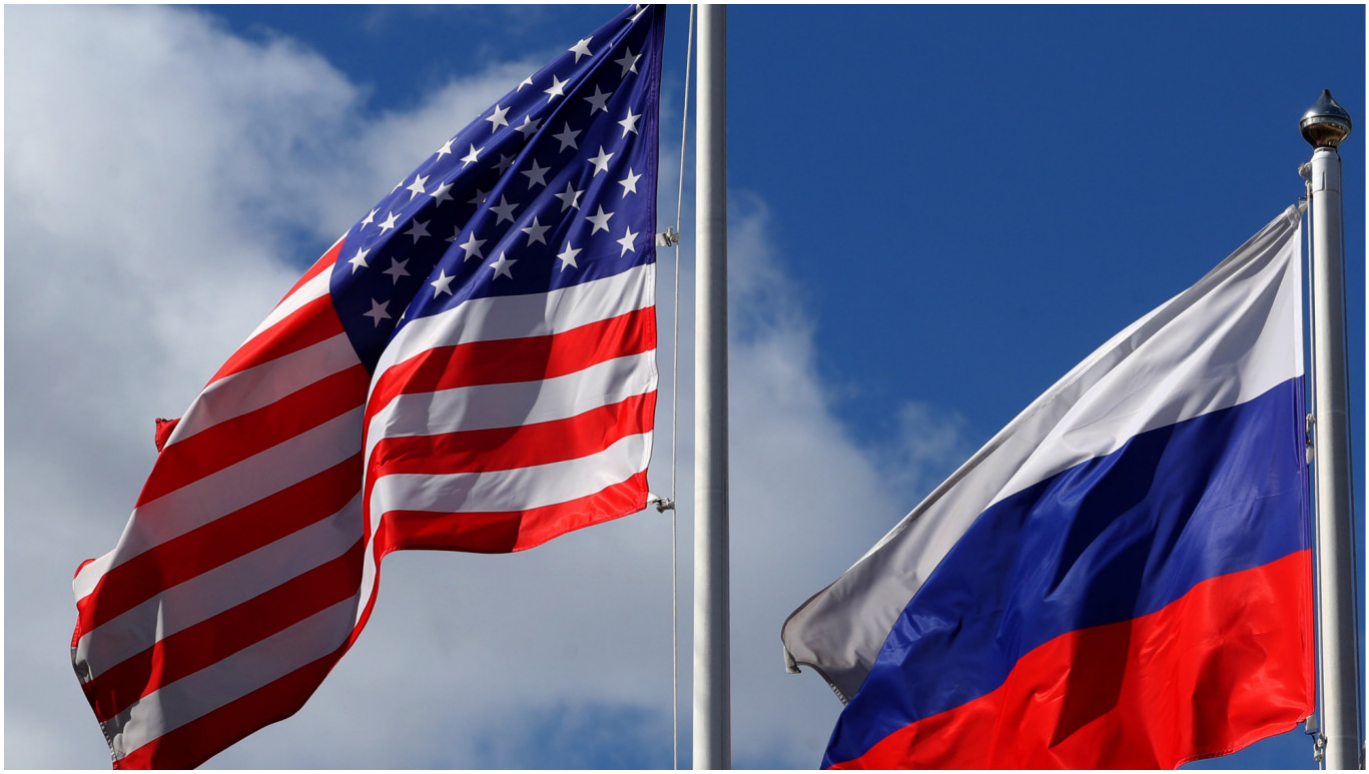
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Russians Grow Friendlier Toward U.S. and Ukraine, Poll Says

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Alexander Demianchuk / TASS

Russians' perception of the United States and Ukraine as hostile foreign powers has dropped significantly over the past year, according to a new poll by the independent Levada Center pollster.

The U.S., Ukraine and Britain have ranked as the top three countries Russians view as enemies since 2017. Russia has experienced fraught relations with the countries over the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, allegations of Russian elections interference and the 2018 poisoning of Sergei Skripal.

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The share of Russians who see the U.S. and Ukraine as enemies fell sharply from 78% to 67% and from 49% to 40% respectively, according to the Levada Center poll cited by the Vedomosti business daily on Friday.

Russians today are less likely to see the U.S. as an enemy because “people are tired of mobilizing and feeling threatened by war,” Vedomosti quoted Levada Center director Lev Gudkov as saying. Many Russians were distracted from tensions with the U.S. after last year’s widely unpopular reform to raise the pension age.

The thaw in hostilities toward Ukraine can be attributed to the election of President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who has been viewed by many in Russia as offering a fresh start for Russia-Ukraine relations, Gudkov said.

Russians are most likely to view Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, all ex-Soviet republics, as Russia’s closest allies, according to the poll.

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