

Russia Is Americans' Biggest Enemy, Poll Shows

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In the eyes of Americans, Russia has surpassed North Korea as the main enemy of the United States, a new Gallup poll reveals.

Respondents were asked the open-ended question, "What one country anywhere in the world do you consider to be the United States' greatest enemy today?"

Russia led the pack of named U.S. foes, having been singled out by 18 percent of Americans. North Korea came second with 15 percent, followed by China (12 percent) and Iran (9 percent).

Russia's leading position represented a significant leap from last year's poll, when only 9 percent of respondents to the same question picked Russia. In 2012, that number had been a mere 2 percent.

The poll also revealed that 72 percent of Americans view Russian President Vladimir Putin in a

negative light. Only 13 percent said they harbor good opinions of him. "Putin's favorable ratings are similar to what Gallup measured last March, but are down a bit from earlier readings in his second presidential administration, and well below what they were in his first administration from 2000-2008," according to a statement released by Gallup.

Overall, only 24 percent of Americans possess a favorable view of Russia, representing a 10 percent decrease since last year.

Nearly half of all Americans, 49 percent, view Russia's military forces as a critical threat to U.S. security, up 32 percent from the previous year.

Still, the perceived threat of Russia's military power pales in comparison to Americans' other concerns. "Despite the increase in perceptions of Russia's military power as a critical threat, the issue still is rated well behind other international challenges such as terrorism generally, the ISIS group specifically, and Iran's development of nuclear weapons," the statement said.

These results were based on a poll conducted between Feb. 8 and 11 among 837 adults aged 18 or older across the United States, and had a margin of error not exceeding 4 percent.

Meanwhile, the results of a recent Russian survey shows the feelings are mutual.

Some 81 percent of Russians view the United States negatively, independent Moscow-based pollster the Levada Center revealed earlier this month. The findings represented an all-time high for the pollster, which has been conducting similar studies since 1990. The Levada Center poll was conducted among 1,600 respondents with a margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent.

Though the level of mutual disregard is soaring to historic highs while Russia-U.S. relations scrape post-Cold War lows, the relationship between the two nations is not irreparable, Gallup said in its explanatory note. "If Russian and American policy interests find more common ground, Americans' views of Russia could recover quickly."

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