nations.

These three findings seem hard to reconcile. Why are young Russians' values more similar to those of their grandparents than to those of their parents? How can the negative attitude toward Western society coexist with the embrace of everyday Western pragmatism? We consider the ori-

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1. One is the *Life in Transition Survey* conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank in fall 2006; it surveyed about 10,000 Russians and 1,000 respondents in each of the other 28 transition countries about issues related to various objective and subjective measures of life. Another dataset, Georating, comes from the leading Russian pollster Public Opinion Foundation (Russian abbreviation FOM); it includes quarterly surveys of 34,000 Russians in 68 regions on various aspects of their life and their political, economic, and social views from 2003 through 2008. We also rely on multicountry opinion polls such as the Pew Global Attitudes Survey and the European Social Survey (ESS); the ESS, somewhat similar to the World Values Survey ([www.worldvaluessurvey.com](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com)), has been administered every other year in 30 countries since 2002 and in 2006 included Russia for the first time.

**Table 7.1 Response to “Is the United States a friendly country?” August 2003**

Response	Percent of respondents
Certainly unfriendly	18.3
Rather unfriendly	30.8
Rather friendly	27.8
Certainly friendly	3.6
Difficult to say	19.4

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, August 2003, <http://english.fom.ru>.

gins and impacts of these conflicting perceptions and speculate about possible explanations.

## Attitudes toward the United States

During the Cold War, the United States was the primary enemy of the Soviet Union and the main object of state propaganda. But one might imagine that perceptions had changed since the Soviet era, as American imports—McDonald’s, Hollywood movies, and Hummers—are now everywhere in Moscow and many other cities. Nonetheless the official rhetoric often portrays the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States as unfriendly and even uses the old Soviet propaganda about militarism and imperialism.

In table 7.1, we present the answers to the question “Is the United States a friendly country?” from the Georating 2003 poll. The results show that the attitudes of 50 percent of Russians are negative.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, that negative attitude was not unique to Russia. Georating posed the question in mid-2003, when responses may have reflected feelings about the war in Iraq: At the time, the United States was unpopular in many countries, including its long-term allies. Similarly, the Pew Global Attitudes Survey of about 5,000 residents of nine European countries in March 2003 showed that Russians’ attitude toward the United States was comparable to that of Germans and French and actually more positive than that of the Spanish and Turkish populations. In a similar survey of 44 countries prior to the war in Iraq, in April 2002, the Pew survey showed that the world on average, and Russians in particular, had a much more positive opinion of

2. Ideally, we would also have liked to see answers to the question “Is the West friendly toward Russia?” Unfortunately, we do not have such data. The dataset has answers to the statement, “Name three countries that are most sympathetic to you” from a list of 11 Western countries. However, inconsistencies in the coding of the data prevent us from including the results.

the United States. While Pew's sample in Russia was only 1,002 respondents in 2002, more than 50 percent of them held a very or somewhat favorable view of the United States and of Americans. By contrast, the 2007 Pew survey of 47 countries found that the United States is quite unpopular but, again, that Russians are more positive about it than most Western and Eastern European countries.

We further explore whether there are differences in Russians' attitudes toward the United States based on different characteristics. One of the most important dimensions to consider is respondents' age. One might anticipate that older Russians would dislike the United States more than the middle-aged and certainly more than the "McDonald's and Nintendo" generation. The older generations grew up in the Soviet Union with its anti-West propaganda in school and in the press. The younger Russians have grown up with many American products and influences and, one might have conjectured, would be more positive about the United States. If this were the case, one would expect a change to a friendlier attitude over time as the younger generation takes over.

The results are not consistent with expectations. The older generation does believe that the United States is not friendly to Russia, but so do young Russians, whereas the attitudes of Russians in their 30s and 40s are slightly more favorable. This result holds when controlling for the most common socioeconomic characteristics: gender, income, location (city, town, or village), and education (figure 7.1). The horizontal axis of the graph is the age of the respondent; the vertical axis is the average numerical value of the response as follows: "certainly friendly" (1), "rather friendly" (0.67), "rather unfriendly" (0.33), and "certainly unfriendly" (0).

We find an inverted U-shaped profile with regard to age. The youngest respondents (20 years old) dislike the United States to the same degree as the 60-year-olds; those who feel somewhat more favorably about the United States are the middle-aged (35 to 45 years old). The attitude of the older respondents (60 and older) is understandable, but it is surprising that young Russians dislike the United States so much. A similar age pattern appears in other measures of anti-Western sentiment from Georating as well as in the *Life in Transition Survey*,<sup>3</sup> where young Russians seem more negative about transition than middle-aged Russians.

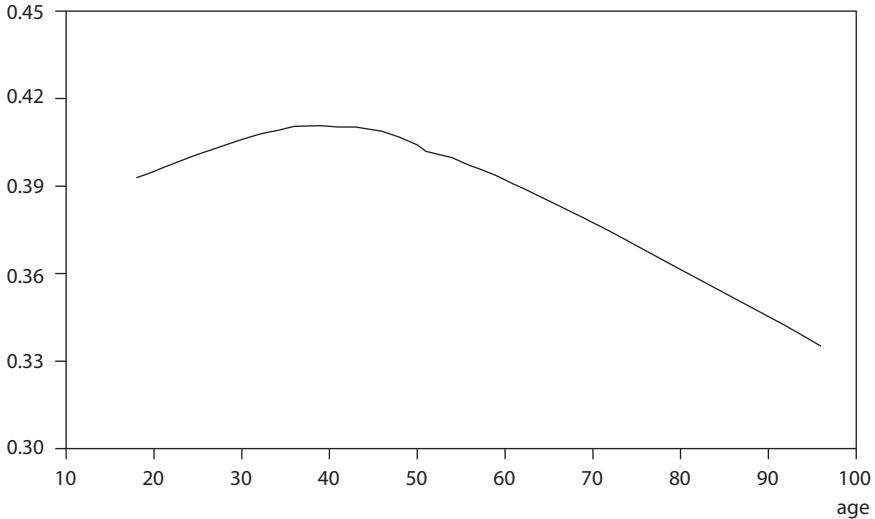
We can only speculate why young Russians are less positive about transition and the United States than their parents. A possible explanation is that they have not witnessed the shortcomings of the Soviet system but have been influenced by the recent years' official propaganda. They may also have learned about the Soviet system and the West from their grand-

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3. I. Denisova, M. Eller, and E. Zhuravskaya, "What Russians Think about Transition: Evidence from RLMS Survey," CEFIR/NES Working Paper no. 114 (Moscow: Centre for Economic and Financial Research, 2007).

**Figure 7.1 Response to “Is the United States a friendly country?” across age cohorts, August 2003**

average numerical value of response



Note: The figure shows the average answer (technically speaking, a nonparametric smoother) to the question, “Is the United States friendly to Russia?” controlling for respondents’ individual characteristics including income, education, gender, self-assessed social status, and location. The dependent variable is coded 1 “certainly friendly,” 0.67 “rather friendly,” 0.33 “rather unfriendly,” and 0 “certainly unfriendly.”

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, August 2003, <http://english.fom.ru>.

parents, who dislike the United States and the market economy more than the middle-aged Russians.

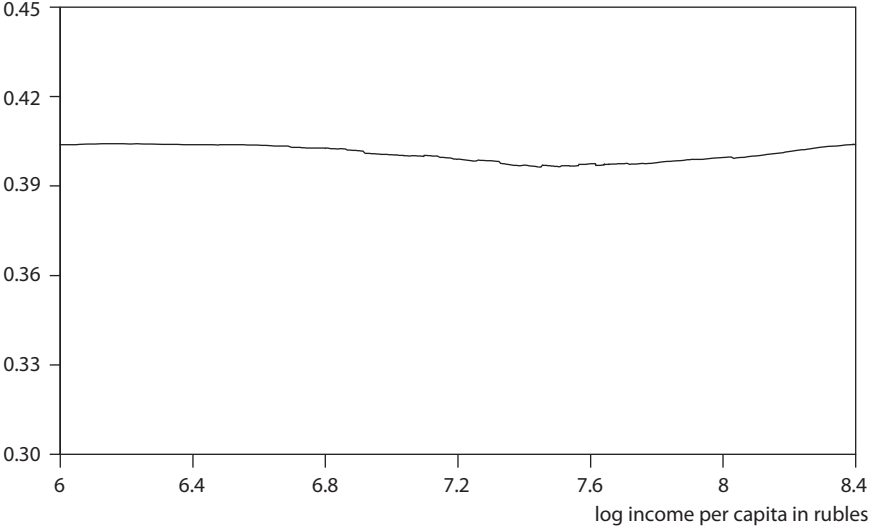
Other socioeconomic characteristics do not have a substantial effect. A graph based on respondents’ income (figure 7.2) shows that the negative attitude toward the United States is virtually uniform across Russian society. If anything, the better-off and educated Russians perceive the United States to be less friendly toward their country. Only the upper class is slightly more positive about the United States, but the difference is very small.

## The Negative Attitude toward the Western Model of Society

Given that the negative attitude toward the United States may be a reaction to US foreign policy—this would explain the low popularity of the United States among its Western allies—we analyze whether Russians

**Figure 7.2 Response to “Is the United States a friendly country?” by income, August 2003**

average numerical value of response



Note: This figure shows a nonparametric smoother controlling for respondents’ individual characteristics including income, education, gender, self-assessed social status, and location type. The dependent variable is coded 1 “certainly friendly,” 0.67 “rather friendly,” 0.33 “rather unfriendly,” and 0 “certainly unfriendly.”

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, August 2003, <http://english.fom.ru>.

think that the West is a good socioeconomic model for Russia. The difference from the question in the previous section is that, while Russians may think that the West is “against them,” they may nonetheless believe that Russian society should be built along the same principles.

We present the answers to the question “Is Western society a good model for Russia?” for polls conducted in the first quarters of 2004 and 2008 (table 7.2). These two polls also allow us to study the dynamics of the attitudes toward the West. They show a very negative attitude: In 2008 only 25 percent of the responses were positive or somewhat positive; among those who gave a definite answer in 2004, 30 percent were positive or somewhat positive. Thus the negative attitude toward the West increased from 2004 to 2008, although not significantly.

Again, income makes little difference. Figure 7.3 plots the average attitudes by income (2004 income is adjusted for inflation). The horizontal axis is the logarithm of income in 2008 rubles<sup>4</sup>; the vertical axis is the av-

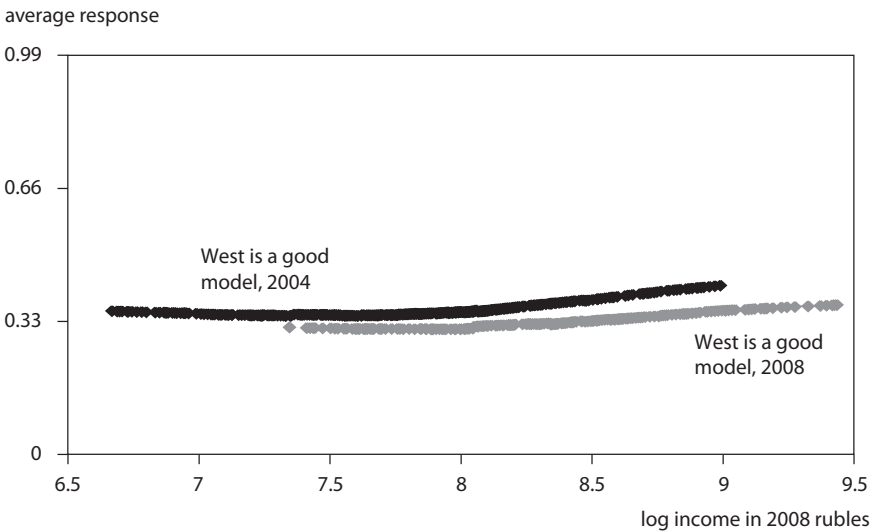
4. We excluded the top and bottom 5 percent of the income distribution to facilitate comparison.

**Table 7.2 Response to “Is Western society a good model for Russia?” 2004 and 2008**

Response	Percent of respondents	
	2004Q1	2008Q1
Certainly not	27.1	30.2
Rather not	29.8	29.8
Rather yes	22.3	18.2
Certainly yes	7.3	7.2
Difficult to say	13.5	14.6

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, 2004 and 2008, <http://english.fom.ru>.

**Figure 7.3 Response to “Is Western society a good model for Russia?” by income, 2004 and 2008**



Note: The y-axis scale is 1 = “certainly yes,” 0.67 = “rather yes,” 0.33 = “rather no,” and 0 = “certainly no.” The x-axis is logarithm of income in 2008 rubles; top and bottom 5 percent of distribution excluded.

Sources: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, 2004 and 2008; authors’ calculations.

erage of the attitudes about Western society as a model for Russia. The top black line on the graph presents the results for 2004, the bottom grey one 2008 (all in 2008 rubles). (The 2008 curve shifts by about 0.5 to the right in logarithmic terms relative to the 2004 curve, representing the 13 percent annual growth in real incomes in 2004–08.) We summarize the results:

**Table 7.3 Response to “Which society is more just and fair—Russian or Western?” 2004Q3**

Response	Percent of respondents
Certainly Russian	6.8
Rather Russian	16.6
Rather Western	30.4
Certainly Western	17
Difficult to say	29.2

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, Georating poll, 2004, <http://english.fom.ru>.

1. *Russians do not like the Western model of society.* In both 2004 and 2008, the average response for all income categories was close to 0.66. In other words, Russians think that their country should not be like the West.
2. *Russians’ attitude toward the Western model of society has worsened in the last four years.* The line of responses in 2008 shifted down, indicating that Russians like the West less across all levels of incomes.
3. *Rich Russians like the Western model more than the poor do, but the difference is small.*

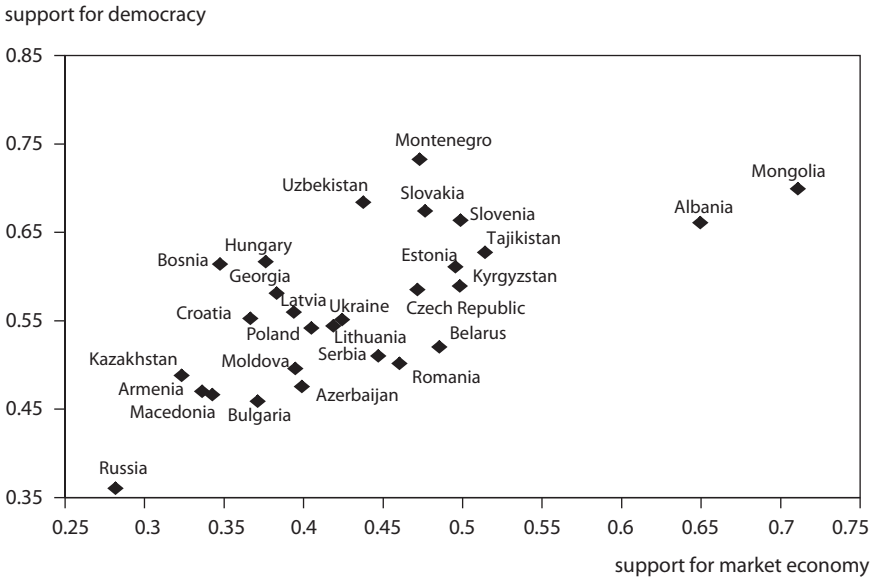
While Russians do not think their country should imitate the West, they acknowledge that the Western model delivers good social outcomes and is fairer. Respondents were asked: “In your opinion, today, which society is more just and fair, Russian or Western?” The breakdown of responses (for 2004Q3) is presented in table 7.3. The responses are clearly positive about the fairness of Western society, at 47 percent compared with only 23 percent favoring Russian society—that is, twice as many Russians believe that the West is more fair and just than Russia. This pattern is true controlling for age, income, and other characteristics.

## Are Russians Uniquely Nondemocratic?

Data from the Pew Global Attitudes Survey and the leading Russian pollster Levada Center as well as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank illustrate Russians’ view of democracy. The polls usually include only 500 to 2,000 respondents per country, but they allow international comparisons that help to benchmark Russians’ attitudes in comparison with those of other nations.

Figure 7.4 displays survey data on attitudes toward market economy and democracy from the *Life in Transition Survey* conducted by the World Bank and the EBRD in 28 transition countries. These data show that Rus-

**Figure 7.4 Support for market economy and democracy across 28 transition countries, 2006** (share of population)



Source: World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Life in Transition Survey*, fall 2006.

Russia is an outlier, with the least support of any of the polled countries for both market economy and democracy—even less than the common straw man of Western criticism, Belarus. This pattern correlates with Russians’ rejection of the West as a model for their society.

How have Russians’ attitudes toward democracy changed over time? In 1991 many Russians were ready to discard autocracy. When asked whether Russia should rely on a democratic form of government to solve the country’s problems or on a leader with a strong hand, 39 percent chose a strong hand and 51 percent a democratic government, a purely abstract concept at the time.<sup>5</sup>

The picture was very different in 2005, the latest year for which comparable data are available. Given the same choice, only 28 percent of Russians favored a democracy while 66 percent preferred a strong leader.<sup>6</sup> The growing incomes matter but are not crucial: Among Russians earning more than 8,000 rubles per month, 34 percent said democracy could solve

5. Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, *The Pulse of Europe: A Survey of Political and Social Values* (Washington, 1991).

6. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Pew Global Attitudes Project: 15 Nation Survey* (Washington, 2006).

the country's problems compared with 27 percent of those making 4,000 to 8,000 rubles per month.

Perhaps the comparison itself played a role in the responses. When pressed to choose between a strong hand and a democracy, people may pick a strong hand because democracy sounds like a weak hand or one that does not provide well. It is likely that the respondents associate the opposites of weakness and strength with the opposites of (relative) poverty and (relative) prosperity. When asked whether a good democracy or a strong economy were more important, Russians overwhelmingly chose a strong economy by an 81 to 14 percent margin.<sup>7</sup>

The Levada Center has posed the same question in its regular polls but with different results. On the question, "Does Russia need a democracy?" 62 percent answered yes and only 20 percent said no in 2008.<sup>8</sup> But answers to further questions clarify how Russians understand democracy. Of those polled, 45 percent would choose a democracy that is "special, suited to Russia's uniqueness and national traditions"; only 20 percent prefer a democracy that is just like in "the developed countries of Europe and America." Only 13 percent chose "the democracy that was in the Soviet Union."

Can we reconcile these facts? In 1991 Russians were choosing between the known and unknown: They no longer wanted what they had but something else instead ("democracy"). Today, after being disappointed by "democracy" they again want something else, not a "Western-style democracy" but a "specially suited democracy." And this "special democracy" should accompany economic growth—unlike the "generic Western-style democracy" of the 1990s.

## Russian Capitalist Pragmatism

The previous section could give the impression that Russians are very different from Westerners. But in their economic behavior Russians are much closer to the Western *homo oeconomicus*. When asked about common, everyday wisdom—rather than about general concepts like "the West," "market," and "democracy," which may be alien and abstract to them—Russians respond very much as they did in the 1991 survey conducted by Robert Shiller, Maxim Boycko, and Vladimir Korobov (see next section).

For example, the Georating survey asked respondents in 2003, "Please name the words that are the most important to the people living in your region." Respondents chose from 24 words of common human and eco-

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7. Ibid.

8. Levada Analytical Center, *Russian Public Opinion 2007* (Moscow, 2008), [www.levada.ru/eng](http://www.levada.ru/eng) (accessed on September 1, 2008).

conomic values. Most important to Russians were safety (37 percent), peace (33 percent), and material well-being (34 percent), followed by religion (27 percent), family (25 percent), and stability (25 percent). The terms “patriotism” and “national power” lagged far behind—as did “democracy” and “human rights.”

In 2006 Russia participated in the large-scale European Social Survey (ESS), which allowed sociologists for the first time to compare Russian values with those of other Europeans.<sup>9</sup> Respondents considered descriptions of a variety of people and for each description indicated the degree of similarity to themselves on a scale from 1 to 6. The ESS describes a typical Russian as follows: “This person wants to have a lot of money and expensive goods. It is important to him/her to be respected. This person wants people to do what he/she wants. He/she wants to be successful.” The survey results indicated, first, that Russia (together with Romania) is ahead of 17 other European countries on the power-wealth index that measures how important it is to be rich, respected, and have power over other people. Second, achievement is an important value for Russians (Russia is ahead of 14 European countries in this category). Russia lags behind the other countries on caring about others (i.e., caring about the well-being of others, fidelity to friends, and readiness to help) and universalist values (respecting the opinion of others and caring about the environment). Finally, the ESS data show that Russians score high on risk taking and openness to change. The data support our contention that Russians are no longer *homo sovieticus*. If anything, they are even more capitalist in their day-to-day life than Europeans.

## Why Beliefs Matter

The first comprehensive study of Russian beliefs and whether they are similar or different from those in the West was the 1991 work of Robert Shiller, Maxim Boycko, and Vladimir Korobov.<sup>10</sup> In telephone interviews in Moscow and New York, they posed questions about attitudes to markets, inequality, and wealth. They followed this survey with another round extended to other Russian and Ukrainian cities.<sup>11</sup> They found that Russians and Americans were surprisingly similar in their attitudes about

9. Vladimir Magun and Maxim Rudnev, “Zhiznennye Tsennosti Rossiiskogo Naselenia” [“Values of the Russian Population”], *Vestnik Obschestvennogo Mnenia* 1 (2008): 34–59.

10. Robert J. Shiller, Maxim Boycko, and Vladimir Korobov, “Popular Attitudes Toward Free Markets: The Soviet Union and the United States Compared,” *American Economic Review* 81, no. 3 (1991): 385–400.

11. Robert J. Shiller, Maxim Boycko, and Vladimir Korobov, “Hunting for Homo Sovieticus: Situational Versus Attitudinal Factors in Economic Behavior,” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, no. 1 (1992): 127–81.

most of these issues. The authors thus concluded that *homo sovieticus* did not exist or was at least not broadly different from the Westerner. A possible explanation for the lack of divergence is that the Russians were in the period of a honeymoon with the idea of the market economy—the interviews took place in the early 1990s when the average Russian was disillusioned with the state-run economy and had not yet seen the functioning (and fallibility) of the market economy.

Contrary to widespread beliefs, the reformers of the Russian economy in the 1990s understood the challenge of large-scale institutional transformation and knew that such a comprehensive reform could not be a top-down effort but required grassroots support. According to the initial Yegor Gaidar plan, reforms would be painful but as they brought results Russians would appreciate their value and support further reform.<sup>12</sup> But the painful reforms of the 1990s caused Russians severe disillusionment with the market economy. Partially in response to such negative popular sentiment, Russian policymakers have since undertaken a significant policy reversal. The early 2000s saw the first reversals of democratization policies, evident in the decline of Russia's rankings for democracy and media freedom.<sup>13</sup> Then came the reversal of liberal economic policy, starting with the nationalization of the Yukos oil company, as well as the development of state corporations and expansion of government spending.

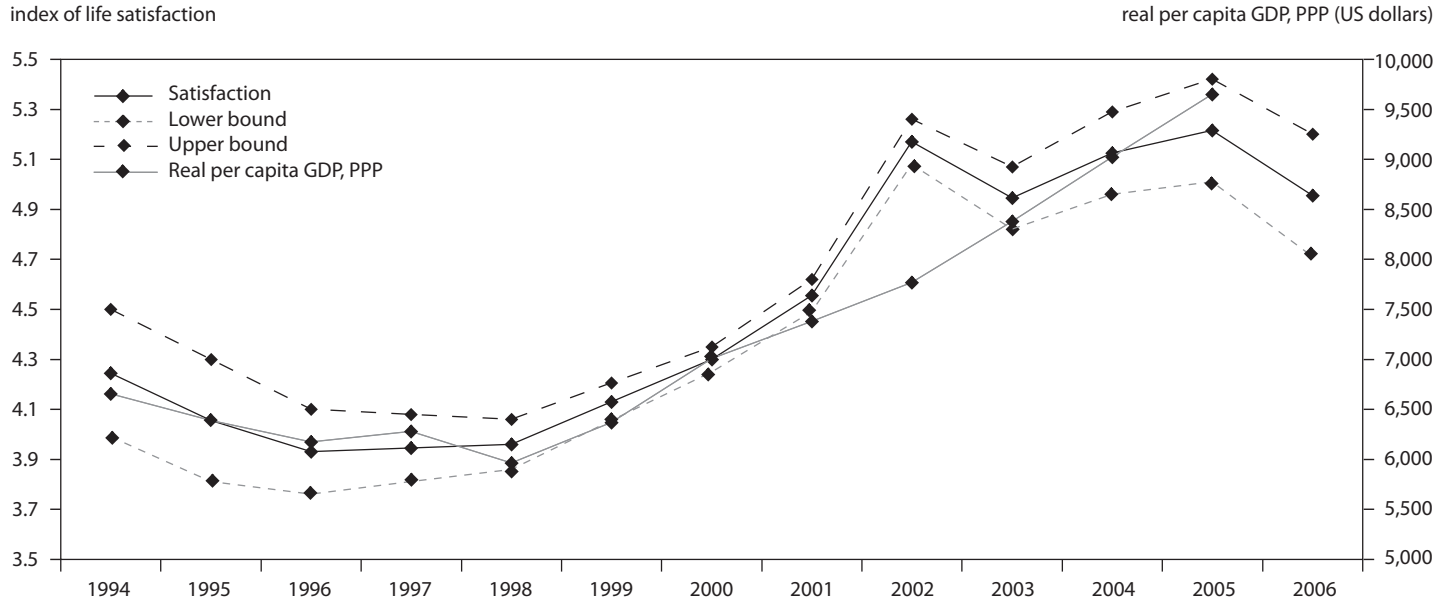
The reversal of promarket and democratic policies coincided with a decade of spectacular economic growth (7 percent per annum on average). Moreover, contrary to the popular stereotype, this economic growth has not benefited just the lucky few but has trickled down to everybody. All measures of economic well-being have improved—unemployment and poverty fell by half and real wages tripled. Russians were buying cars, cell phones, and vacations abroad at a level that could not have been envisioned in the 1990s or, indeed, at any time in Russian history. The average Russian enjoyed this higher level of prosperity. Figure 7.5 presents a proxy for subjective well-being, an index of life satisfaction measured across a representative panel of Russians since 1994.<sup>14</sup> The graph shows that people are substantially happier than they were in the late 1990s.

12. Yegor T. Gaidar, "Inflationary Pressures and Economic Reform in the Soviet Union," in *Economic Transition in Eastern Europe*, ed. P. H. Admiraal (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

13. The Freedom House's Media Freedom Index for Russia changed by 12 points in just five years, 2000–05 ([www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)). This is a substantial change: The index is measured by a 100-point scale, and the standard deviation across countries is only 25 points. Larger declines in media freedom in the same period occurred only in Venezuela and Iran. In Polity IV's measures of democracy, Russia was ranked 61–69 (out of 150 countries) in 2000 and 69–78 (out of 152 countries) in 2005 ([www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm](http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm)).

14. Sergei M. Guriev and Ekaterina V. Zhuravskaya, "(Un)Happiness in Transition," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (2008): 53–72.

**Figure 7.5 Dynamics of life satisfaction and per capita GDP, 1994–2006**



PPP = purchasing power parity

Note: The left axis shows life satisfaction for an average individual from the panel regressions with person fixed effects and other usual controls (with 95 percent confidence interval). There were no *Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Surveys* in 1997 and 1999, so we use linear interpolation. The right axis shows real PPP-adjusted per capita GDP in 2000 US dollars. According to the Penn World Tables, in 2004, the PPP-adjusted GDP per capita in Russia reached \$11,794.

Source: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Carolina Population Center, *Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey*, [www.cpc.unc.edu/rims](http://www.cpc.unc.edu/rims); World Bank, *World Development Indicators*.

There is little doubt that Russians are not only happier but also more prosperous than in the 1990s. What effect does this new prosperity have on their beliefs? The average Russian sees simultaneously the reversal of liberal policies and improved material outcomes. It is, therefore, not surprising that support for such a reversal is great, as Russians associate market reforms with the bad economic outcomes of the 1990s. Russia is not unique in this respect. French economists Augustin Landier and David Thesmar argue that the economic growth in France after World War II—probably due to the rebuilding of the economy and a natural bounce from a very low starting point—coincided with greater government involvement in the economy.<sup>15</sup> These two events changed the beliefs of the French that government is beneficial to economic growth and, hence, should play a larger role in the economy.

Why do Russians' attitudes toward the Western model matter now? One reason is that they lead to a tradeoff between economic growth and democracy. At the current level of GDP per capita, sustained economic growth is possible only by relying on capitalist or free-market values. But democracy requires policies that are inconsistent with the voters' preferences: The average citizen in Russia does not want markets or a capitalist economic model. Thus either a fully democratic Russia would vote for the reversal of many pro-market reforms or a nondemocratic government could promote markets and private property.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Russians' beliefs and attitudes may become a constraint on the implementation of liberal economic reforms.

This constraint is even more important now as Russia has probably picked most of the low-hanging fruit of its economic growth. The catch-up phase of economic growth since the slump following the collapse of the Soviet Union has ended. The main market infrastructure (e.g., a functioning financial market and a system of commercial banks) is in place. The benefits of the conservative macroeconomic policy, flat income tax reform, and administrative reform have come to fruition.

As Russia is growing richer, it is now facing a new economic challenge: how to embrace the innovation-based growth at the world's technology frontier. For such human capital-intensive economic growth, political and personal freedoms are important, but the values of Russians have to change. The present government seems to understand this conflict. Vladimir Putin's and Dmitri Medvedev's campaign speeches in February 2008 as well as the 2020 Strategic Economic Development Plan focus on build-

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15. Augustin Landier and David Thesmar, *Le grand méchant marché: Décryptage d'un fantasme français* [*The Big Wicked Market: Deciphering a French Fantasy*] (Paris: Flammarion, 2008).

16. This distinction is evident in the divide between the two major pro-Western parties, the now disbanded Union of Right-Wing Forces (SPS) and Yabloko. While the former emphasized private property and economic reform even at the cost of political centralization, the latter focused on defending democratic values even at the cost of reversing privatization.

ing a prosperous and democratic society by 2020. While the speeches stress the value of freedom, they also acknowledge that political liberalization is a prerequisite for an “innovation economy” and that without innovation economic growth will inevitably slow down.

## Conclusion

Multiple polls confirm that most Russians have negative attitudes toward the West, Western values, and the Western socioeconomic model. The data we have reviewed suggest that these attitudes are unlikely to change as Russia grows richer and the post-Soviet generation takes over: Wealthier Russians are only slightly more pro-Western than poorer ones, and the younger generation is even less happy about the West and the Western model than middle-aged Russians.

The fact that better-off and better-educated Russians have changed from liking the West (in the late 1980s) to disliking it is not new for Russia—waves of fascination and disillusionment with Western ways have followed each other for centuries. Russia’s identity emerged when tsars started seeing themselves as standard-bearers of the Orthodox world after the fall of Constantinople in the 15th century, and the idea of Russia as a political and spiritual alternative to the West has been developing ever since. This messianic narrative is matched by an equally strong growing drive to catch up with the West economically (see chapter 1). The two motivations alternate, as an urgency to develop prevails for a certain period until the messianic calling proves time and again to be a deep-seated instinct.

Interestingly, both Slavophiles and Westernizers, the two major opposing schools of thought in 19th century Russia, agreed on the country’s unique identity. “In the West the soul is in decline . . . conscience is replaced by law, inner motives by regulations. . . . The West has developed the rule of law because it felt a lack of truth in itself,” wrote Konstantin Aksakov, a leading Slavophile. Leading Westernizer and dissident Alexander Herzen looked for truth in the West but became disillusioned with democracy, calling it a “collective mediocrity.” This led him to believe that Russia should not repeat the West but should follow its own way instead: “Should Russia follow all the stages of European development? No, I reject the need for repetition.” A messianic discourse of Russian national identity endured even as the Moscow Empire fell and a new state replaced it.<sup>17</sup>

The current wave of disillusionment with the West may be due to the coinciding policy reversals and the economic growth in the past 10 years,

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17. Judith E. Kalb, *Russia’s Rome: Imperial Visions, Messianic Dreams, 1890–1940* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

when Russia experienced both a decline in personal and political freedoms and stellar economic growth. This combination of developments may have convinced the Russian public that a Western-style democracy and market may function well in the West but are not suited for Russia. Russians do not seem to believe that Russia can build an effective democracy and a developed market economy. Whether the ongoing crisis will again bring a new tide of Westernization is yet to be seen.