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## The Road to Crimea: Putin's Foreign Policy Between Reason of State, Sovereignty and Bio-Politics

By Philipp Casula, Zurich

### Abstract

The Crimean Crisis of 2014 has emphasized once more the troubled relations between Putin's Russia and the West. It has also brought to the fore a lack of understanding of Russia's foreign policy in the West. Many observers are oscillating between disbelief and alarm, trying to figure out Russia's conduct in foreign affairs by referring to imperialism, the Cold War, or to an inherently autocratic character of Russian politics. But how special or different are the drivers of Russian foreign policy compared with those of other powers? This paper investigates Russia's foreign policy along three key terms of political history, reason of state, sovereignty, and bio-politics, highlighting what they have meant historically and how they are put into practice by Russia's current regime, especially during the Crimean Crisis.

### The Ups and Downs in Russia's Foreign Policy Relationship With the West

On March 2, Secretary of State John Kerry commented on the Russian *de facto* take-over of control in Crimea, declaring that "you just don't in the 21<sup>st</sup> century behave in a 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion by invading another country on a completely trumped-up pretext." While Kerry was mocked for this statement, since it was too easily applicable to the U.S. action against Iraq, the remark raises the question of whether, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, war has really become an unjustifiable means to an end—at least for the sake of increasing territory, and at least within Europe.

Since the Soviet Union's demise, Russian relations with the West have experienced ups and downs. Since Putin's third term, they have steadily deteriorated and reached a nadir with the Crimean Crisis of 2014. However, there has never been an unreservedly pro-Western course in the Russian Federation's foreign policy, at least not since the mid-1990s. It was only during Andrey Kozyrev's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs that Russia adopted a clear pro-Western stance, aimed at maximum integration within Western organizations and institutions. During this period, between 1992 and 1996, Russia largely ignored the other former republics of the USSR and followed a path of political, economic, and cultural isolationism in the post-Soviet space.<sup>1</sup> Kozyrev advocated the ideas of "returning to civilization" and integration with Europe in a "common European home" (a Gorbachevian theme). However, this orientation had already started to lose momentum by 1993, with opposition to this course emerging within the Yeltsin team itself. Things finally changed when Yevgeny Primakov took over the helm at Smolenskaya square in 1996. He is the most well-known

representative of the so-called statist tradition of foreign policy. From the beginning of his tenure, Primakov sought to establish a relationship with the West on an equal footing. His aim was to restore a balance of power, and for Russia to be recognized as a great power. This trend continued when Vladimir Putin assumed the Russian presidency in 1999. Relations briefly improved in 2001 in the context of the "war on terror", when Russia and the U.S. closely collaborated on security issues. Moscow politically and logistically supported NATO's engagement in Afghanistan. Generally, however, relations followed a long downward trend, marked by NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia (1999), the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (2003), the 2004 dual enlargement of the EU and NATO, the Orange Revolution (2004/05), the planning of a NATO missile defense system (2002/2007), and the intervention in Libya (2011). In the Kremlin, these events were all perceived as manifestations of the West creeping closer to Russia's borders or as meddling into the affairs of sovereign states irrespective of Moscow's explicit dissent. The anti-Western turn in the mid-2000s culminated in Putin's well-known speech at the Munich Security Conference (2007). The aforementioned issues figured again in Putin's speech on March 18, 2014, in which he commented on the Crimean Crisis.

Apart from the conclusion of the new START agreement in 2010, the "reset" of U.S.–Russia relations under Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev soon stalled, and relations between Russia and the West in general and the U.S. in particular have remained strained during Putin's third term. Disagreements range from the Syrian civil war to the fate of whistleblower Edward Snowden. At the same time and despite being Russia's biggest trading partner, relations with the EU have stagnated (for instance, the "Partnership for Modernization"). The Crimean Crisis is to be interpreted with these developments in mind.

1 Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

## Reason of State From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to Present-Day Russia

I would like to go one step further than John Kerry and argue that Russia's military intervention in Crimea includes elements of a 17<sup>th</sup> century conception of the state and of the use of its military apparatus. This conception goes by the name of *raison d'état* (reason of state). Reason of state describes, following the famous definition by Giovanni Botero, the knowledge necessary to form, preserve, strengthen and expand the state. The key question of reason of state is how to achieve the state's preservation, expansion, and felicity.<sup>2</sup> In this perspective, the state is the sole principle and aim of governmental ratio, supplanting the centrality held beforehand by the prince. Formerly, it had been all about securing, preserving and increasing the wealth of the sovereign, now it was increasingly the state itself that had to be secured and expanded. The state became the primary lens through which all given institutions and their relations had to be understood. Reason of state means the absolute primacy of the state over all other concerns. In foreign policy, *raison d'état* was concerned with seeking and maintaining a balance of power, using both war and diplomacy as its key instruments to this end. The advent of reason of state also coincides with that of mercantilism, which sought to strengthen the state's power through commerce. This logic has never completely changed: while reason of state originates in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it continues to be applied, explicitly or implicitly, by all nation-states, not only by Russia, but, alas, with different degrees of intensity. When the vital interests of a state are at stake, military action can never be considered off the table. It remains the *ultima ratio* in international relations.

Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy argue that the state is a "mythic entity" in Russia.<sup>3</sup> They interpret Vladimir Putin as a statist, a *gosudarstvennik* or *derzhavnik*, appointed to serve the Russian state and restore its greatness. He is, from this perspective, by definition not a sovereign, whose only aim is to preserve his own power, but rather an executor of the state's interests. Putin's well-known statement made in 2005 that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century", perfectly reflects *raison d'état* thinking. The demise of the USSR meant a weakening of the Russian state, of its institutions and of its reach. Restoring Russia's power has been a clearly stated goal of Putin's tenure, from its very beginning. This does not necessar-

ily mean (military) expansion, but certainly the end of the above-mentioned isolationism *vis-à-vis* the ex-Soviet territory. The Eurasian Economic Union is an expression of such a striving for closer ties and greater integration with its neighboring countries. In view of this statist thinking, two foreign policy tenets of the current leadership come to the fore:

Firstly, a preference for stability over democracy. This holds both for domestic and foreign policy. Hence, Syria's Bashar al-Assad is better than a "radical" and split opposition, Ukraine's Viktor Yanukovich better than "fascists" and nationalists. Official Russia abhors any revolutionary scenario. As Boris Kolonitskii commented, "after 23 years apart, Russians and Ukrainians have shaped very different narratives from the same Soviet memories. Soviet culture romanticized and sanctified revolution. (...) The very term revolution has come to carry negative connotations for Russians."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, while Russia's opposition at first managed to mobilize 50,000 Muscovites to protest against the Kremlin's action in Crimea, now even critical voices such as that of Dmitry Bykov, caution against the Maidan protests, and against revolutions in general.<sup>5</sup> The Kremlin seems to be a *status quo* force, whatever the *status quo* is.<sup>6</sup> Unless, of course, change is to the advantage of the Russian state, as the Crimean case exemplifies.

Secondly, Russia's official vision of sovereignty praises the "Westphalian system" that is based on clearly delineated territories and clear spheres of influence that do not interfere with each other. Any tipping of the international balance of power must be avoided. With the West perceived as creeping closer to Russia's borders, even swallowing former satellites, and seen as obstructing the planned Eurasian Economic Union by integrating Ukraine through the recently-signed EU-Ukraine *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement* (DCFTA), the Kremlin has interpreted these actions and events as destabilizing a balance to the disadvantage of Russia and as doing what Hillary Clinton promised in 2012: "let's make no mistake about it [the Eurasian Economic Union]. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it." As if replying to Clinton directly, Putin underlined on March 18, 2014 that "we understand that these actions

2 All following definitions of reason of state, sovereignty, and geopolitics are adapted from: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (New York: Picador, 2009).

3 Clifford Gaddy and Fiona Hill, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington: Brookings, 2013).

4 Boris Kolonitskii, "Why Russians Back Putin on Ukraine", *New York Times* (international edition), 12/03/2014.

5 Dmitry Bykov, "Ukrainian euphoria, patriotic ecstacy on Crimea and the spirit of the second revolution," *Sobesednik* 11 (2014), available at: <<http://sobesednik.ru/dmitriy-bykov/20140325-dmitriy-bykov-ukrainskaya-eyforiya-patrioticheskiyektaz-kr>>

6 Artemy Magun, "Commentary on Russia and Ukraine", *Telospress*, 11/03/2014, available at: <<http://www.telospress.com/commentary-on-russia-and-ukraine>>

were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And all this while Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. (...) But we saw no reciprocal steps.” Ultimately, the Eurasian Union and the DCFTA can be seen as quasi-mercantilist means to facilitate economic exchange and strengthen Russia and the EU respectively.

### Sovereignty from Machiavelli to Putin

The second key term through which I will analyze Russian foreign policy, is even older than that of reason of state. Sovereignty is the key political term of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Barack Obama alluded to sovereignty in his Brussels speech of March 26, when he described “a more traditional view of power” according to which “ordinary men and women (...) surrender their rights to an all-powerful sovereign.” Indeed, and in contrast to *raison d'état*, sovereignty is concerned with the prince and his relation to territory. The traditional concern associated to sovereignty is that of conquering territories or holding on to conquered territory: How can territory be demarcated, fixed, secured, or enlarged? The traditional tools of sovereignty are laws. Sovereignty is circular in the sense that the only goal it proposes is an orderly, lawful society. The public good ultimately is obedience to the law. What characterizes the goal of sovereignty is nothing else than submission to this law. In an odd way, the Putin regime has indeed fulfilled the promise of installing a “dictatorship of law”, with loyal courts sentencing opponents in politicized trials. This is the domestic concern of sovereignty.

On the foreign policy side, the key danger is dispossession: hence, sovereignty is not only concerned with fending off internal enemies, but likewise external ones in order to keep and secure territory. Thus, the two aspects of sovereignty which should be highlighted are “law” and “territory”. Regarding Russia, the key question is *what territory* is perceived by the Russian leadership as relevant for Russia. Is it just the territory of the Russian Federation in its current borders? Until recently, respect for the Belavezha Accords of 1991 has been a cornerstone of Russia’s policies in the near abroad.

“Sovereign democracy” was for quite a while a key notion used by Russian political leaders to describe the Russian system, until the term was dismissed by Medvedev in 2006. However, while the term was put aside, its meaning and significance were not. The insistence on sovereignty meant two things: firstly, that Russia’s political system should be considered as a democracy *sui generis*. Secondly, it meant that no country has the right to interfere into the internal affairs of any other country. Two additional points are especially important in this respect:

One, as aptly summarized by Vladimir Putin, is that “Russia is an independent, active participant of international life, and it has, like other countries, national interests, which you have to take into account and to respect.” According to this rationale, Russia is not any other country but a great power with clear spheres of influence. This is in line with the classic precepts of sovereignty in terms of a territory, which has to be defended and preserved; in terms of Russian territory itself, and in terms of spheres of influence.

Two, is the insistence on law: Putin has repeatedly accused the West of violating international law and the sovereignty of other states, mentioning, of course, Iraq: “Our approach is different”, Putin stressed on March 4, “we proceed from the conviction that we always act legitimately. I have personally always been an advocate of acting in compliance with international law.” And again, on March 18, Putin condemned Russia’s “Western partners”, stressing that they “prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. (...) They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states (...) To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall.” Accordingly, for Russia, Yanukovich is still the legitimate president, because he has not been deposed constitutionally. This *de jure* perspective precludes seeing him as delegitimized *de facto*. However, it is *raison d'état* which explains what is more important when the concern for the state is at odds with the concern for law: reason of state prescribes that law can and must be broken if this serves the state’s interests. The key here is “necessity”, which justifies the means.

### Bio-Politics and the Compatriots abroad

Finally, an element of Russian foreign policy which has steadily gained importance is the concern Russia displays for its “compatriots” (*sootechestvenniki*), or in other words, the community of ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad, broadly conceived. Already under Yeltsin, efforts have been undertaken to develop a strategy towards this group and, in 1999, Federal Law 99-FZ “On state policy toward compatriots living abroad” was passed. The law offers multiple and vague definitions, institutionalizing ambiguity about who can be considered a “compatriot”.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the law has been amended several times, and the topic has regularly been raised by Russian politicians, adding to Russia’s for-

7 Oxana Shevel, *Migration, Refugee Policy, and State Building in Postcommunist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011).

eign policy a bio-political element. Bio-politics means that the population as a whole is considered in terms of being a political problem. Neither territory nor the state are the sole objects of power, rather, power's attention is increasingly directed towards the population.

In 2005, Putin highlighted that the end of the USSR, "for the Russian people, became a real drama. Tens of millions of our citizens and countrymen found themselves outside Russian territory." This issue was picked up again on March 18, 2014: "Millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders." The compatriots also figure prominently in the 2013 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*. It underlines that "particular attention will be paid to providing support to compatriots living in the CIS Member States, as well as to negotiating agreements on the protection of their (...) rights and freedoms."<sup>8</sup>

The defense of Russian citizens or *russophone* populations abroad became a key issue and a rationale for justifying the exertion of pressure on neighboring countries. The intervention in South-Ossetia in 2008 was explicitly made on the grounds of saving the lives of the *sootchestvenniki*. After hostilities had started, Dmitri Medvedev affirmed on August 8, 2008: "Civilians (...) are dying today in South Ossetia, and the majority of them are citizens of the Russian Federation. In accordance with the Constitution and the federal laws, as President of the Russian Federation it is my duty to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be." With regard to Ukraine, Putin broadened the concept of compatriots, and stated that there "live and will live millions of *ethnic Russians, russophone citizens*, and Russia will always defend their interests with political, diplomatic, and legal means." Russia clearly allots to the former Soviet republics a special place in its foreign policy not only due to geographical proximity and resulting socio-economic ties, but because their populations include Russian or *russophone* minorities, and thus actual or potential compatriots. In this light, it seems, the Kremlin displays an interest in the population of the CIS in the first place, and only then, in its territory. Russia reserves the right to intervene to protect this population with whom Russia claims to have "close historical, cultural and economic ties. Protecting these people is in our national

interests. (...) we cannot remain indifferent if we see that they are being persecuted, destroyed and humiliated", as Putin underscored. Or, put more bluntly by Foreign Minister Lavrov, on April 23: "Russian citizens being attacked is an attack against the Russian Federation." Such an interpretation of compatriots means that the current Russian foreign policy explicitly recognizes a mismatch between the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation and the population for which the regime claims responsibility.

### Conclusions

It might be true, then, that *raison d'état* and sovereignty are "more traditional" forms of power, but they are not outdated. It would be questionable to assume that they have been replaced and that, as Obama stated, "through centuries of struggle, through war and enlightenment, repression and revolution, (...) a particular set of ideals began to emerge" associated with a new type of (democratic) power. Russian and Western states' foreign policy bears witness that there is not a series of successive elements of power in foreign policy, with new ones causing the older ones to disappear. History does not evolve linearly, and power is exercised simultaneously targeting the state, the territory, and the population. Hence, on the one hand, there are many continuities with the policies initiated by Primakov some eighteen years ago, which stressed state greatness and great power spheres of influence. The road to Crimea had, in this sense, already been sketched out.

However, there are some truly new elements: firstly, the Russian leadership's interpretation of Russian identity has shifted increasingly to include a biopolitical concern for the compatriots living in the post-Soviet space. This concern is coupled with a willingness to actually mobilize the military apparatus in order to protect the lives of the people considered to have "close historical, cultural and economic ties" with Russia. This readiness had already become visible in 2008, when Russian troops rushed to assist South Ossetia

Secondly, in the case of Crimea, Russia went beyond this. Not only did it invade Ukrainian territory, but in an extremely swift legal procedure, went on to first recognize Crimea as an independent state (March 17) and then to incorporate it as part of the Russian Federation itself (March 21), circumventing constitutional limitations that would have required Ukraine's consent to let Crimea go, as stipulated by Federal Constitutional Law No. 6-FKZ. So, in contrast to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Crimea became part of Russia itself. In both cases, however, control over territories inhabited by compatriots was restored. Because of this mismatch between the territory of the Russian Federation on the one hand, and

8 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 12/02/2013, available at: <[http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D)>

the *Rusky mir*<sup>9</sup> or its “sphere of identity”, Russian foreign policy contains an expansionist potential aimed at preserving influence over territories where compatriots live.

While the West was never fully willing or able to welcome Russia as equal partner, now some Western leaders have completely written-off the Putin regime.<sup>10</sup> The Russian leadership, for its part, increasingly gave up

on the idea of Russia becoming a part of the West and “started creating their own Moscow-centered system”, as noted by Dmitri Trenin as early as 2006,<sup>11</sup> turning its attention more and more towards Russian compatriots in the former USSR. The incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation seems to be the last nail in the coffin of Moscow’s Westernizers.

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9 Igor Zelev, “The new foreign policy doctrine of Russia”, *Vedomosti*, 07/04/2014, available at: <<http://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/news/2014/04/07/24981841>>

10 Peter Baker, “In Cold War Echo, Obama Strategy writes off Putin”, *New York Times*, 20/04/2014.

11 Dmitri Trenin, “Russia Leaves the West”, in *Foreign Affairs* 85 (4) 2006, 85–96.

## ANALYSIS

# Taking the Shortcut to Popularity: How Putin’s Power is Sustained through Ukraine

By Bo Petersson, Malmö

## Abstract

Putin has built his popularity on two incongruent myths: that Russia is an eternal great power and that the country is beset by cyclical periods of weakness. Putin’s popularity stands in contrast to the lack of legitimacy within Russia’s overall political system. Recently, Putin has used Ukraine to revive his popularity as his term in power stretches well beyond a decade, but it remains unclear what the cost of these actions will be.

## Russia as a Great Power

Speaking about the purportedly poor condition of state museums in Crimea, which in mid-March 2014 had been annexed to the Russian Federation by almost unanimous votes in both houses of the Russian parliament, Russian President Vladimir Putin lamented on April 10, “Ukraine has its own problems; it even had its own ideology of development or, on the contrary, obliterating some of the common pages of our history. But what is entirely clear is that they need to be revived.”<sup>1</sup> On the same day, marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its liberation from Nazi occupation, Putin issued a greeting to residents of the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa and to surviving WW II veterans there: “The President of Russia expressed his conviction that centuries-old traditions of good neighborliness and mutual support will continue to unite Russians and Ukrainians. He stressed that their common duty is to cherish the memory of the

past war, to thwart any attempt to rewrite history and to bring up the younger generation on the high ideals of patriotism and pride for our Great Victory.”<sup>2</sup>

Seen in the context of the generally tense situation between Russia and Ukraine, Putin’s words could certainly be interpreted as ominous. The small components of the language he used, such as “the common pages of our history” that “need to be revived,” “unite Russians and Ukrainians,” “thwart any attempt to rewrite history” (what parts of history?) and “pride for our Great Victory” all had the same connotations: scarce recognition by Russia of the sovereignty of Ukraine, and instead profuse references to Ukraine as destiny-bound to community with great-power Russia.

In this article I argue that Putin’s strong promotion of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and his hardline stance against Ukraine are highly consistent with the basic

1 <<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7001>> (accessed 16 April 2014).

2 <<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7000#sel=3:1,3:64>> (accessed 16 April 2014).

modes of legitimation that he has been using throughout his three presidential terms. His line of action is intimately bound up with his interpretation of Russia's role and privileges as a great power. This great power theme is closely linked to fundamental sentiments of Russian national identity and therefore highly popular among the public. Moreover, through his actions, Putin has demonstrated that he still is a formidable force to be reckoned with. The message is conveyed to the electorate that he is a strongman who is virtually irreplaceable at the helm of Russian state power. By many measures, Putin's personal popularity was waning at the beginning of his third presidential term in office, but the conflict with Ukraine will at least in the short-term mean a boost for his domestic popularity.

### Putin the Myth-Maker

All nations, big and small, tend to have political myths that promote ideational unity and cohesiveness among their populations. These myths confer legitimacy on political leaders who act upon them in resonance with public sentiments. Whether the myths are true or false is not important for the analysis, but the main thing is that they express naturalized, taken-for-granted cultural knowledge in the Barthesian sense of the word.<sup>3</sup>

Ever since he first became president in 1999/2000, Putin has been extremely successful at building his popularity on the basis of two predominant Russian political myths: about Russia as an eternal great power, regardless of the circumstances, and about Russia as regularly beset by cyclically recurring periods of weakness (*smuta*, Time of Troubles).<sup>4</sup> These periods are eventually overcome by the people who unite behind a great leader and act to throw insurgents and foreign schemers out. Thanks to this leader, who emerges on the stage in the nick of time, Russia is again resurrected to its great power status.

Putin has skillfully depicted himself as the personification of both myths, as the guarantor in the first place, and as the great savior in the other. Thanks to his exploitation of this basis of legitimacy, Putin has almost consistently had stunningly high popularity ratings, often above 80 percent, but never less than 65.<sup>5</sup>

The imagery of Russia as an eternal great power has been used by Putin for both legitimizing and mobilizing purposes. In the early days of his first presidency, he stated that "either Russia will be great or it will not be at all," and, in an interview with a Western newspa-

per, he indignantly retorted that Russia is not claiming great power status, but *is* a great power by virtue of its huge potential, history and culture. Since great power status is an elusive quality at all times, what Putin seems to be striving for is being treated as an equal by other great powers and a status that is second to none in the international arena.

The paradigmatic Time of Troubles took place between 1598 and 1613, but according to contemporary political discourse in Russia, the most recent *smuta* coincided with Boris Yeltsin's presidencies in the 1990s. According to this contemporary mythology, Putin personified its successful ending. The 1990s were a period of humiliating economic and political weakness and protracted internal unrest, with the civil war in Chechnya as the most obvious example. When taking up the presidency, Putin declared that "the state has to be strong, but it has become weak," and from his first day in office he started to act accordingly. Concepts like "dictatorship of the law" and "sovereign democracy" were launched with great determination during his first presidency, underlining Putin's ambition to strengthen order inside Russia, make the country respected again, and demonstrate that it was its own master, beholden to no one.

During the first half of the 2000s, Putin was extremely lucky with timing. His first presidential tenure coincided with unprecedented jumps in oil and gas prices, and as a major exporter of these strategic commodities, Russia benefited greatly from the development. To use a popular expression frequently employed among Russia analysts at the time, Russia had established itself as an energy superpower, wielding key economic and political influence over transit and consumer countries in Europe. The newfound energy wealth meant that Putin could kick-start his presidency economically, and from the point of view of the public, it would seem as though Russia, thanks to him, had finally, after the chaos of the 1990s, made it back to the ranks of the great powers at break-neck speed. Consequently, Putin earned solid popularity as the man who restored Russia to greatness and kept it there.

### The Popularity-Legitimacy Paradox

There is, however, a fundamental distinction to be borne in mind between popularity and legitimacy, whereby legitimacy is considered as the more diffuse, but also more sustainable, popular trust in the basic institutions of the political system. Several scholars specializing in Russian politics have observed a paradox whereby Putin's personal popularity ratings remain high, but popular faith and trust in the fundamental institutions of the Russian political system, including the presidency as

3 Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

4 Petersson, Bo. "Still Embodying the Myth?", *Problems of Post-Communism* 61.1 (2014): 30–40.

5 <<http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>> (accessed 17 April 2014).

such, are chronically low.<sup>6</sup> This is a situation that can turn out to be problematic in many ways. As Vladimir Gel'man<sup>7</sup> has suggested, Putin's high popularity ratings may actually inhibit the development in Russia of more long-term legitimacy in the Weberian sense.

However, even though Putin's exploitation of the great power and the restoration-of-order myths was undoubtedly successful, there are formidable problems to be encountered with regard to the tension between popularity and legitimacy. If Putin ceases to deliver the economic goods and times get rough for the electorate and/or his personal popularity wanes while trust in state institutions remains low, the system will come under considerable strain. Already the financial crisis from 2007 onwards meant a heavy burden for the Russian economy, and even if the Putin administration was quick to try to shift all the blame onto the United States, there was no doubt that Russia was affected. Also, the combination of extreme personal popularity and limited systemic legitimacy makes for a possible power vacuum once Putin eventually leaves office. Who is to succeed him and who can ever step into his shoes to secure greatness and order? However, right now that day seems to be distant. The concern is no doubt with the present.

### Fighting the Stagnation Specter

After Putin's return to presidential power following the Medvedev interlude a lingering question arose: For how long can the old recipes work? Putin, born in 1952, did not seem to come across as resourceful and energetic anymore. Instead, he had become synonymous with the system. In the words of Ben Judah, dynamic Putinism was becoming replaced by stagnant Putinism.<sup>8</sup> Tellingly, after the end of the presidential elections in 2012, Putin argued indignantly that the opposition wanted to reinstate chaos in Russian politics and wished to "usurp power," thus suggesting that it was his personal privilege to uphold the presidency. There seemed to be rich evidence of sclerosis.

The deal in 2011 between then President Medvedev and then Prime Minister Putin to switch places with each other did nothing to alleviate the impression of a political elite set on preserving its hold on power at all costs. The demonstrations that followed in the big metropolises showed that the tandem's ways of rigging

the system had little support. Even if Putin's popularity index by international comparison had not fallen to any disastrous levels, the tendency towards decline was, according to the monthly polls by the Levada Center, steady and apparent: from a protracted peak of close to 90 percent approval rates in 2007–2008 to ratings situated in the low or mid-60s rather consistently from the spring of 2012 on.<sup>9</sup> For a political leader embedded in a political system enjoying institutionalized public trust, this figure would have been no problem, but for someone clearly constructing his power basis on personal popularity, it represented a worrying trend.

At this point it seemed as if Putin balanced between stressing stability and order, on the one hand, and nurturing stagnation, on the other. The specter of Brezhnev-like sclerosis was frequently discussed among political analysts abroad, and Putin was ever more often mocked in Russian social media. The first months of his third presidency again signaled inertia. In the President's annual address to the Federal Assembly, delivered in December 2012, grand visions were conspicuously absent. Instead there were plenty of self-congratulatory reminders of what had already been achieved in the 2000s: internal order had been re-established, and Russia was again a strong power to be reckoned with. Old wine was poured into old bottles.

### Ukraine: Consolidating Putin's Power

No doubt Putin and his advisors were keenly aware of this dilemma. The Sochi Olympics in February 2014 meant an opportunity to showcase newfound vitality. Even more so, the situation unfolding in Ukraine and the power vacuum after the downfall of president Yanukovich offered a chance to change the equation and counteract both the pattern of stagnation and the declining personal popularity rates.

In any case, it can be said that today, in connection with the acute crisis over Crimea and Ukraine, the old magic seems again to be working for Putin; his popularity ratings are rising steeply, past the 80-percent threshold and apparently only knowing the sky as their limit.<sup>10</sup> Putin again appears as the man who delivers the goods, talks and acts tough against his opponents at home and abroad, and upholds Russia's reputation as a great power which demands to be treated with awe and respect. At the same time, he has seemed to disprove the predictions that Russia is entering another period of stagnation; Putin is projected as forever strong, and so is Russia. Just like he managed to lay the foundation of his spectacular and enduring popularity through his hard

6 Sil, Rudra, and Cheng Chen. "State Legitimacy and the (In) significance of Democracy in Post-Communist Russia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 56.3 (2004): 347–368.

7 Gel'man, Vladimir. "Regime changes despite legitimacy crises: Exit, voice, and loyalty in post-communist Russia." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 1.1 (2010): 54–63.

8 Judah, Ben. *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell in and Out of Love with Vladimir Putin*. Yale University Press, 2013.

9 <<http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>> (accessed 17 April 2014)

10 <<http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>> (accessed 17 April 2014)

and uncompromising line against secessionist Chechnya in the late 1990s and early 2000s, he now seems to be consolidating and extending his popular mandate by flexing great-power muscle against Ukraine and demonstrating that Russia does not flinch in the face of Western sanctions.

The annexation of Crimea and the tensed relations with Ukraine have therefore, no matter how deplorable

they are for Western democracies, added new elements of vitality to Putin's power base. Putin has advanced his position and his personal popularity has no doubt been strengthened in the short run. For Ukraine the price is high. For Russia itself and the surrounding world, the final price tag is unknown as yet, but the increasingly used expression about this time being the New Cold War does suggest that the development does not come for free.

#### *About the Author*

Bo Petersson is Professor of Political Science and International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Malmö University, Sweden.

### ANALYSIS

## The Return of Ideology—Russia's New Sense of Mission<sup>1</sup>

By Jens Siegert, Moscow

### Abstract

Since returning to the Kremlin, Putin and his regime have moved away from the informal “social contract” of the 2000s, in which the state refrained from playing a role in shaping people's lives towards promoting a neo-ideology—a crude mixture of a sense of threat from and resentment towards the foreign and the human, neo-religious bigotry and an anti-Western and anti-modernizing geopolitical world view. While this neo-ideology may secure the regime a few additional years in power, it is likely to lead the country into decline, as it is scaring off exactly those people—the young, (well-)educated, mobile and entrepreneurial—needed to modernize Russia.

An important differentiating characteristic between the Soviet Union and Putin's Russia was, until recently, the widespread freedom of its people to define their lives as they wish. This freedom, the freedom to think what you want and to say what you think, to travel where you want to go, return when you like, to live with whom you wish, to love whom you wish, to work where you wish (all within the framework of given social and economic possibilities, naturally) was, moreover, a part of the often discussed (even though it was not set out in writing) “social contract” of the 2000s. According to this “contract”, Putin determines politics and controls the most important economic resources. But he also cares for the growing prosperity of as many people as possible, does not interfere in the private lives of his citizens, and does not interfere in what they think and believe.<sup>1</sup>

Putin once even spoke of this last part of the “social contract” himself. In his first speech on the “state of the

nation” in front of both chambers of parliament in July 2000, he explained that he was “against the reintroduction of an official ideology in Russia in any form whatsoever.” There have been, time and time again since then, moments of temptation, above all in the case of recent history, to prescribe or forbid something or other. But on the whole, Putin kept his promise.

He probably actually believed that things are better that way (also, or perhaps above all, for himself). Because it is only in this combination that both strands of his power basis hold together: on one side the so-called “Gosudarstvenniki” (from Gosudarstvo—the state), those who always put the interests of the state first (it is towards these who Putin himself very obviously leans, ideologically and biographically). They stand for the “rise of the Russian state from its knees,” for a more self-aware policy towards the West, for the uncompromising approach in the second war with Chechnya and also for the gradually strengthening of limitations on citizens' participation rights. They now, unanimously, support the annexation of the Crimea peninsula and certainly will support further steps to destabilize the Ukraine as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> This article is a slightly revised and updated version of that found on Rights in Russia, which is available at: <<http://www.rightsinrussia.info/archive/comment/siegert/obscurantism>>

On the other side, Putin leans on a free-market liberal elite, many of whom grew rich and influential during the 1990s. Their (as it tends to be) free-market liberal economic policy is to increase Russia's prosperity, to make it great again, and, not unimportantly, through their economic successes, to secure Putin's sovereignty and thereby his power. Furthermore, this elite served, until recently, as a counterweight to the "Gosudarstvenniki" (this might change now in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis). This all worked very well until around the end of the decade. The majority of people in Russia were certainly satisfied with the result overall.

Then came the economic crisis. Confidence in a rosy future in the country took a hit. The discourse on modernisation under the interim president Medvedev brought a bit of hope and something of a breath of fresh air. But, as Medvedev stepped down in September 2011 and Putin came back, this air quickly ran out. What followed were the winter protests which no one thought possible and a real fear probably crept into the Kremlin that Putin's rule could soon be over.

The switch from an ideologically neutral, or better yet, only selectively and instrumentally ideological state of the 2000s, to one which calls for an ideological following, and, at the very least, restraint in dissent against it, showed itself at first in a change of concept. Instead of president of a whole, a "single" Russia, since early 2012 (the peak of the protests) Putin has claimed to be representing only the politics of an "overwhelming majority".

The outline of this form of politics was quickly sketched out. It can, very conveniently, be seen in the repressive measures used against the protesting opposition. The political classes have, ever since, been conducting themselves—as has been conveyed to western societies—like right-wing conservatives, religious zealots, closer to or already past the limits of obscurantism. The most prominent examples are the anti-homosexuality laws, the so-called Dima Yakovlev law forbidding the adoption of Russian children by US citizens, the law to "protect religious feelings" and the increasingly hysterical public discussion of apparent falsifications of history, in particular involving the Second World War (a full list would be very long). Taken together, these events have come to represent a kind of antithesis to the "Western" reviled (democratic) modernity.

At first, this development looked like a new, more tactical about-turn, thought up chiefly to secure sovereignty. Hardly anyone believed that all this could really be meant seriously. However, the whole lifestyle (and I do not fear this choice of words) of the ruling political class in Russia (and all the more so, the economic elite) has become completely Westernised, right down to family and wealth in the West.

And with time this crude mixture of a sense of threat and resentment towards the foreign and the human, neo-religious bigotry and a geopolitical world view has intensified into a kind of ideology. Not yet a very consistent one, but thoroughly usable one nonetheless. Internally, it is employed against the opposition and externally against the West.

Vladimir Putin gave credence to this ideological substrata in detail for the first time in September of last year in a half-hour speech before the so-called Valdai Club. A quick summary of the report is as follows: the West (in particular "Europe", by which the EU is meant) has strayed from its Christian-occidental path and deteriorated into a hotbed of decadence, sin and, from Putin's view probably the very worst of all, weakness (ideas straight from the grave of Oswald Spengler, a very popular man in Russia). A textbook example of this is the apparent rise of gays everywhere, which, from Putin's point of view, has led directly to discrimination against supporters of traditional sexual relationships.

A new (but essentially old) mission for Russia has arisen from this: saving the (Christian) West (even though it doesn't deserve it). This mission is leading to the discovery of interesting new allies in the West. In January this year, the French Front National leader, Marine Le Pen, was received in Moscow like a head of government on standby. There were meetings with Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin and the Chair of the State Duma, Sergei Naryshkin. It was not difficult for them to find common ground. Later on, members of Le Pen's organization, from the Italian Lega Nord, the Austrian FPÖ, the Belgium Vlaams Belang and other European right wing parties have been invited by the Russian government to "monitor" the illegitimate referendum in the Crimea peninsula and, to no one's surprise, they approved it as "free and democratic".

Elena Mizulina, member of the State Duma and the main agitator for the anti-homosexuality laws, was enthusiastically received as a guest speaker at a conference of the German political obscurantist scene in Leipzig at the end of November, organised among others by Thilo Sarrazin. And there has also been animated and friendly contact with religious fundamentalists from the USA, including from the same school as Pat Buchanan, occasionally referred to as "paleo-conservative".

There is not much fundamentally new in any of this. It was the preoccupation of the Soviet Union, not the West, to be the anti-West or the better West. A more accurate comparison in my view, however, would be with the late Russian Empire. It was then that many liberal men, like the Finance Minister, Sergei Witte from around 1890, and very conservative men, like Prime Minister, Pyotr Stolypin in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century (who Putin refers to time and time again with clear veneration), tried to transform the country into a kind of dictatorship of modernisation using the power of the Tsarist autocracy. This approach was a reaction to the social and political rejection to which Russia (like the USA and Western and Central European countries before it) was submitted during the transition from an agricultural to an industrial country.

This autocratically led and controlled modernisation was thoroughly successful at the time. But, nonetheless, the basis on which the regime was built remained a pre-modern agricultural elite, with a world view which was already very out of fashion (to put it mildly) in other

places at the time. This elite was perched to grab the power of the Tsars, but the opportune time passed them and their rulers by. Something similar is threatening Putin. His new neo-ideological course has scared off just those people—the young, (well-)educated, mobile and entrepreneurial—who could pull off a modernisation of Russia today. This is, therefore, a course which can secure power for Putin for a few additional years (but also maybe not). But, the whole country could go to the dogs again in the process. One hundred years ago, things did not go well for Witte and Stolypin for very long.

*Translated by Helen Corbett*

#### *About the Author*

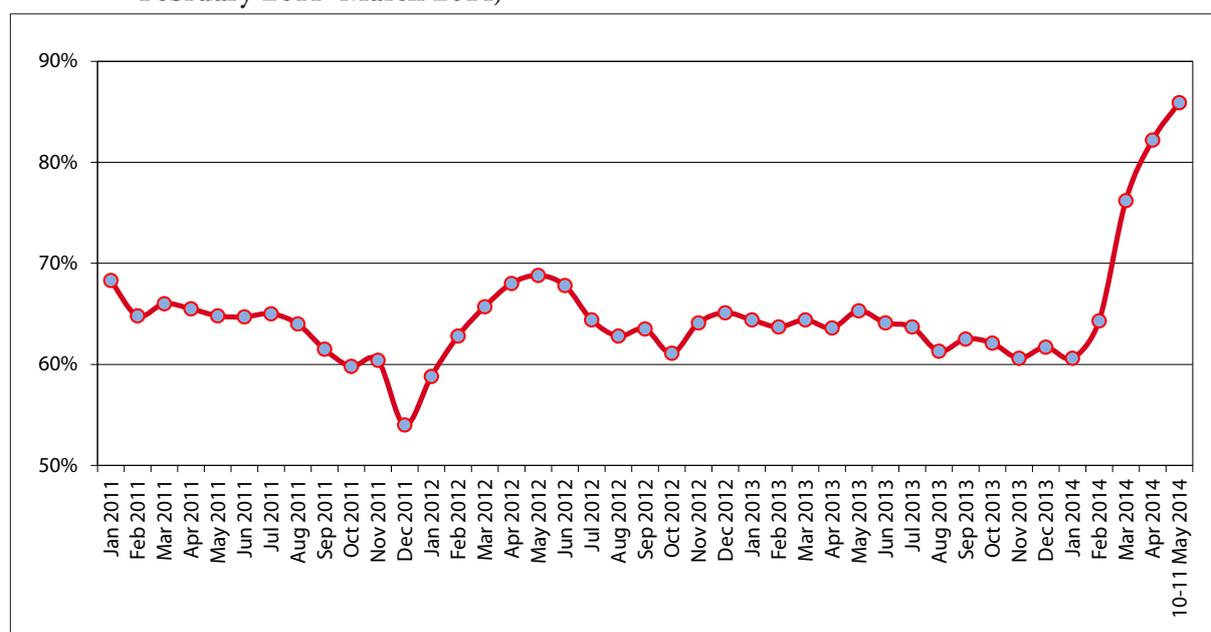
Jens Siegert is the Director of the Moscow office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. He is an expert on Russian domestic and foreign policy with a special focus on civil society issues. He previously worked as a journalist in Moscow.

For more of Jens Siegert's analysis of contemporary developments in Russia, you can follow his *Russland-Blog* (in German) at <http://russland.boellblog.org/> and in the "Notizen aus Moskau" section of *Russland-Analysen*, available at: <http://www.laender-analysen.de/russland/>. English translations of some of his blog posting can be found on the *Rights in Russia* website, at <http://www.rightsinrussia.info/archive/comment/siegert/>

## POLL

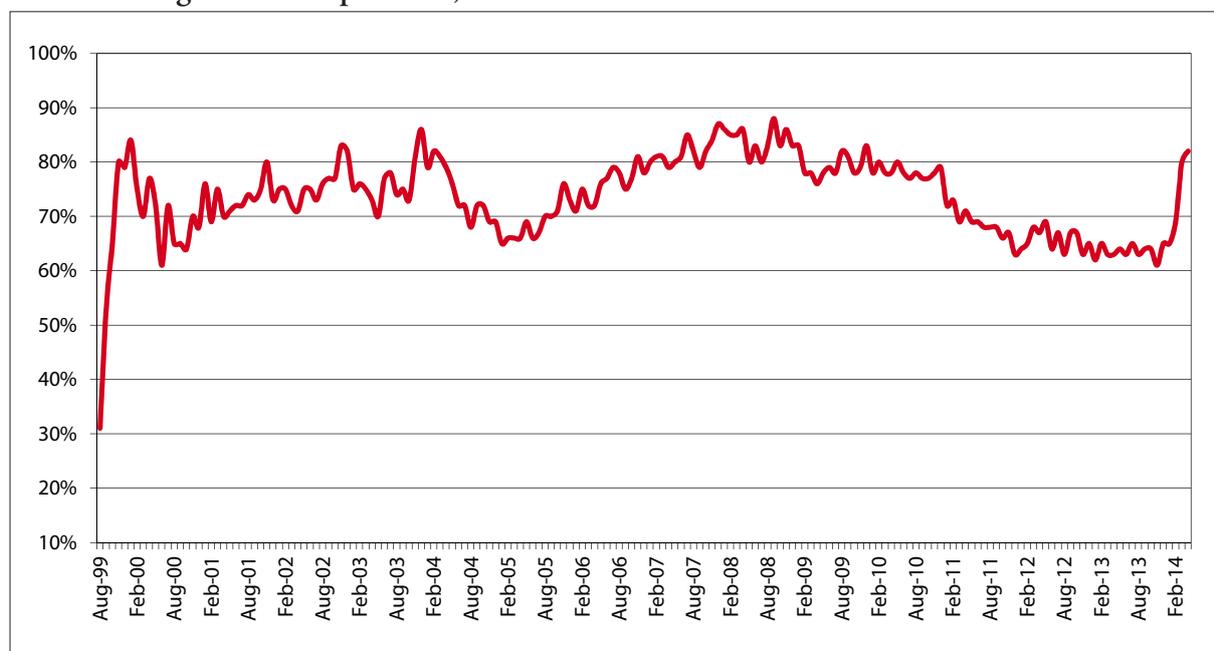
### Putin As Leader

**Figure 1: Do You Approve of Putin's Work? (Positive Answers in Percent, VTsIOM, February 2011–March 2014)**



Source: representative opinion polls by VTsIOM, February 2011 – 22–23 March 2014, <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=114759>

**Figure 2: Do You Approve of Putin's Work? (Positive Answers in Percent, Levada-Center, August 1999–April 2014)**



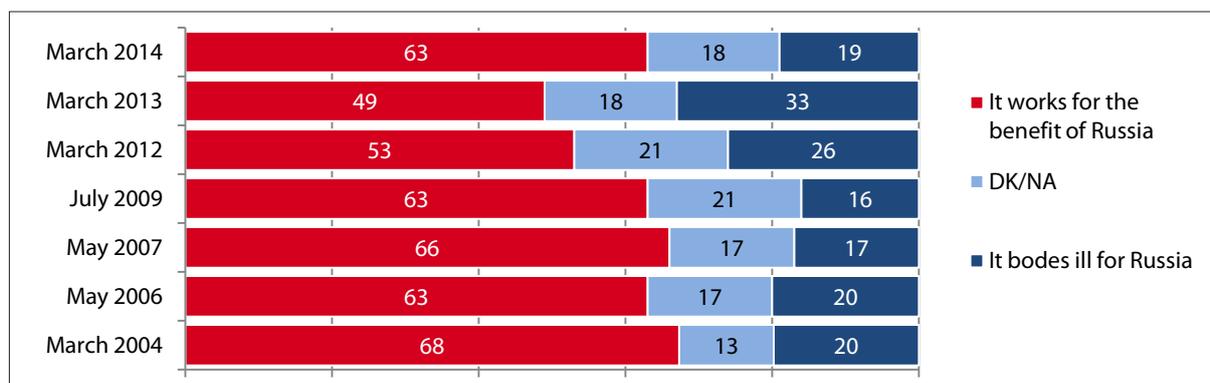
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, August 1999– April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>>

**Table 1: In Your Opinion, What Has Vladimir Putin Achieved During His Time in Power?**

	August 2010	February 2013	March 2014
Restore the status of a great power to Russia	36	36	51
Overcome separatist tendencies, keep Russia from falling apart	-	24	27
Increase wages, pensions, grants and welfare payments	43	28	25
Stabilize the situation in the North Caucasus	12*	17	25
Manage the consequences of the 2008 crisis	-	19	19
Keep Russia on the path of reforms	22	22	16
Ensure the rapprochement of countries of the CIS	20	16	13
Continue reforms, but with greater attention to the social protection of the people	22	10	12
Overcome the economic crisis of the country, halt the decline in production	18	14	12
Strengthen law and order	17	11	9
Return funds that average citizens lost during the reforms	11	5	3
Ensure a fair distribution of income in the interests of average citizens	5	3	2
Nothing of the above	6	9	6
DK/NA	5	8	10

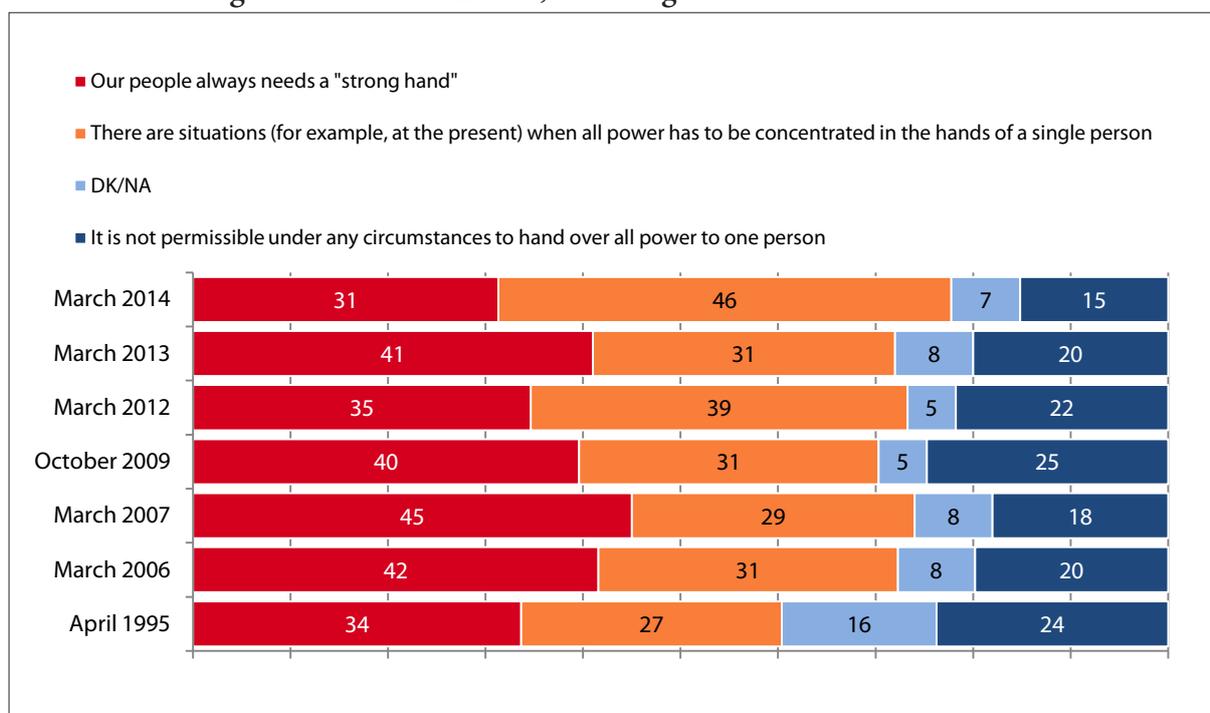
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, August 2010 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/18-04-2014/vladimir-putin-otsenki-deyatelnosti>>

**Figure 3: What Is Your Opinion: The Fact That Practically All Power in the Country Is Concentrated In the Hands of Vladimir Putin—Does This Work For the Benefit of Russia Or Does It Bode Ill For Russia?**



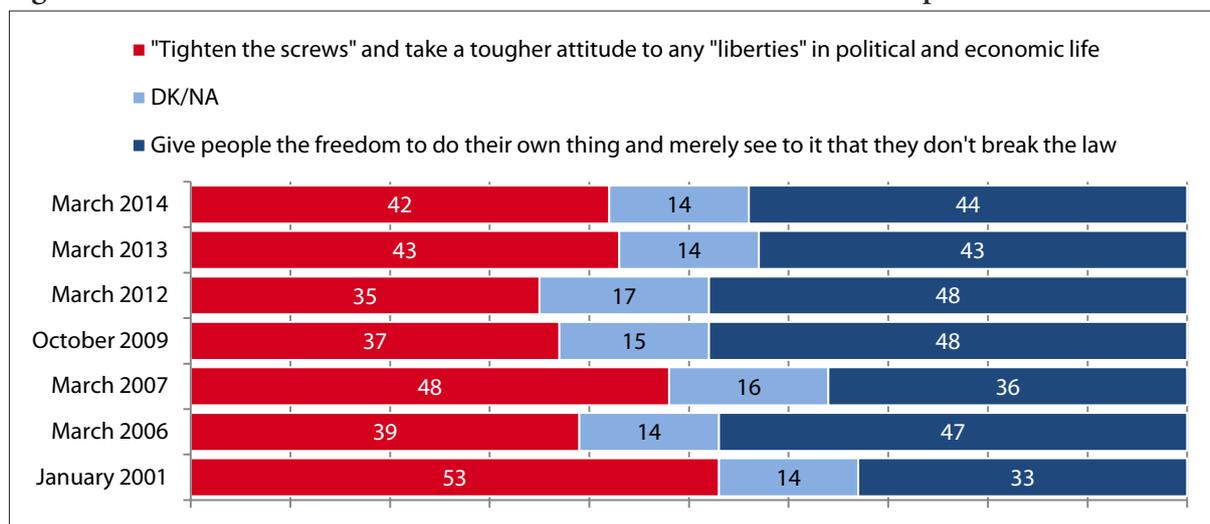
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, March 2004 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/08-04-2014/ros-siyane-o-silnom-lidere-i-edinovlastii>>

**Figure 4: In Your Opinion, Are There Situations in the Life of a Country When the People Need a Strong and Dictatorial Leader, a “Strong Hand”?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, April 1995 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/08-04-2014/ros-siyane-o-silnom-lidere-i-edinovlastii>>

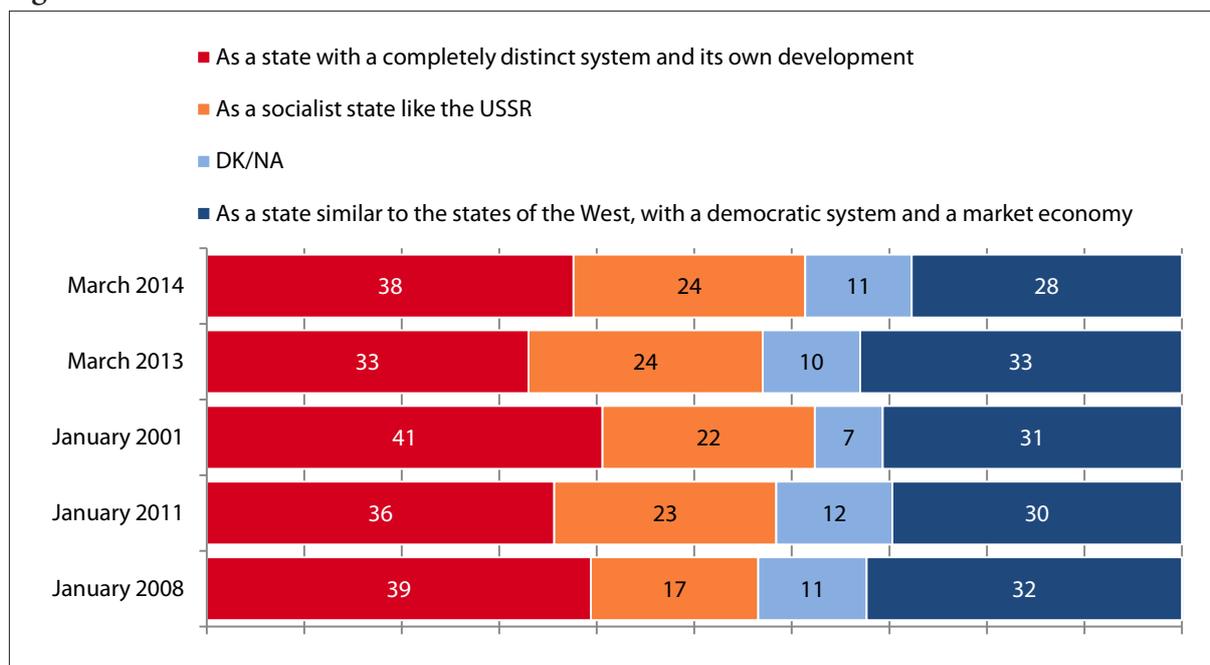
Figure 5: What Should President and Government Do Now, In Your Opinion?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, April 1995 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/08-04-2014/ros-siyane-o-silnom-lidere-i-edinovlastii>>

## Russia's Special Path

Figure 6: As What Kind of State Would You Like to See Russia in Future?

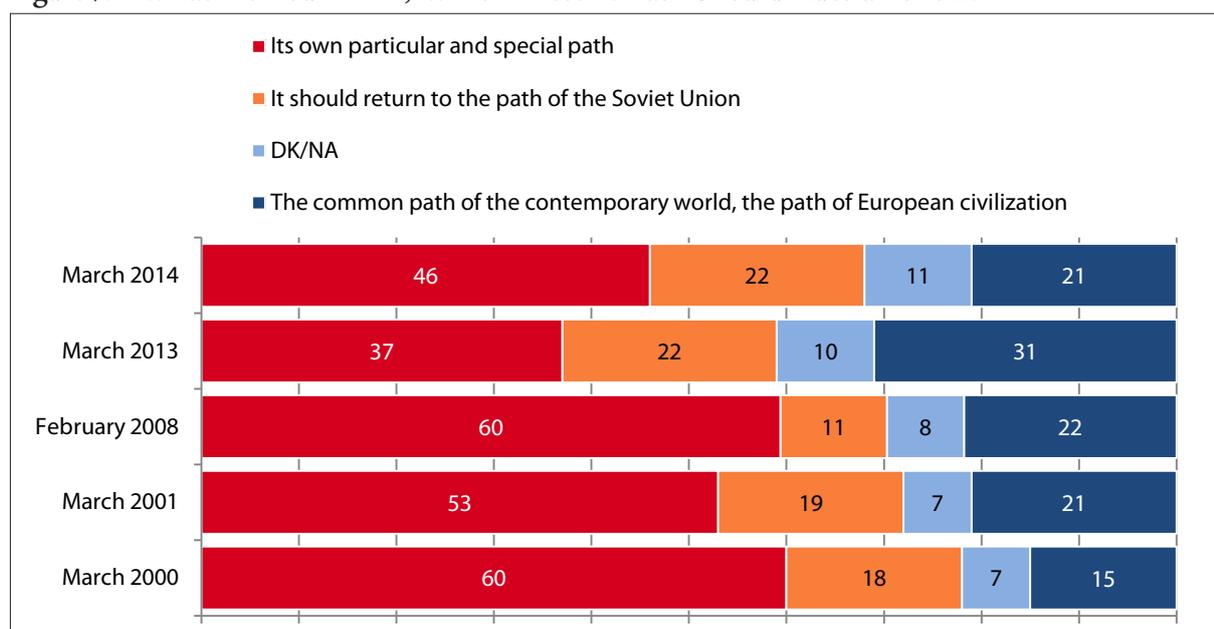


Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2008 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/07-04-2014/oso-byi-rossiiskii-put>>

**Table 2: If You Hear About the “Special Russian Path”, What Occurs To You Above All?**

	January 2008	January 2011	January 2012	March 2013	March 2014
Economic development of the country, but with more concern for people and not for profit and the interests of the “masters of life”	34	39	42	30	31
Discrepancy between values and traditions of Russia and the West	22	16	18	19	23
Taking into account in politics of the spiritual and moral aspect of relations between state and citizens	18	19	20	15	19
Necessity to constantly take into account factors such as the hostile encirclement of the country and the threat of an attack	9	5	11	8	11
Being prepared for the self-sacrifice of citizens for the sake of the greatness of the Russian state	7	8	7	5	6
I do not think that Russia’s development should be different from that of other countries	9	6	8	7	6
Predominance of the interests of the government over those of the people	7	9	7	7	4
I don’t know how, strictly speaking, the “special path” manifests itself, nothing comes to mind	16	15	16	17	15
I haven’t heard anything about this	11	11	8	11	13
DK/NA	9	7	6	8	7

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2008 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/07-04-2014/oso-byi-rossiiskii-put>>

**Figure 7: What Do You Think, Which Historic Path Should Russia Follow?**

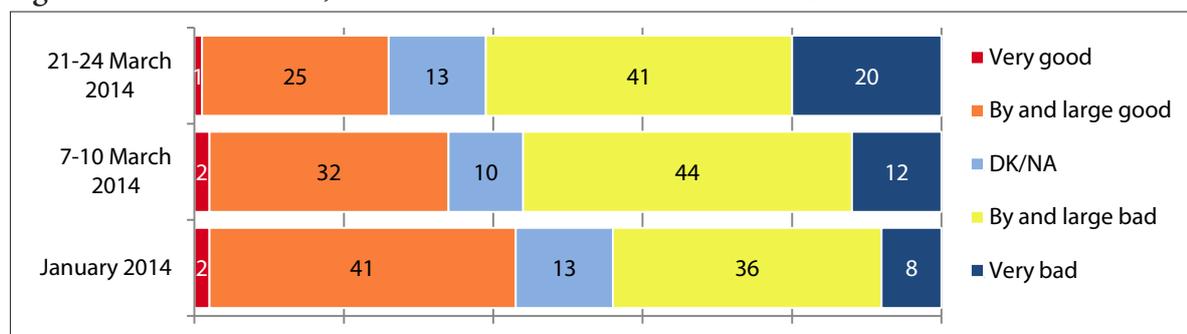
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2008 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/07-04-2014/oso-byi-rossiiskii-put>>

**Table 3: In Your Opinion, How Will Russia Most Probably Live in Fifty Years Time?**

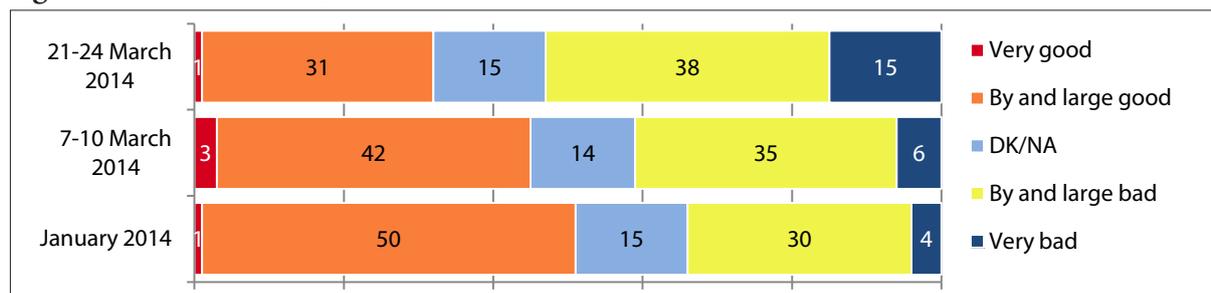
	November 1994	March 2000	February 2008	May 2012	March 2013	March 2014
Russia will be a rich and developed country, like the countries of the West	24	25	35	21	24	30
Technology, science, and armaments will be to Western standards, but the life of the people will be completely different	20	23	20	28	23	21
Russia will develop like the great Asian states: China, India	4	7	6	7	6	10
Russia will return to the path of socialism and communism	7	6	5	5	8	9
Russia awaits inevitable collapse and ruin	5	5	1	7	5	3
Russia will be a poor and backward country	-	-	2	-	10	3
DK/NA	40	34	31	33	25	25

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2008 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/07-04-2014/oso-byi-rossiiskii-put>>

## Russia's Position in the World

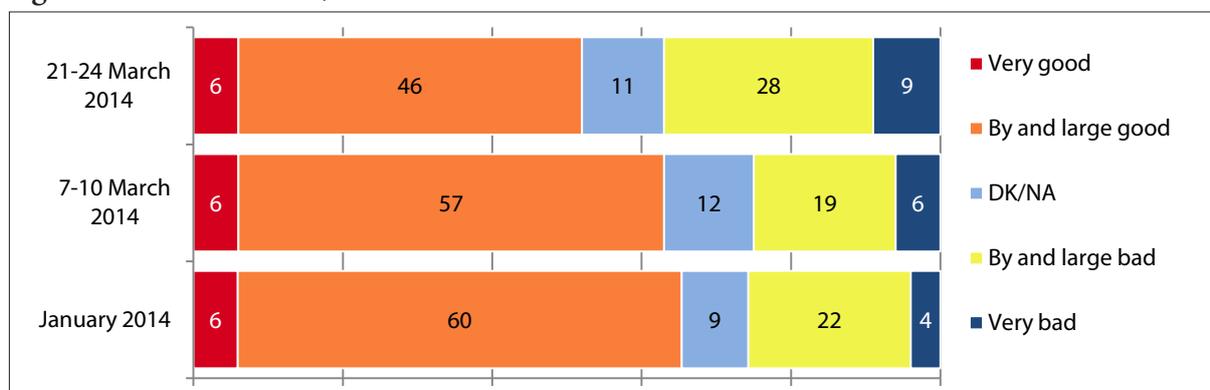
**Figure 8: On the Whole, What Is Your Attitude Towards the USA?**

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2014 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 9: On the Whole, What Is Your Attitude Towards the EU?**

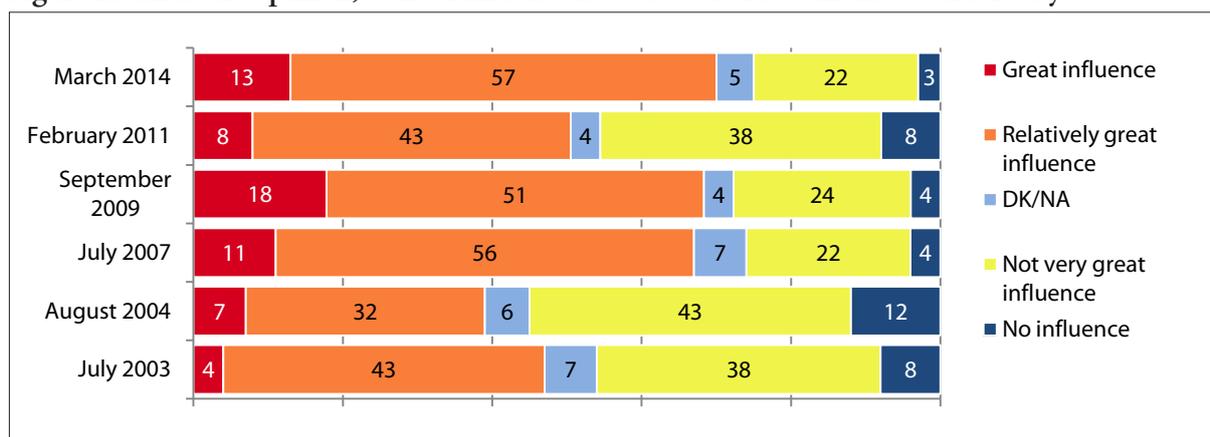
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2014 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 10: On the Whole, What Is Your Attitude Towards Ukraine?**



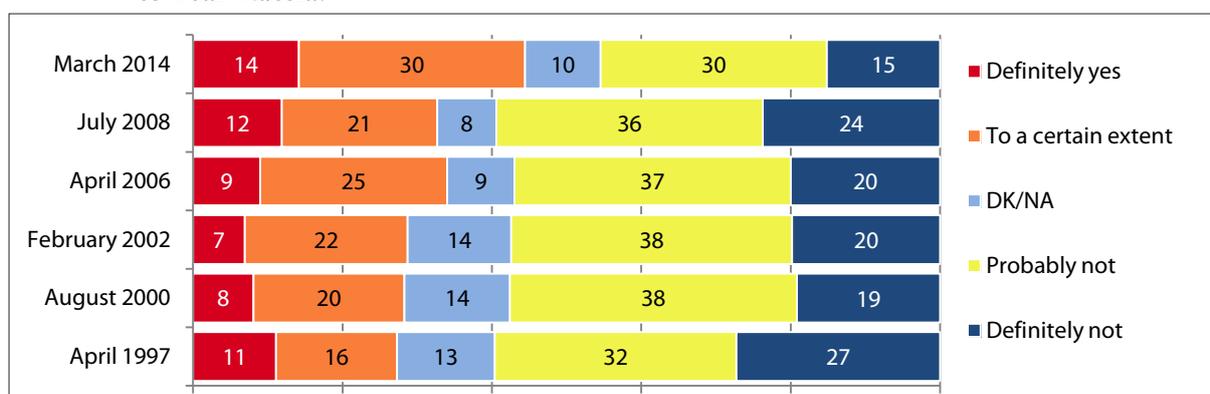
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2014 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 11: In Your Opinion, What Influence Does Russia Have in the World Today?**



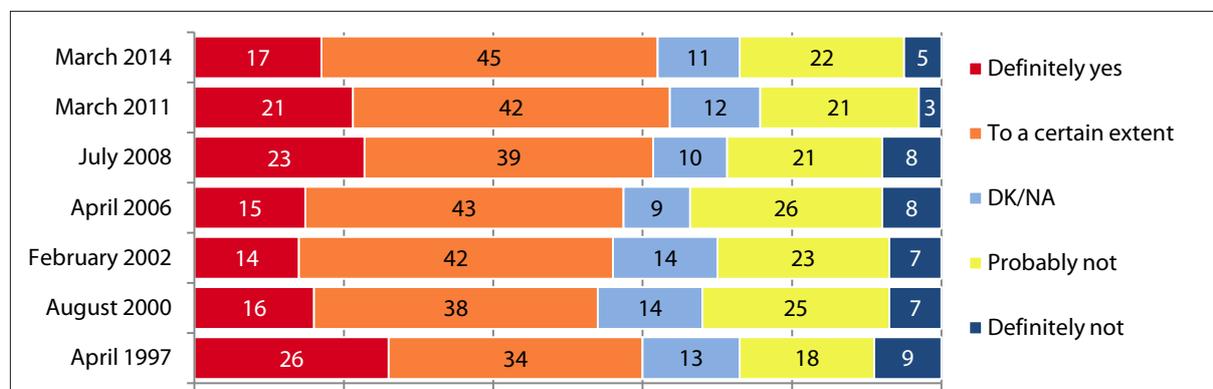
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, July 2003 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 12: What Do You Think, Do the Western Countries That Are Part of NATO Have Reason to Fear Russia?**



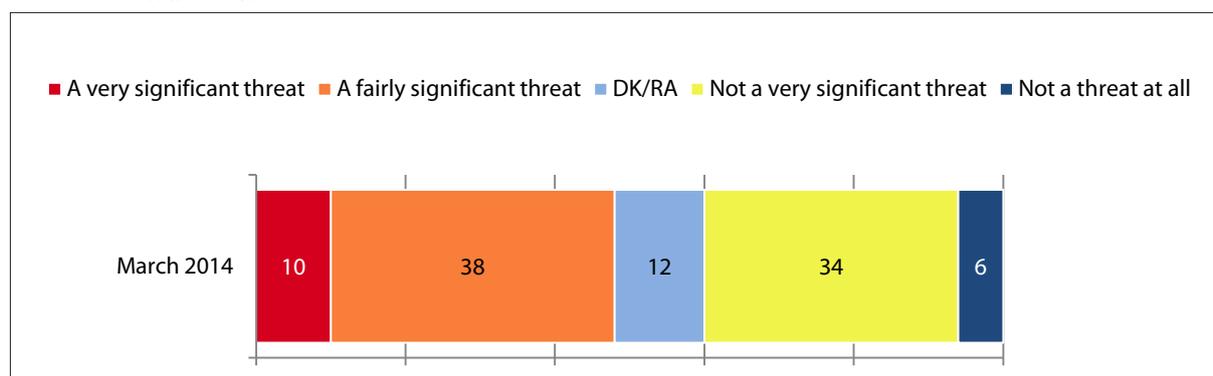
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, April 1997 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 13: What Do You Think, Does Russia Have Reasons to Fear the Western Countries That Are Part of NATO?**



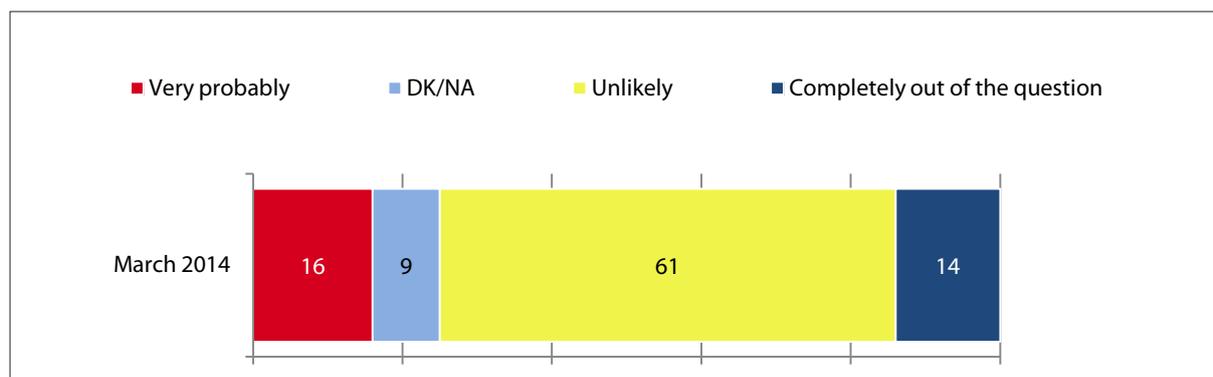
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, April 1997 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 14: What Do You Think, How Significant a Threat to Russia Would a Return to the “Cold War” Be?**



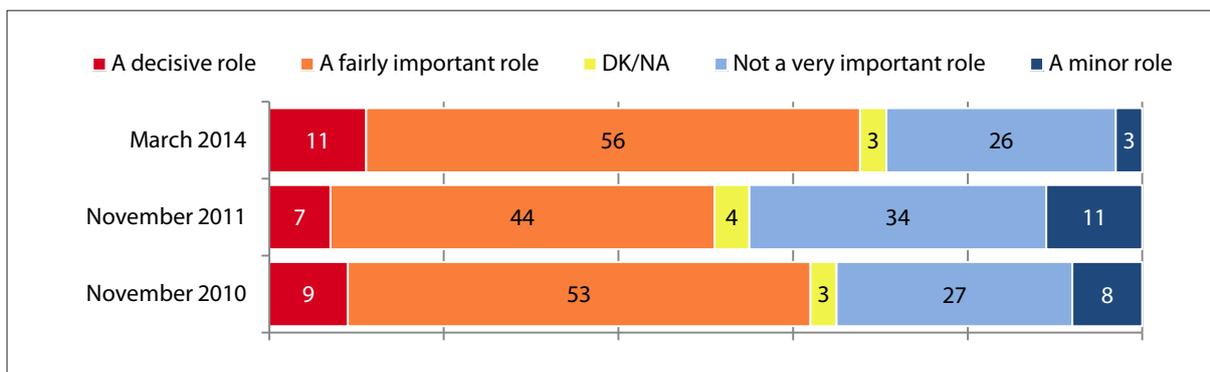
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 15: What Do You Think, Can the Present Worsening of Relations Between Russia and the Countries of the West Lead to an Armed Conflict Between Them?**



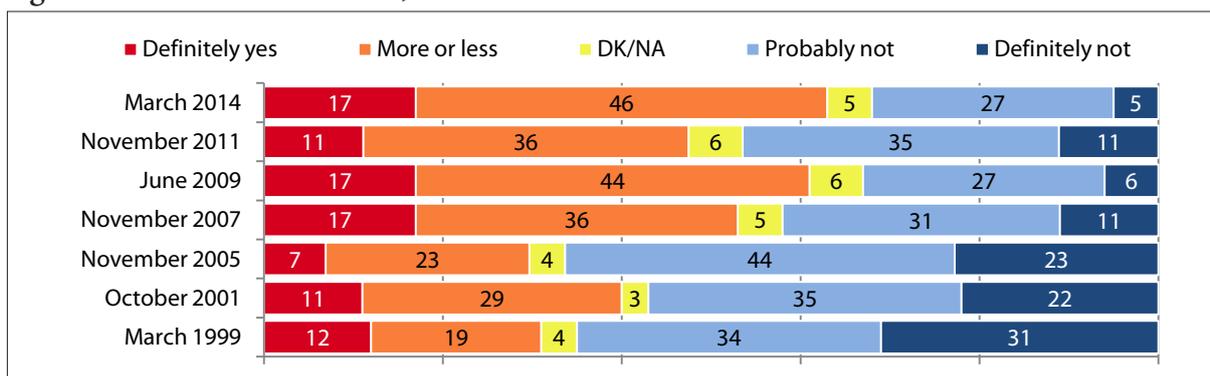
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/02-04-2014/otnoshenie-rossiyan-k-drugim-stranam>>

**Figure 16: What Is Your Opinion, What Role Does Russia Play at Present in the Solution of International Problems?**



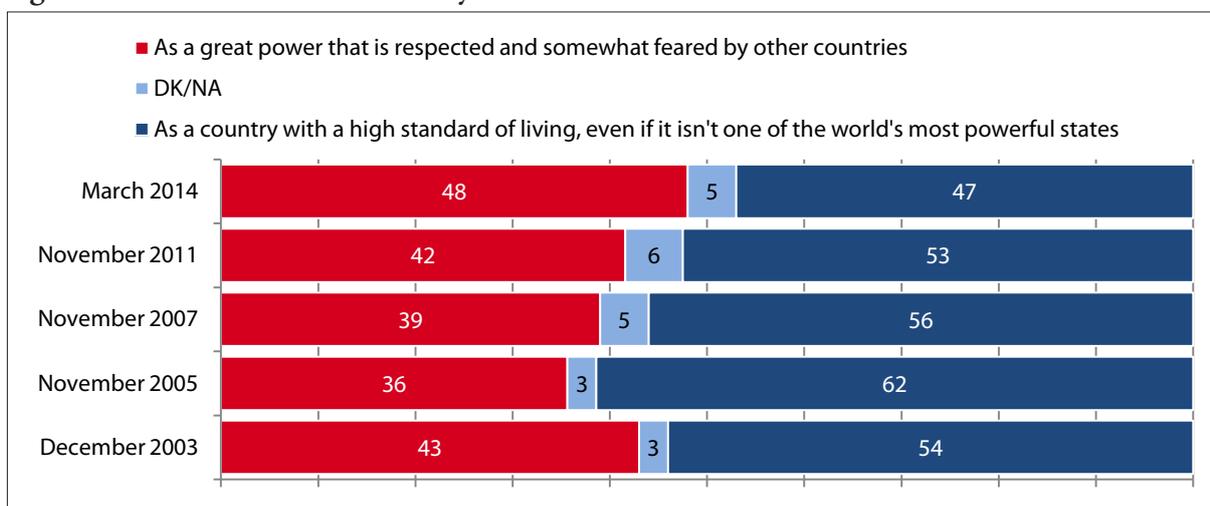
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, November 2010 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/17-03-2014/pozitsii-rossii-na-mirovoi-arene>>

**Figure 17: What Do You Think, Is Russia At Present a Great Power?**



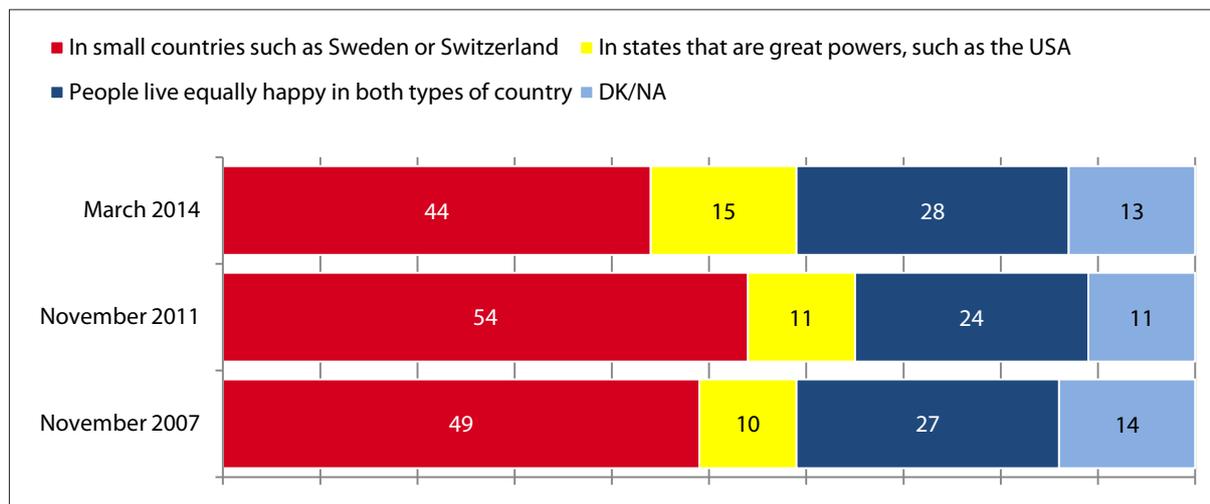
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, March 1999 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/17-03-2014/pozitsii-rossii-na-mirovoi-arene>>

**Figure 18: As What Kind of Country Would You Like To See Russia At the Present Time?**



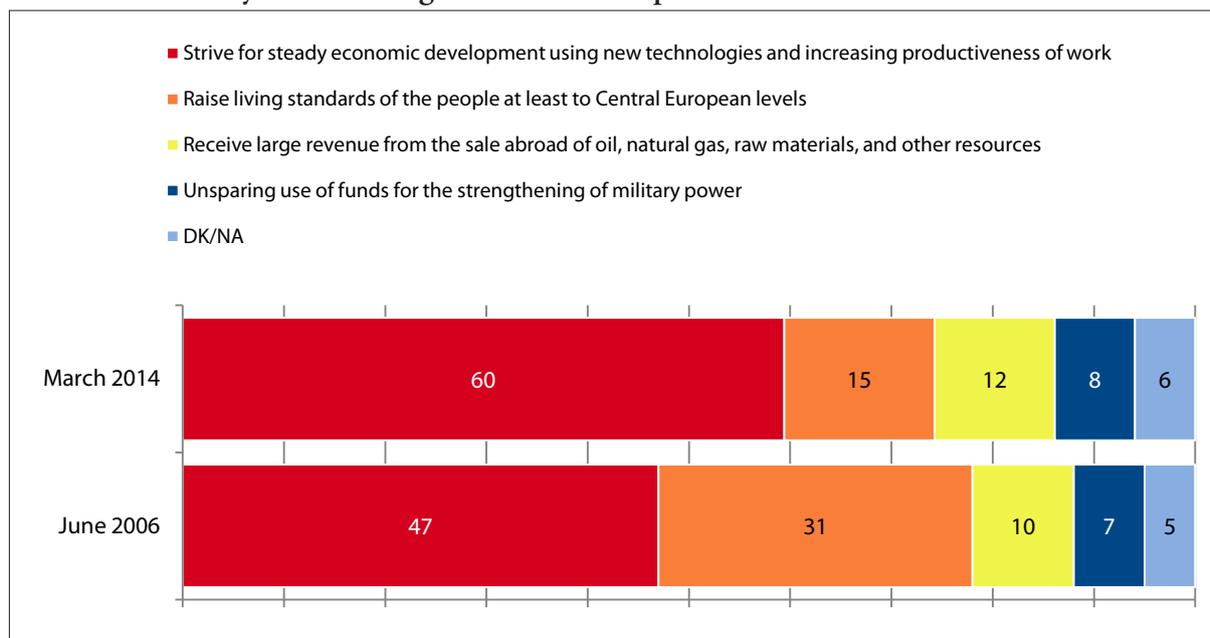
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, December 2003 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/17-03-2014/pozitsii-rossii-na-mirovoi-arene>>

**Figure 19: Where, In Your Opinion, Do People Live a Happier Life: In Small Countries Such As Sweden or Switzerland, Or in States That Are Great Powers, Such as the USA?**



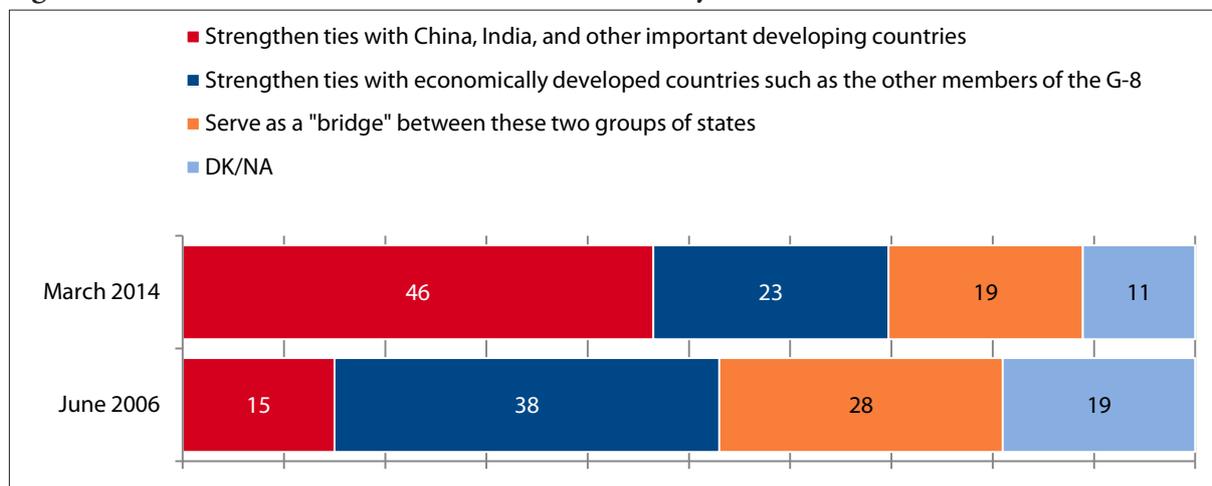
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, November 2007 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/17-03-2014/pozitsii-rossii-na-mirovoi-arene>>

**Figure 20: What, In Your Opinion, Is Now More Important In Order For Russia to Occupy a Worthy Place Among the Most Developed Countries?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, June 2006 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/11-04-2014/uchastie-rossii-v-bolshoi-vosmerke>>

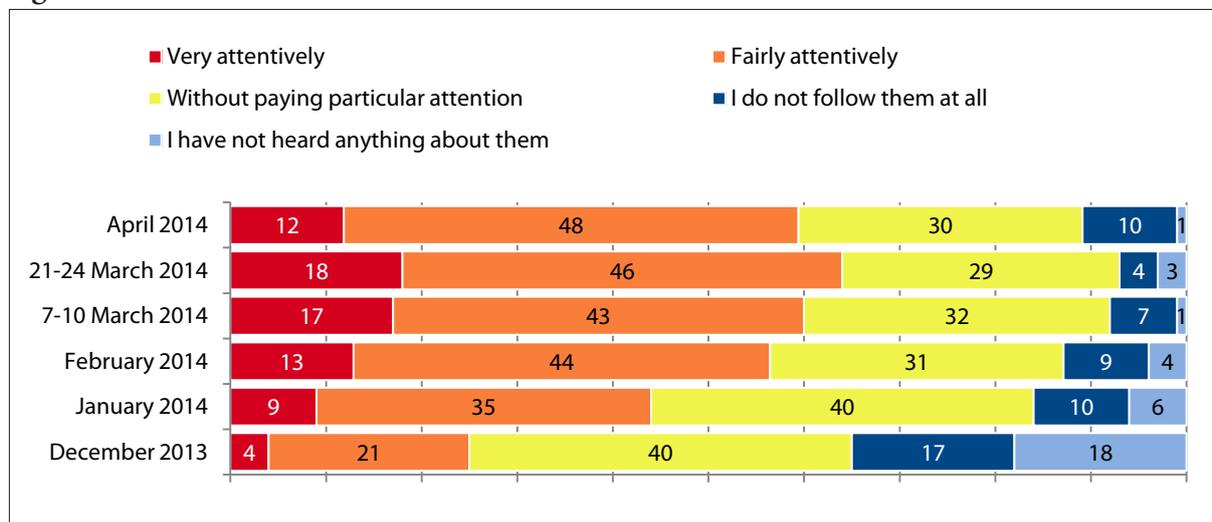
Figure 21: What Would Be Better for Russia's Economy?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, June 2006 – 21–24 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/11-04-2014/uchastie-rossii-v-bolshoi-vosmerke>>

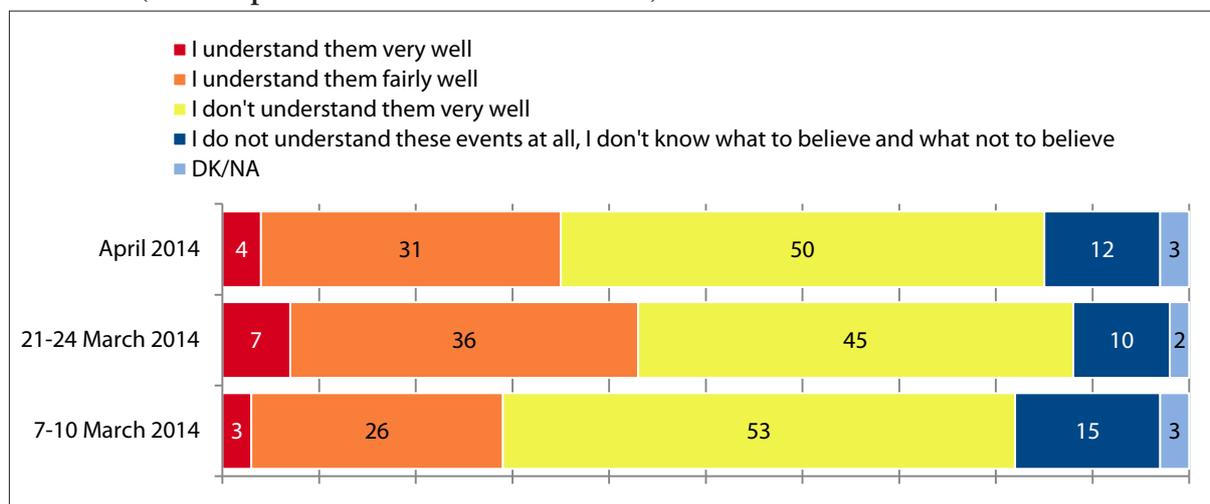
## The Ukraine Crisis, the Annexation of Crimea, and Russians Abroad

Figure 22: Do You Follow the Latest Events in Ukraine?



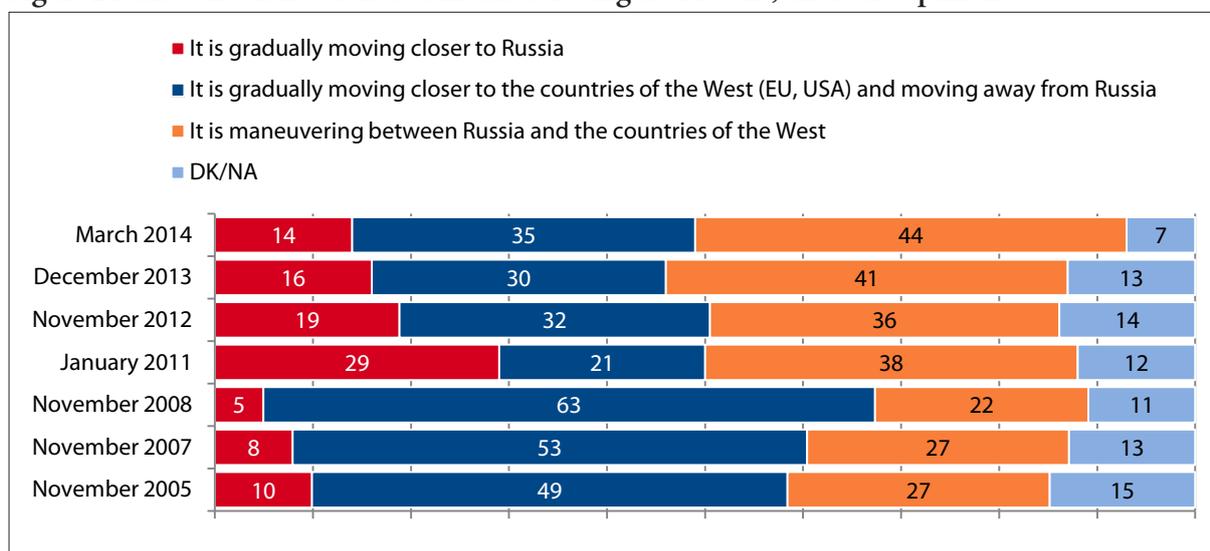
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, December 2013 – 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 23: Can You Say That You Understand these Events?**  
(% of respondents who follow the events)



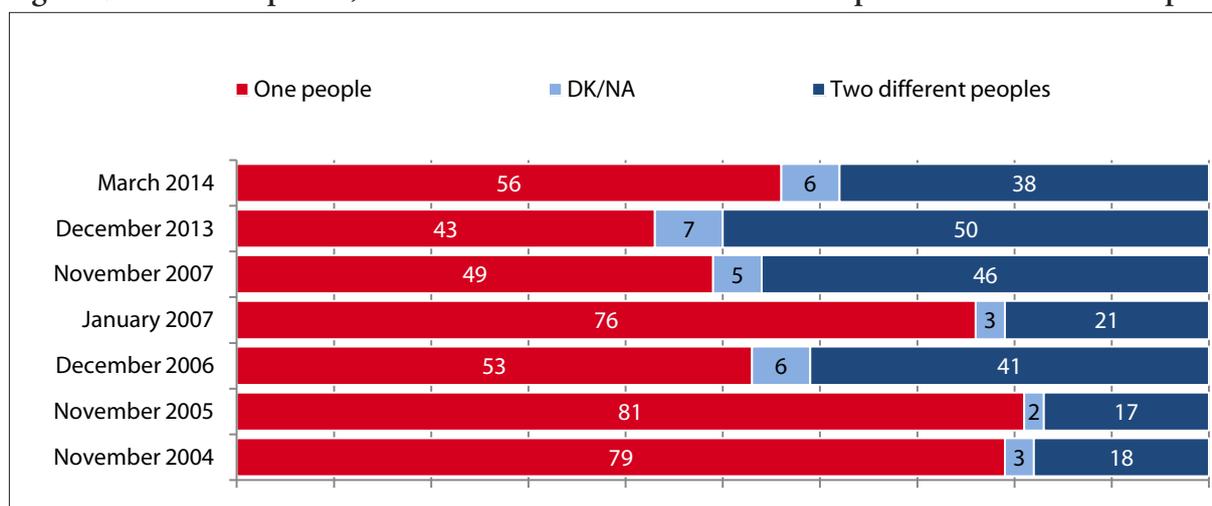
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 7–10 March 2014 – 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 24: In What Direction Is Ukraine Moving At Present, In Your Opinion?**



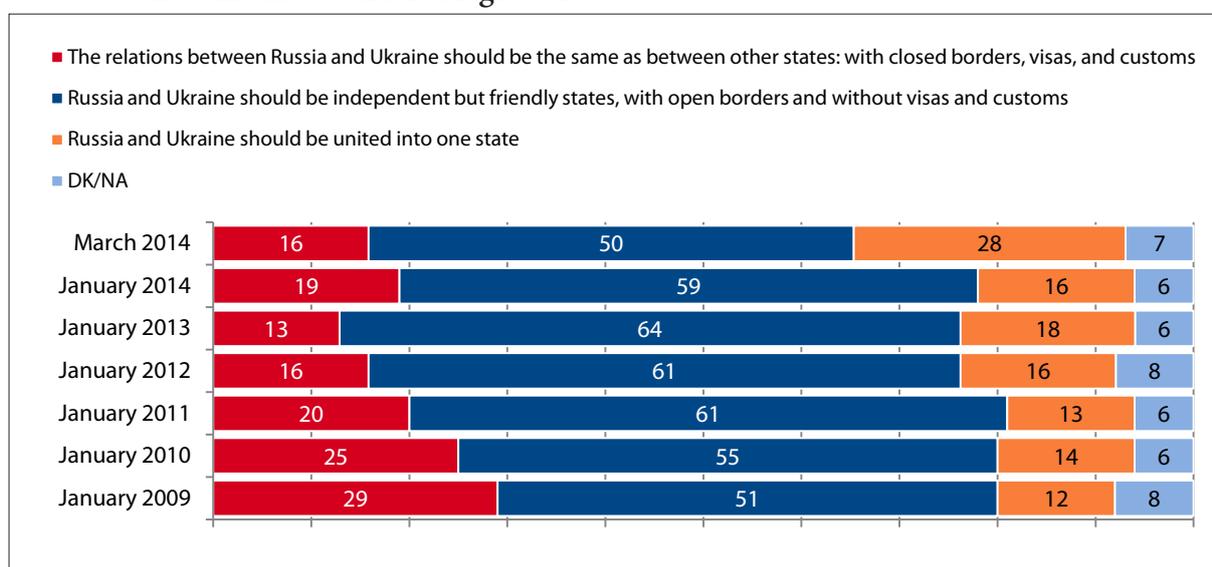
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, November 2005 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/14-03-2014/rossiyane-ob-otnosheniyakh-s-ukrainoi>>

**Figure 25: In Your Opinion, Are Russians and Ukrainians One People Or Two Distinct Peoples?**



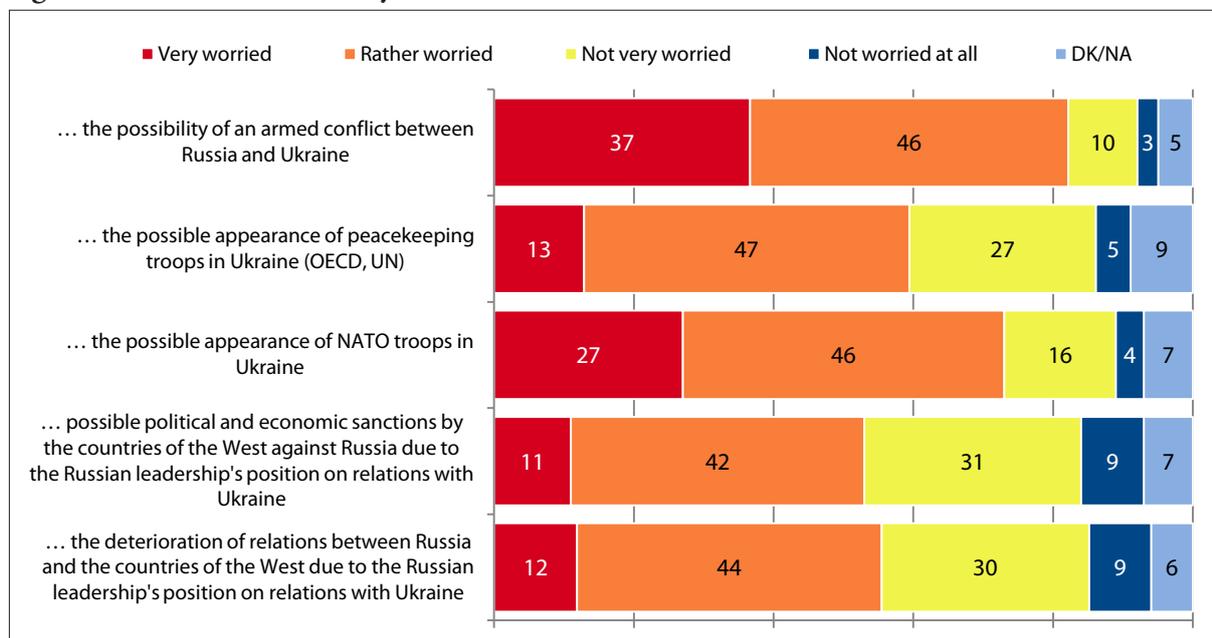
NB: 2004, 2005 and in January 2007 the question was formulated thus: “Are Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians distinct peoples or three branches of the same people?” Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, November 2004 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/14-03-2014/rossiyane-ob-otnosheniyakh-s-ukrainoi>>

**Figure 26: With Which of the Following Statements Concerning the Relations Between Russia and Ukraine Would You Agree Most?**



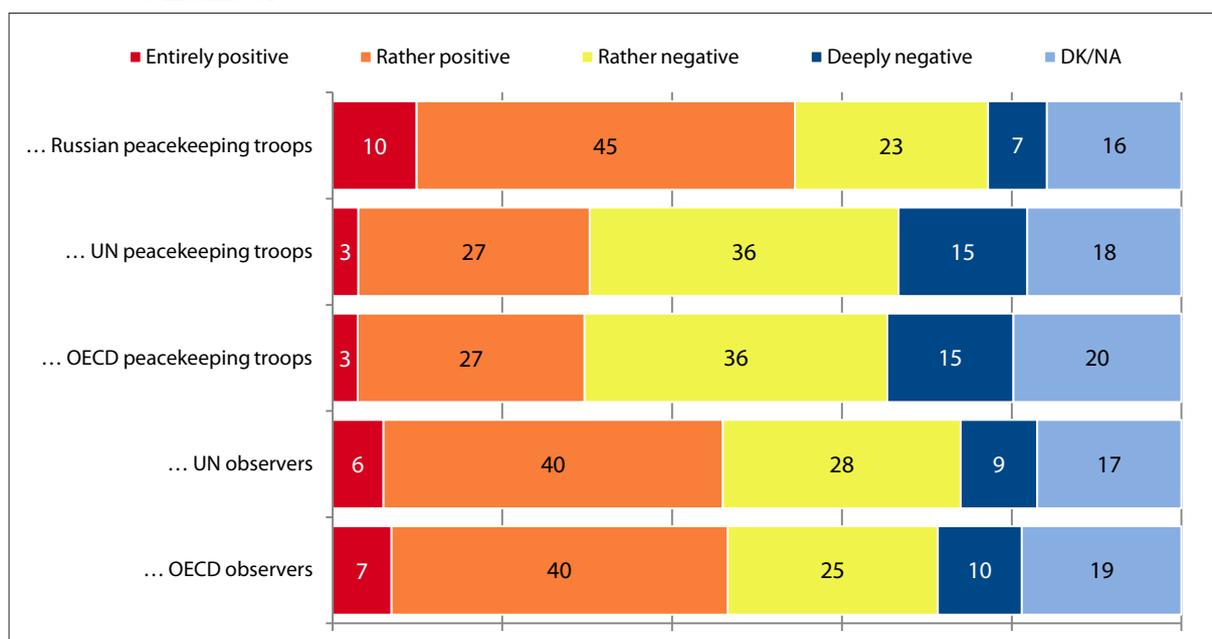
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, January 2009 – 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/14-03-2014/rossiyane-ob-otnosheniyakh-s-ukrainoi>>

Figure 27: Are You Worried By ...



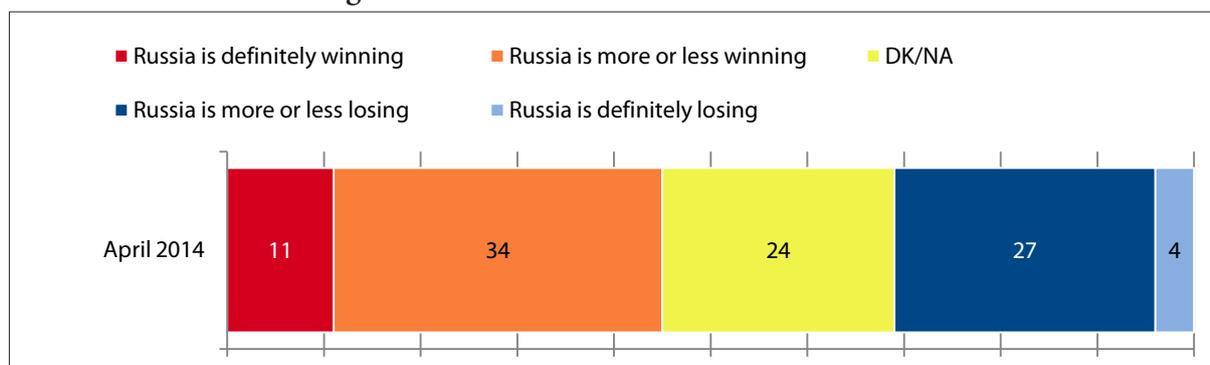
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/14-03-2014/rossiyane-ob-otnosheniyakh-s-ukrainoi>>

Figure 28: What Is Your Attitude Towards the Involvement in the Resolution of the Conflict in Ukraine of ...



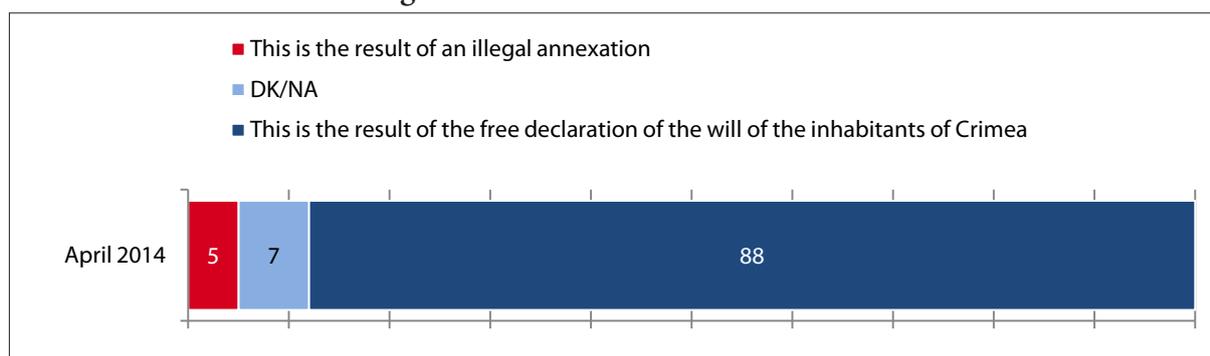
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 7–10 March 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/print/14-03-2014/rossiyane-ob-otnosheniyakh-s-ukrainoi>>

**Figure 29: What Is Your Opinion, Is Russia Winning Or Losing the Information War With the West Concerning Ukraine and Crimea?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrain-skikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 30: With Which of the Following Statements Concerning the Joining of Crimea With Russia Would You Agree?**



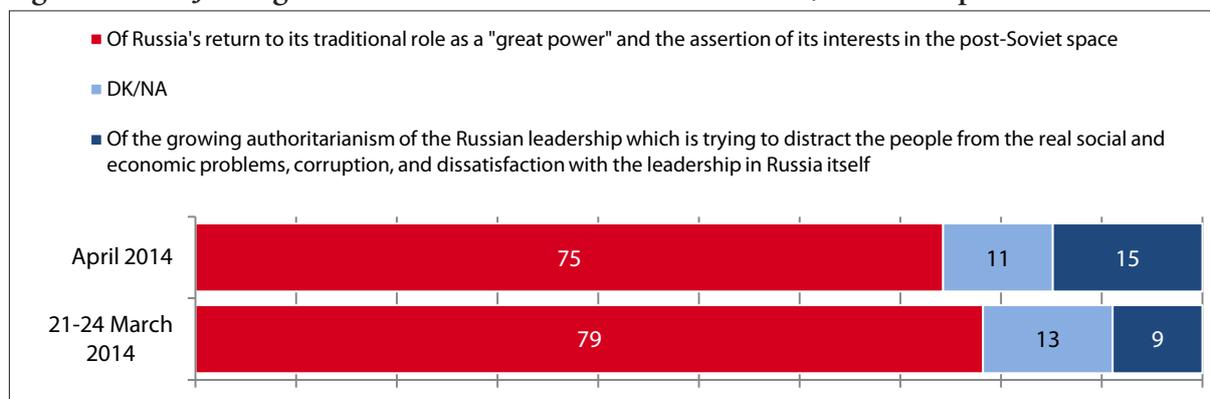
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrain-skikh-sobytyakh>>

**Table 4: What Emotions Does the Decision of Russia’s Leadership to Join Crimea With the Russian Federation Evoke in You?**

	21–24 March 2014	April 2014
A feeling of the triumph of justice	31	30
Pride in the country	34	38
Joy	19	23
Approval	47	46
Disapproval	3	3
Protest, indignation	1	<1
Shame, desperation	<1	<1
Anxiety, fear	3	3
No particular emotions	7	11
DK/NA	1	2

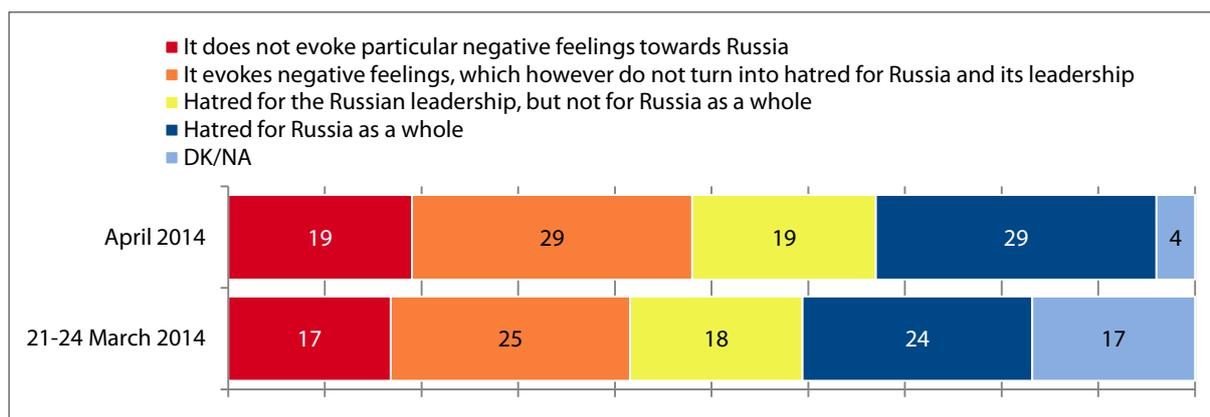
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 31: The Joining of Crimea to Russia is Evidence of What, In Your Opinion?**



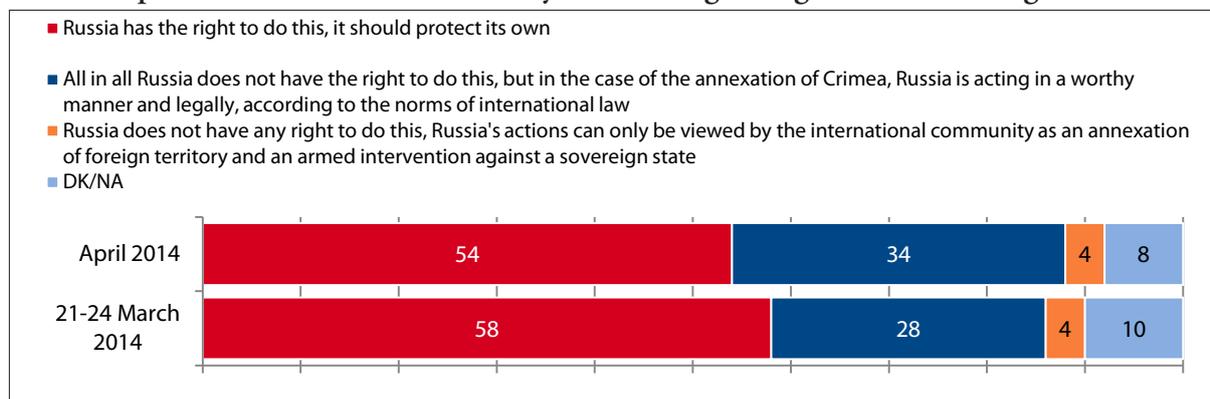
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 32: What Do You Think, What Feelings Does the Joining of Crimea to Russia Evoke in Ukraine?**



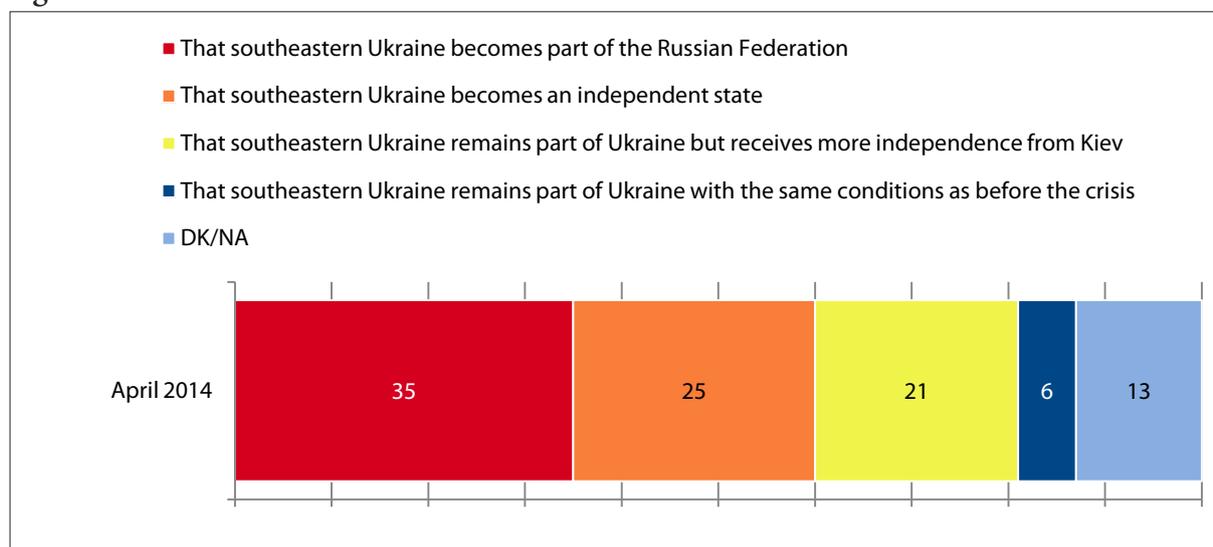
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 33: Does Russia Have the Right to Annex Territories and Former Republics of the USSR on the Basis of Declarations That Russians Living in These Areas Could Be Or Already Are Being Oppressed and Could Suffer or Already Are Suffering Infringements of Their Rights?**



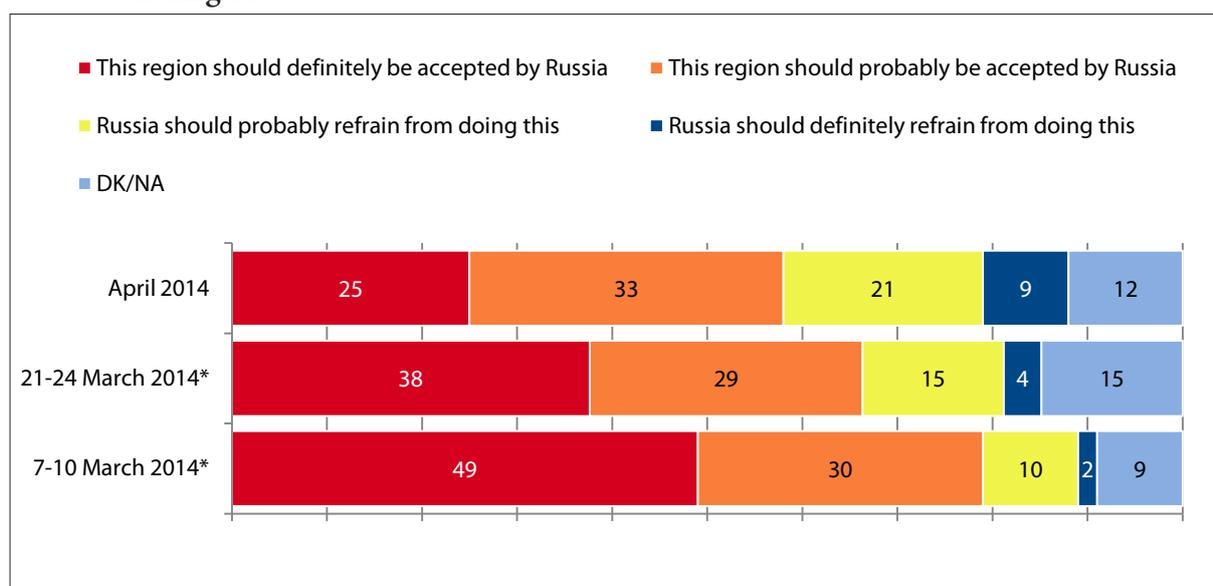
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

Figure 34: What Would You Prefer?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

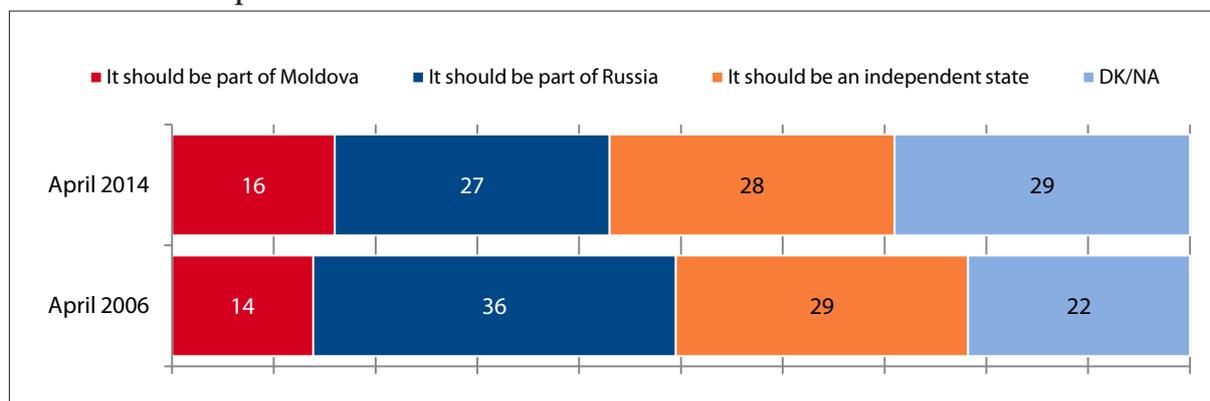
Figure 35: What Is Your Opinion: If the People of Donetsk or Lugansk Oblast Express the Desire to Leave Ukraine and Join Russia—Should Russia Accept this Region or Refrain From Doing So?



\* The question was formulated as follows: “If the population of another region of Ukraine apart from Crimea expresses the desire for a referendum in favor of leaving Ukraine and joining Russia—should Russia accept this region or refrain from doing so?”

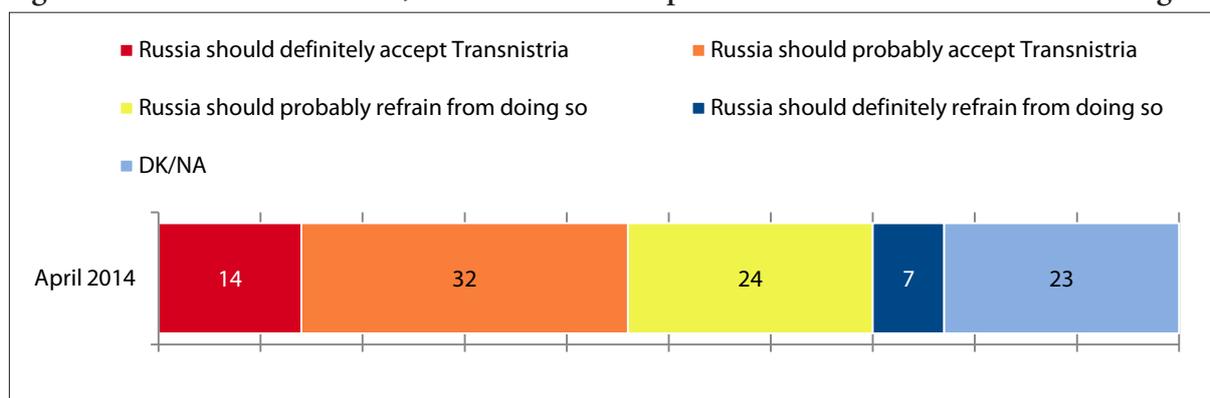
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 7–10 March 2014, 21–24 March 2014 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 36: What Do You Think, Should Transnistria Be Part of Moldova, Part of Russia, Or Be an Independent State?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, April 2006 and 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

**Figure 37: What Do You Think, Should Russia Accept Transnistria Or Refrain From Doing So?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada-Center, 25–28 April 2014, <<http://www.levada.ru/06-05-2014/rossiyane-ob-ukrainskikh-sobytyakh>>

## ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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