

Americans' Views on Russia and Putin Sour, Poll Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — For the first time in 15 years, more Americans view Russia as an unfriendly or enemy nation than as an ally or friend of the U.S, and for the first time since President Vladimir Putin took office in 2000, a majority of Americans have an unfavorable opinion of him, a new poll shows.

"Since 1999, Americans have considered Russia more of an ally or a friendly nation than an unfriendly nation or an enemy," said the Gallup polling organization, which surveyed 1,010 American adults by phone from Sept. 15 to 16.

As recently as three months ago, Gallup noted, 52 percent of Americans considered Russia a friend of the U.S., but when Gallup asked this week whether Russia was friend or foe, the number of respondents who replied friend had dropped to 44 percent, with 50 percent saying they saw Russia as an unfriendly nation or enemy of the U.S.

Americans' opinions of Putin are declining as well, with 19 percent having a favorable view of the Russian president and 54 percent seeing him in an unfavorable light, Gallup said.

"During his first term as Russian president, Americans were on balance positive toward him," the polling agency wrote, although the figures published by Gallup show that when a poll was taken in 2002, as many Americans who had a favorable view of Putin — 41 percent — did not know who he was or had no opinion of him at all.

Americans' views of Russia have soured after a series of recent events that have pitted Russia directly against the U.S. — such as how to deal with the use of chemical weapons in Syria or Russia's granting U.S. intelligence leaker Edward Snowden temporary asylum — and sometimes clashed with Americans' values of equal rights, such as the passage of a controversial Russian law banning the promotion of "nontraditional" relationships to minors, Gallup said.

The Sept. 15 to 16 survey, which had a margin of sampling error of 4 percent, found that 64 percent of Americans who knew that Russia had granted asylum to Snowden disapproved of the move and that 69 percent who were aware that Russia recently passed a "gay propaganda" law disliked Russia's policies toward gays and lesbians.

Putin himself apparently did nothing to win over the American public to his side when he questioned the idea of American "exceptionalism" in a New York Times op-ed last week, the polling agency wrote.

But while Americans' views of Putin and Russia have soured, 72 percent of those polled back the Russian proposal, agreed on by Washington and Moscow, to avert U.S. military strikes on Syria for the time being by getting Damascus to agree on surrendering its chemical weapons to international monitors.

Half of Americans also said Putin's involvement in getting the plan off the ground was mostly helpful to U.S. interests, while 36 percent said it was harmful. Only 18 percent said they disapproved of the plan.

Gallup concluded from its poll numbers that "matters such as the Snowden asylum case and Russian policy toward gays and lesbians may weigh more heavily on Americans' minds than Russia's recent role in the negotiations on Syria," and that "Russia's more aggressive posture on the world stage in recent months has not gone over well with Americans."

It also predicted that Russia would continue to "influence worldwide debate for the foreseeable future," partly because it is hosting the Winter Olympics in Sochi next year.

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