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IS RUSSIA TOO UNIQUE TO LEARN FROM ABROAD? ELITE VIEWS ON FOREIGN BORROWING AND THE WEST, 1993-2012

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For more than two centuries, Russia has struggled to define its historical-cultural relationship with the West, as its intellectual and political elites vigorously debated whether their country should emulate Europe or follow a distinct path of development. This "Slavophile-Westernizer controversy," as it is sometimes called, constitutes a protracted and deeply divisive national conversation, in which the Slavophiles emphasize the uniqueness of Russia and the inadvisability of importing Western models of development. Or as Tim McDaniel defines it, the Russian idea is "the conviction that Russia has its own independent, self-sufficient, and eminently worthy cultural and historical tradition that both sets it apart from the West and guarantees its future flourishing."[1] Richard Sakwa adds, "Almost every significant writer has had something to say on the question of 'the Russian idea,' and the whole notion is central to the debate over Russia's path of post-communist development and the relevance of Western notions of liberal democracy to Russia. The Russian idea in one way or another suggests a unique path for Russia…"[2]

Statements issued by Russia's post-communist presidents suggest that the conceptualization of Russia's national identity is still highly contested. Boris Yeltsin adopted a decidedly pro-Western stance early in his presidency, but in the course of a few years found himself casting about for the creation of a national idea. The government newspaper Rossiiskaya gazeta even sponsored a public contest during his presidency to help spur the development of a unifying "idea for Russia." Yet despite the "oceans of ink spent printing ruminations about Russia's special path," the contest ultimately "produced no winning pithy formula or catchy slogan."[3]

Since Vladimir Putin became president in late 1999, his statements regarding this issue have been mixed, though they have increasingly emphasized Russia's uniqueness. One Russian scholar contends that contemporary Russian identity – for both those in power and the mass public – had crystallized by 2007; one can find in it "stable verbal and speech blocs," such as "the inappropriateness of Western models for Russia," "our uniqueness," and "our unique path."[4] These themes were on prominent

[1] McDaniel, Tim. The Agony of the Russian Idea. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. Pp. 10-11.

[2] Sakwa, Richard. Russia, Communism, Democracy // Developments in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics. 3rd ed. Ed. by White S., Pravda A., Gitelman Z. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994. P. 292.

[3] Smith, Kathleen E. Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory During the Yeltsin Era. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002. Pp. 158-161, 164.; See also, Зубкова Е., Куприянов А. Возвращение к «русской идее»: кризис идентичности и национальная история // Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах. Под редакцией Аймермахера К., Бордюгова Г. М.: АИРО-XX, 1999. – С. 299–328. [Zubkova E., Kupriyanov A. Vozvrashchenie k «Russkoi idee»: krizis identichnosti i natsional'naya istoriya (A Return to the "Russian Idea": an identity crisis and national history) // Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh. Pod red. Aimermakhera K., Bordyugova G. Moscow: AIRO-XX. 1999. pp. 299-328].

[4] Раскин Д.И. Русский национализм и проблематика культурно-цивилизационной идентичности // Полис. – 2007. – № 6. – С. 36. [Raskin D.I. Russkii natsionalizm i problematika kul'turno-tsvilizatsionnoi identichnosti (Russian

display in Putin's 2013 address to the Valdai International Discussion Club, in which the president reflected on Russia's attempts to create a "new national ideology" after 1991. Putin averred that "the attempt to construct our state and society spontaneously did not work, and neither did mechanically copying the experience of others" – what he called "crude borrowing and attempts to civilize Russia from the outside." Although inviting Russia to remain "open and receptive to the best ideas and practices of the East and the West" at the end of the speech, the thrust of his message was that the Russian state must rely on its own historical experience.[5]

Another characteristic of this period is the sharply critical view of Western countries (and especially the U.S.) that became dominant in the state-controlled media beginning in Putin's second presidential term. As a result of this sea change, and undoubtedly in part as a result, the attitude of Russian elites toward the USA have soured, such that a much higher percentage of elites now holds the views that the USA represents a threat Russia than did so in the early 1990s.[6]

These twin phenomena – the centuries-old belief in and Putin's renewed emphasis on Russia's uniqueness, and the increasingly negative perceptions of the U.S. held by Russian elites during the post-communist period – form the basis of the following two hypotheses about how Russia's post-communist elites should view the advisability of importing models from the West. First, during any period (except in the immediate aftermath of communism's collapse) one would expect a majority of Russian elites to hew to tradition by preferring a uniquely Russian model of political and economic development. Second, one would also anticipate a sharp rise in the reluctance of Russian elites to adopt Western models over the course of Putin's tenure in power.

This article uses original elite survey data to examine these two propositions. It begins by investigating the extent to which parliamentarians and civil servants in the mid-1990s supported the view that Russia should traverse a unique path of development, or, conversely, borrow models of development from other countries, including the U.S. The article then documents the rise of anti-American attitudes among Russian elites during both the Yeltsin and Putin eras. Third, it tracks elite receptivity toward borrowing from the West over time and explores the reasons for the differences in attitudes obtained by two leading elite surveys. It concludes by offering several explanations of the counter-intuitive results produced by both surveys.

The article reaches two conclusions. First, despite Russia's long tradition of underscoring its uniqueness, close to three-quarters of Russian bureaucrats and Duma deputies in the mid-1990s were nonetheless willing to borrow from foreign experience, particularly from models of European welfare capitalism. Second, despite the sharp rise in anti-Western sentiments emanating from the Kremlin over the past decade, as well as Vladimir Putin's ever-growing emphasis on Russia's distinctiveness, Russian elites are still surprisingly willing to adopt political and economic models from the West.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In the first empirical section of this study, the analyses are based on data from an original survey of Russian political elites that

nationalism and the issue of cultural and civilizational identity) // *Polis*, 2007, No. 6, p. 36]; See also Aron, Leon. Why Putin Says Russia Is Exceptional // *Wall Street Journal*. May 30, 2014; Evans, Alfred B. Power and Ideology: Vladimir Putin and the Russian Political System. Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies. January 2008, No. 1902, pp. 12-15.

5 Заседание международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай». 19 сентября 2013 года. [Valdai International Discussion Club Meeting, September, 19, 2013]. Mode of access: http://kremlin.ru/news/19243.

6 Zimmerman, William et al. Russian Elite–2020: Valdai Discussion Club Grantees Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2013. P. 30. See also, Понарин Э. Российская элита: Что она думает о Соединенных Штатах и почему / ПОНАРС Евразия, Аналитическая записка № 273. Август 2013. [Ponarin E. Rossiskaya elita: Chto ona dumaet o Soedinyonnykh Shtatakh i pochemu (the Russian Elite: What it thinks about the USA and why) / *PONARS Eurasia,* Policy Memo No. 273. August 2013].

I conducted between February and July 1996 in collaboration with the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Sociology.[7] For that survey, I drew two samples of national elites: 1) a random sample of parliamentary deputies in the lower house of Russia's national legislature, the State Duma; and 2) an interval sample of top-level bureaucrats working in all federal ministries except for the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In other words, in that study, I define political elites in the same manner as a landmark study of elites in seven advanced industrial democracies did over thirty years ago: as parliamentarians and high-ranking civil servants.[8] As in the aforementioned study, the bureaucrats directed departments, divisions, or bureaus in federal ministries, were located in the nation's capital, and held positions roughly one to two rungs below the minister. Eighty-three Moscow-based interviews were conducted in all, with 45 deputies and 38 civil servants. Of the initial samples, 81.8% of the deputies and 74.5% of the civil servants were successfully interviewed. Those response rates mirror or surpass the rates attained in other elite studies, including the research done in Britain and Italy by Robert Putnam.[9]

In the following empirical sections, I draw on data from a six-wave series of interviews of Moscow-based foreign policy elites that span both the Yeltsin and Putin eras. The surveys – conducted in 1993, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2008, and 2012 and commissioned by William Zimmerman – include between 180 and 320 respondents each, for a total of 1,421 individuals.[10] The respondents were selected on the basis of positional criteria and were employed in a broader range of institutions than those whom I interviewed in my 1996 survey – i.e., in the media, state-owned enterprises and private businesses, academic institutes, the executive and legislative branches of the government, and the armed forces.[11] The sub-groups contain between thirty and forty individuals each.

ELITE RECEPTIVITY TO FOREIGN BORROWING FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

Although the Slavophile-Westernizer controversy originated in pre-revolutionary Russia, intense debate about Russia's identity among political elites has continued into the contemporary era. In the post-Soviet period, Gennadii Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, has been a vocal proponent of the view that Russia is an "original organism [that] has its own special laws of development." In fact, he has called Russia "a unique type of civilization – one that is the heir to and successor of the thousand-year-old tradition of Kievan Rus', the Muscovite kingdom, the Russian empire, and the Soviet Union."[12] In contrast, Russia's first president, Boris Yeltsin, emphasized the utility of borrowing from foreign models. For instance, in September 1991, Yeltsin was told in an interview that Mikhail Gorbachev had recently expressed his support for Swedish social democracy as the best model for Russia and was then asked, "What is your model, Yeltsin's model? Perhaps it is the model of

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7 For details on the sample and interview format, see Rivera, Sharon W., Kozyreva P., Sarovskii E. Interviewing Political Elites: Lessons from Russia. // Political Science and Politics, 2002, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 683-688.

8 Aberbach, Joel; Putnam, Robert; Rockman, Bert. Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

9 Putnam, Robert. The Beliefs of Politicians: Ideology, Conflict, and Democracy in Britain and Italy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. P. 15.

10 Zimmerman, William et al. Russian Elite–2020: Valdai Discussion Club Grantees Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2013. P. 16. The data base contains information about the months in which most of the surveys were conducted. These are: December 1992/January 1993 for the 1993 survey; November for the 1999 survey; March/April for the 2004 survey; and July/August for the 2012 survey. In addition, William Zimmerman records that the 1995 survey was conducted in October and November. See Zimmerman, William. The Russian People and Foreign Policy: Russian Elite and Mass Perspectives, 1993-2000. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. P. 20.

11 Zimmerman, William. Slavophiles and Westernizers Redux: Contemporary Russian Elite Perspectives // *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 2005, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 185.

12 Зюганов Г.А. Россия и современный мир. – М.: ИИА «Обозреватель», 1995. – С. 20. [Zyuganov G.A. Rossiya i sovremennyi mir (Russia and the contemporary world). – Moscow: IIA «Obozrevatel'». 1995. C. 20.]; See also Remnick, David. Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia. New York: Vintage Books, 1998. Pp. 311-316.

François Mitterand's France, or John Major's Britain, or the United States, or Japan, or Spain, or Germany?" To this question, Yeltsin replied, "I would take everything together; I would take the best from each system and introduce it in Russia...You cannot just take a model and install it ready made. Maybe create a new model, but take something from the Swedish model, and why not take a piece from the Japanese model – an interesting piece – and from the French, too, especially as regards the parliamentary aspect? And in the United States, where they have 200 years of democracy... they have a definite framework for this democracy, and that's interesting too. So, in principle, I am in favor of social democracy, but nevertheless, to take the best there really is in these countries.[13]

The stamp of approval Yeltsin gave to foreign borrowing resonated among the political elites of that period as well, as illustrated by my 1996 elite survey data. In response to the question, "Could you name any country which could serve as a model for Russia with respect to its political-economic development?"[14] only about a quarter of the respondents were resistant to importing models from abroad. Specifically, 26.5% of the respondents (22 in all) expressed firm opposition to borrowing from the experience of another country (see *Table 1*). I have labeled these respondents "traditionalists," or those who believe that foreign models of societal development cannot or should not be transplanted to Russian soil. In their view, Russia is too unique to adopt formulaic policy prescriptions; rather, solutions should be found within the context of history and national tradition. In other words, Russia has its own path (*svoi put'*) that it must follow. As one bureaucrat stated: "Foreign experience is hardly 100% – and not even something like 30% – applicable to Russia. It's too unique a country" (G-109).[15] Another civil servant put it this way: "I don't think that Russia should emulate another country. If you remember history, before World War I Russia was developing at a very high rate. Russia was able to provide everyone with bread and butter and meat and fur and so on...Various kinds of standard approaches to transition won't work for Russia" (G-086).

Table 1

Russian Elite Attitudes Toward the Applicability of Foreign Models

in 1996 (*n*=83)	%
Traditionalists	**26.5**
Offer no model because Russia is unique	19.3
Name a period in Soviet or pre-revolutionary Russian history as a model	7.2
Pure Voluntarists	**38.6**
Name one or more countries that could serve as a model for Russia	38.6
Quasi-Voluntarists	**32.6**
Offer no model, but mention one or more countries that have instructive and/or applicable attributes	20.5
Offer no model, but state that Russia should appropriate the best from other countries	12.1
Don't know/refuse to answer	**2.4**
Total	100.1

Source: Author's database.
Note: Percentages do not sum to 100.0% due to rounding.

The "traditionalist" label was applied not only to those who objected to the *wholesale* importation of foreign models to Russia since few policymakers would advocate the transplantation of a model without any adaptation. Indeed, as Richard Rose argues, "differences in time and space normally make impossible a carbon copy of a program in effect elsewhere."[16] Rather, the essence of traditionalism, as I define it, is an unwillingness to seriously consider transferring *elements* of foreign models to Russian soil. Those who refer only to periods in Russia's past as appropriate models are also included in this category.

When pressed to elaborate on their reluctance to import foreign models to Russia, traditionalists did not proffer explanations that are prominent in the literature on democratic transitions. For example, although arguments about the uniqueness of the Russian transition from authoritarian rule often highlight the

[13] Quoted in Colton, Timothy. Yeltsin: A Life. New York: Basic Books, 2008. Pp. 218-219.

[14] See Appendix A for the original question wording in Russian.

[15] These numbers refer to the interviewees in the study. 'D' denotes deputies and 'G' stands for government bureaucrats.

[16] Rose, Richard. Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning Across Time and Space. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1993. P. 3.

absence of an established market economy,[17] only one traditionalist discussed this issue explicitly (although another four traditionalists cited structural aspects of the Russian economy as an impediment to foreign borrowing). Political factors, such as Russia's weak political institutions, are also not prominent in their responses and were mentioned only six times.

Rather, many based their reasoning on the idea of Russian exceptionalism. Specifically, eight of the 22 traditionalists discussed the Russian mentality (*mentalitet*) as constituting a serious obstacle to borrowing ideas from abroad; eight referred to Russia's multi-ethnic and/or multi-confessional nature; nine named its long and/or distinctive history; and three mentioned its cultural traditions. Additionally, thirteen traditionalists pointed to Russia's unique geography as a barrier to the import of foreign models. The following represents a typical traditionalist commentary: "Russia is a particular (*osobennaya*) country, a unique country. There are no analogues to it in nature or the world, so to speak… All countries have their own special features. Germans have their own mentality and Russians have their own… Look, who has a history like Russia's? What country could possibly have such a history?" (D-030)

In contrast to the traditionalists, *Table 1* reveals that close to three-quarters of the elites are coded as either "pure voluntarists" or "quasi-voluntarists." "Pure voluntarists," comprising 38.6% of the respondents, were quick to name a specific country or countries that could serve as a model for Russia and usually offered a reason or two for their selection. For example, one pure voluntarist discussed the merits of both Switzerland and Sweden in terms of political institutions: "Well, I think that Switzerland is a good model – and the Swedes are also good, well organized – even though one is a republic and the other is a monarchy. But we could borrow a lot from their governmental structures... In Switzerland, there are cantons, which are essentially analogous to the subjects of the Russian Federation. They have a very high degree of freedom and independence and at the same time comply with federal legislation." (D-007)

"Quasi-voluntarists," comprising yet another 32.6% of the respondents, fall somewhere between the traditionalists and pure voluntarists. As with the traditionalists, they believe that Russia's uniqueness limits the applicability of foreign models to Russia. Yet following a voluntarist mindset, they add that partial lessons can be learned from foreign countries and/or that Russia should seek to appropriate the best that world experience has to offer. A typical quasi-voluntarist had this to say: "No, I can't name one country that we should blindly copy. First, Russia has its own historical roots, its own distinctiveness, and it's impossible to transfer various systems to Russian soil mechanically. Moreover, the results will be undesirable. We need to take all the very best that has been achieved in other countries. There should be no blind copying from a single country." (G-077)

To sum up, in 1996 close to three-fourths of the parliamentarians and bureaucrats whom I interviewed expressed receptivity to the transplantation of ideas and institutions from abroad to Russia. The remainder – constituting only slightly more than a quarter of the respondents – emphasized Russian exceptionalism and were drawn to the promise of a uniquely Russian model of development. Given the emphasis on Russia's uniqueness that has been espoused by many Russian historians, philosophers, and politicians over the last two centuries, this high degree of openness to borrowing from abroad in the mid-1990s is particularly noteworthy.

RISING ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT

Although the pro-Western euphoria of the immediate post-communist period had dissipated and anti-Western sentiment had started to rise already in the early 1990s,[18] elite surveys register a sharp increase in suspicion of the West only during the latter half of the 1990s. This is illustrated by the responses to Zimmerman's survey question regarding whether "the USA represents a threat to Russian national security." As the solid line in *Figure 1* shows, in 1993, the percentage of respondents adhering to this

[17] See Terry, Sarah. Thinking About Post-Communist Transitions: How Different Are They? // *Slavic Review*, 1993, Vol. 52, No. 2, p. 333-337.

[18] See Aron, Leon. A Different Dance: From Tango to Minuet // *The National Interest,* Spring 1995, No. 39, pp. 27-37.

position was at its lowest, at 26.0%. By 1995, just over half (50.6%) of the respondents espoused this view, and by 1999, this figure had risen to 59.2%. The high point of concern about a threat emanating from the U.S. appeared in 2008 – the year of the Russian-Georgian war – when more than two-thirds of all respondents (69.7%) perceived the U.S. to be a threat to their country's security. Although there have been valleys as well as peaks since the early post-communist years in these threat perceptions, the percentage of elites sensing danger originating in the United States never dipped lower than 41.7% between 1995 and 2012. As Zimmerman and his collaborators write, "….although the post-crisis periods – 2004 and 2012, respectively – saw anti-American sentiment fall somewhat, it was still significantly higher in 2012 than in 1993. Moreover, the trend was observed among all [age] cohorts."[19]

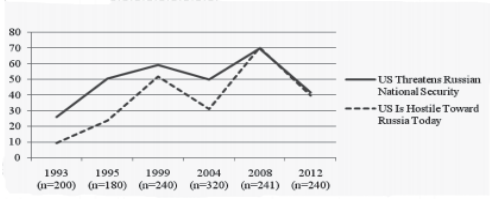

Figure 1. Anti-Americanism in the Russian Elite[20]

Source: Data from six-wave elite survey described in William Zimmerman et al., Russian Elite—2020: Valdai Discussion Club Grantees Analytical Report (Moscow, July 2013).

[19] Zimmerman, William et al. Russian Elite–2020: Valdai Discussion Club Grantees Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2013. P. 31.

[20] The first survey question reads as follows: "Do you think that the policy of the U.S. represents a threat to Russian security?" (1993, 1995) or "Do you think that the USA represents a threat to Russian national security?" (1999, 2004, 2008, 2012). The data points represent those who responded "yes" as a percentage of all respondents, including those who gave a "don't know" response. The second survey question reads as follows: "For each country that I will now name, please tell me your opinion about how friendly or hostile this country is toward Russia today: very friendly, rather friendly, neutral, rather hostile, or very hostile." In the 2008 and 2012 surveys, the first phrase reads: "For each international organization or country that I will now name…" The data points represent all those selecting either "rather hostile" or "very hostile" as a percentage of all respondents, including those who gave a "don't know" response.

A second question in the Zimmerman survey confirms this growing apprehension among Russian elites about the aims of the U.S. Respondents were asked for their views on a series of countries (and, beginning in 2008, international organizations). For each country, they were asked whether it was "very friendly, rather friendly, neutral, rather hostile, or very hostile" toward Russia today. As the dashed line in *Figure 1* shows, only 9.5% of all respondents in 1993 considered the U.S. to be either "rather hostile" or "very hostile." This percentage rose to 52.1% in 1999, dipped to 31.3% in 2004, and then spiked to 70.5% in 2008. Although the percentage of elites believing that the U.S. is hostile to Russia declined to 40.0% in 2012, this still represents almost a fourfold increase from the percentage espousing that position in 1993.

ATTITUDES TOWARD FOREIGN BORROWING DURING THE PUTIN YEARS

So how did this significant rise in anti-Americanism on the part of Russian elites affect their willingness to borrow from the West? Earlier I hypothesized that any elite receptivity to foreign borrowing that existed in Russia during the 1990s would have declined sharply by the time Putin returned to the presidency in 2012. To ascertain whether these expectations are borne out, I focus on this question in the six-wave set of elite surveys conducted between 1993 and 2012: some people believe that Russia should follow the path of developed countries, integrate into the world community, and absorb the experience and achievements of Western civilization. Other people, taking into account the history and geographical location of Russia at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, believe that it should follow a unique Russian path. Which of these statements is closer to your point of view?[21]

The results of these six surveys are presented in *Figure 2*. As the top (dashed) line in the figure illustrates, the percentage of respondents believing that Russia should follow its own path has indeed increased over time, but only marginally. In 1995, slightly more than half

[21] See Appendix A for the original question wording in Russian.

of the respondents (52.8%) selected the second option in the survey question – that given its history and geographical location, Russia should "follow a unique Russian path" [*idti osobym rossiiskim putyom*]. Yet by 2012, this percentage had settled in at only 3.9 percentage points above the 1995 figure, at 56.7%. Even in 2008, when U.S.-Russian relations were at the lowest point in years, the share of respondents who favored a unique Russian path was just 5.3 percentage points higher than in 1995, or 58.1%.

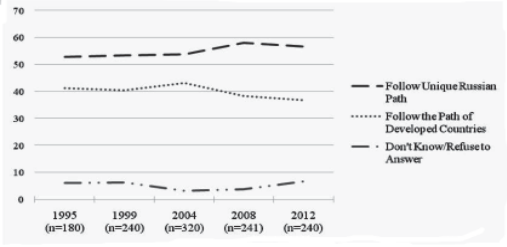

Figure 2. Russian Elite Attitudes Toward Foreign Borrowing[22]

Source: Data from six-wave elite survey described in William Zimmerman et al., Russian Elite—2020: Valdai Discussion Club Grantees Analytical Report (Moscow, July 2013).

As with the "Slavophiles," the trend line for the "Westernizers" exhibits remarkable stability over time. The middle (dotted) line of *Figure 2* shows that in 1995, 41.1% of elites believed that "Russia should follow the path of developed countries, integrate into the world community, and absorb the experience and achievements of Western civilization." By 2012, this percentage had fallen by only 4.4 percentage points, to 36.7%.

METHODOLOGICAL EXTENSIONS

A careful observer might notice that the overall distribution of attitudes toward borrowing from Western models varies across the two surveys used in this analysis. Specifically, the percentage of respondents identified with the traditionally Slavophile point of view is higher in the six-wave elite survey than in my 1996 elite survey: in 1995, 52.8% of Zimmerman's respondents believed that Russia should "follow a unique Russian path," compared to the 26.5% of respondents whom I coded as "traditionalists" in my 1996 survey. There are several plausible explanations for this discrepancy, all of which derive from the question wording used in the surveys.

First, the six-wave survey offers only two choices – integrate with the West or follow a distinctly Russian path. No "quasi-voluntarist" position akin to the one available in the 1996 study was available to respondents who believe *both* that Russia's uniqueness places some limitations on the applicability of foreign models to Russia *and* that useful lessons can nonetheless be gleaned from foreign countries. If such a choice had been added to Zimmerman's forced-choice answers to more closely parallel coding used in my 1996 survey, I suspect that many of his "Slavophiles" would have selected this intermediate option.

A second reason that the distribution of Westernizers and Slavophiles differs between the two surveys relates to whether the survey question includes the phrase "unique path" (*osobyi put'*). The 1996 survey did not mention those words but instead probed respondents' attitudes with a broad, open-ended question: "Could you name any country which could serve as a model for Russia with respect to its political-economic development?" In contrast, the Zimmerman survey asked specifically whether respondents advocated following "a unique Russian path." This concept is a broad, widely-used phrase that encompasses a wide range of ideas, some of which are only vaguely, if at all, related to whether Russia should shun the adoption of Western models and instead turn inward for political and economic inspiration. To illustrate the imprecision of this phrase, one need only examine a survey question that the *Levada Center* has asked the Russian mass public since 2008: "When you hear about Russia's 'unique path,' what, above all, comes to mind?" One possible answer (favored by 16-22% of

[22] The survey question reads as follows: "Some people believe that Russia should follow the path of developed countries, integrate into the world community, and absorb the experience and achievements of Western civilization. Other people, taking into account the history and geographical location of Russia at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, believe that it should follow a unique Russian path. Which of these statements is closer to your point of view?" Percentages may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding.

respondents between 2008 and 2013, depending on the year) is indeed the "incompatibility between the values and traditions of Russia and the West." But another answer that rivals it in popularity (favored by 15-20% of the respondents) is the following: "Giving due consideration in politics to the spiritual and moral aspects of the relationship between the state and its citizens." And the response selected by a plurality of respondents in each year (namely, between 30-42% of respondents) is: "The economic development of the country, but with more concern for people rather than for profits or the interests of the wealthy."[23] Since the concept of Russia's "unique path" evokes numerous images, the elites queried in the six-wave survey likely imputed their own preferred meaning to it. As a result, the inclusion of this phrase in Zimmerman's survey question may have attracted more respondents to the "traditionalist" position than would otherwise have been the case.

A final explanation for the higher percentage of Slavophiles in the six-wave survey is that its Westernizer option is associated only with following the route of *developed* countries and absorbing the experience and achievements of *Western* civilization. In the 1996 survey, by contrast, respondents were coded as voluntarists or quasi-voluntarists as long as they favored borrowing from *any other* country or region of the world. As a result, Zimmerman's survey forced those willing to borrow foreign models – but from non-Western regions – to select the Slavophile response. Indeed, a closer look at the countries that the 32 voluntarist respondents in my 1996 survey mentioned as potential models suggests that such a group may have been a sizeable one. Of the 57 responses, 73.7% did focus on countries or regions that are part of the established West, but the remaining 26.3% of the countries named by the voluntarists were located in South America, Asia, or East Central Europe.

[23] Аналитический Центр Юрия Левады. Общественное мнение – 2013: Ежегодник. М.: Левада Центр. 2014. С. 36 (Таблица 3.2.4). [Analiticheskii Tsentr Yuriya Levady. Obshchestvennoe mnenie – 2013: Ezhegodnik (Analytical center Levada for public opinion polls - 2013: Annual Report). Moscow: Levada Centre. 2014. p. 36. Mode of access: http://www.levada.ru/sites/default/files/om13.pdf.

CONCLUSIONS

Rather quickly after communism's demise in 1991, the initial pro-Western euphoria shared by much of the Russian elite dissipated and gave a way to what turned out to be a rather steady rise in anti-Western sentiment. Elite survey data reveal that, nevertheless, receptivity toward Western models was high in the mid-1990s. In fact, close to three-quarters of Duma deputies and federal bureaucrats were willing to borrow from the West either piecemeal or wholesale in 1996.

If these results were not surprising enough – given the longstanding attachment among Russian thinkers and politicians to the "Russian idea" – data from the later post-communist period reveal an even more counterintuitive finding. In the wake of the elevated levels of anti-American sentiment that emerged in the late 1990s and increased in the Putin era, one might have expected Russian elites to be increasingly unlikely in the 2000's to look abroad in their search for workable solutions to Russia's problems. Yet the data presented in this paper fail to validate this prediction. The period from 1995 to 2012 witnessed no significant rise in the percentage of elites preferring to follow a unique Russian path. Indeed, the percentage of elites favoring that option was only 3.9 percentage points higher in 2012 than in 1995. In sum, the virulent anti-Western rhetoric characteristic of Putin's second and third presidential terms has affected Russian elite attitudes toward borrowing from the West only on the margins.

The question then arises – why is this the case? One possible explanation is that a broad cross-section of Russian elites does not wholeheartedly embrace the Kremlin's anti-Western rhetoric. Indeed, Vladimir Shlapentokh suggests that anti-Americanism is not deeply rooted in the Russian mentality but rather ebbs and flows depending on the messages emanating from the country's leaders.[24] If this is so, then elites' views of the U.S. might mirror the Kremlin's position at any given time but will not be particularly stable or well-entrenched.

[24] Shlapentokh, Vladimir. The Puzzle of Russian Anti-Americanism: From «Below» or from «Above» // E*urope-Asia Studies,* July 2011, Vol. 63, No. 5, P. 887.

In support of this interpretation, *Figure 1* shows that in 2012, after four years of Dmitrii Medvedev's presidency (which featured the well-known "reset" of US-Russian relations), elites' concern about a threat to Russian national security originating in the U.S. was the lowest it has been since 1993.

A second possibility is that Russian elites make a clear distinction between the U.S. and Europe. Thus, although anti-*American* sentiments may be high, Russian elites are still receptive to importing models from *other* Western countries. In support of this interpretation, my 1996 surveys make clear that European advanced industrial democracies are far and away the most attractive models for Russian elites. Specifically, 59.6% of all countries mentioned by the 32 pure voluntarists in that sample (i.e., individuals who believed that Russia's development might follow the path of a foreign model and named a specific country or region as an examplar) were located in Western Europe.[25] Hence, elites may be willing to "follow the route of developed countries" (by which they mean Europe), while still remaining apprehensive about and suspicious of the U.S.

APPENDIX A

The Russian versions of the survey questions used in this paper are as follows:

1996 Elite Survey:

Не могли бы Вы назвать какую-либо страну, которая могла бы послужить для России образцом в отношении политико-экономического развития?

Six-Wave Elite Survey:

Одни люди полагают, что России следует идти путем развитых стран, влиться в мировое сообщество, осваивая опыт и достижения западной цивилизации. Другие люди, исходя из истории и географического положения России, лежащей на стыке Европы и Азии, считают, что ей нужно идти особым российским путем. Какое из этих утверждений ближе к Вашей точке зрения?

a. России следует идти путем развитых стран, влиться в мировое сообщество, осваивая опыт и достижения западной цивилизации

b. Исходя из истории и географического положении России, лежащей на стыке Европы и Азии, нужно идти особым российским путем

c. Затрудняюсь ответить

Считаете ли Вы, что США представляют угрозу для безопасности России? (wording used in 1999, 2004, 2008, and 2012 surveys)

a. Да

b. Нет

c. Затрудняюсь ответить

Для каждой страны или международной организации, которую я сейчас назову, скажите, пожалуйста, насколько дружественно или враждебно, по Вашему мнению, она относится к России сегодня: Очень дружественно, довольно дружественно, нейтрально, довольно враждебно или очень враждебно.– США (wording used in 2008 and 2012 surveys)

a. Очень дружественно

b. Довольно дружественно

c. Нейтрально

d. Довольно враждебно

e. Очень враждебно

f. Затрудняюсь ответить

[25] Ривера Ш.В. Уникальный путь России? Обзор политических элит // Ученые записки, 2006. Под ред. Шутова А.Д. М.: Научная книга, 2006. – С. 46–59 (Таблица 2). [Rivera S.W. Unikal'nyi put' Rossii? Obzor politicheskikh elit (A unique Russian path? Review of political elites). // Uchyonye zapiski, 2006. Pod red. Shutova A.D. M.: Nauchnaya kniga. 2006. P. 46–59. See also Rivera, Sharon. Elites and the Diffusion of Foreign Models in Russia // *Political Studies,* March 2004, Vol. 52, No 1, pp. 43-62.

Is Russia Too Unique to Learn From Abroad? Elite Views on Foreign Borrowing and the West, 1993-2012

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Abstract: *For more than two centuries, Russia has struggled to define its historical-cultural relationship with the West, as its intellectual and political elites vigorously debated whether their country should emulate Europe or follow a distinct path of development. This article uses original elite survey data to examine these two propositions. The article reaches two conclusions. First, despite Russia's long tradition of underscoring its uniqueness, close to three-quarters of Russian bureaucrats and Duma deputies in the mid-1990s were nonetheless willing to borrow from foreign experience, particularly from the models of European welfare capitalism. Second, despite the sharp rise in anti-Western sentiments emanating from the Kremlin over the past decade, as well as Vladimir Putin's ever-growing emphasis on Russia's distinctiveness, Russian elites are still surprisingly willing to adopt political and economic models from the West.*

Key words: *Russia, the West, development, civilization, democratization, Slavophiles, Westernizer, elite, elite survey, civil society, identity.*

Настолько ли уникальна Россия, чтобы игнорировать чужой опыт? Мнения элит о Западе и о возможностях заимствования зарубежных моделей развития (1993–2012)

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Аннотация: *Более двухсот лет в России продолжаются дискуссии о характере историко-культурных связей с Западом: представители российской интеллигенции и политических элит спорят о том, должна ли страна заимствовать западную модель развития или избрать свой собственный путь. В настоящей статье автор использует метод опроса элит для того, чтобы оценить идейную «расстановку сил» по данному вопросу, что позволило придти к двум выводам. Во-первых, несмотря на подчеркивание Россией своей уникальности, в середине 1990-х годов около 75% всех российских бюрократов и депутатов Государственной Думы выступали за заимствование чужого опыта, прежде всего, моделей европейского капитализма и государств благосостояния. Во-вторых, несмотря на значительный рост антизападных настроений, спровоцированный Кремлем, в последние 10 лет, несмотря на постоянный акцент на российской уникальности, который делает Президент, удивительно, но российские элиты все еще стремятся к заимствованию политических и экономических моделей Запада.*

Ключевые слова: *Россия, Запад, развитие, цивилизация, демократизация, славянофилы, западники, элиты, опрос элит, гражданское общество, идентичность.*