

# Russian Superiority Remains Alive and Well

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When I chose to concentrate on U.S. literature at the Russian State University for the Humanities back in the 1990s, some of my classmates joked that I wanted to study U.S. culture because there was nearly nothing else to study.

This notion of Russian superiority remains alive and has manifested itself in a recent surge of anti-Americanism.

Top politicians have been criticizing the U.S. for months in connection with child adoptions, and the furor has grown after it emerged last week that Maxim Kuzmin, a 3-year-old adopted Russian boy, died under unclear circumstances in Texas last month.

Using a human tragedy, the death of a little boy, adds to the ugliness of this anti-Americanism, which has included the expulsion of USAID from Russia, bans on the adoption of Russian children by U.S. families and the importation of U.S. meat, and withdrawal from an

agreement on cooperation on law enforcement and drug control. The Kremlin, bristling since the start of anti-Kremlin street protests in late 2011, which it has linked to the U.S., blames the U.S. for a spike in tensions for its passage of the Magnitsky Act, which blacklists Russians suspected of human rights violations. For its part, the U.S. withdrew from the Civil Society Working Group of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission.

But anti-Americanism lives far beyond Russia. Only 43 percent of the Chinese population shares a favorable view of the U.S., while 52 percent of Russians have similar feelings, according to a 2012 survey by the Washington-based Pew Research Center. The Levada Center said even fewer Russians liked the U.S., 46 percent.

U.S. popularity drops even further in Muslim countries like Pakistan, where three in four people view the U.S. as an enemy, according to Pew research.

Meanwhile, 62 percent of Russians view China positively, and China is becoming more popular than the U.S. in the Middle East as well.

As in China, this sense of Russian pride stems from the perceived threat of losing a unique Russian lifestyle, mentality and cultural heritage, along with the government's political agenda.

The U.S. also shoulders some blame, starting perhaps with the 2008-09 financial crisis, which initiated on its shores and went on to buffet the global economy.

But it's the little things that count, too. Consider this: Shanghai International Studies University, Beijing Foreign Studies University and a number of other Chinese schools have centers for American cultural studies, while neither the Moscow State Institute for International Affairs, Moscow State Linguistic University nor any other major Russian school has developed separate departments or centers for studying U.S. culture and history. Students at major Russian schools study American history and literature mostly in English-language or "Europe and America" study programs.

At the same time, international broadcaster CNN broadcasts in two languages besides English but has no regular programming on U.S. history and culture. Russian television channel RT, which airs in three languages and has a Russian-language service online, provides a daily show and regular documentaries about Russia. China's international broadcaster CCTV has services in 12 languages, airing three to four shows about China daily and another one to two programs on Asia.

These are just some of the factors that, together with the lingering memory of the Cold War, makes it easy for the Kremlin to convince the public that "American" is a dirty word.

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*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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