



RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA AND THE NEAR EAST

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Russia's Policy toward the Middle East

By Mark N. Katz, Washington, DC

Abstract

Russian leaders—especially Vladimir Putin—have spoken on many occasions about how Russia is once again a great power. Since the rise of Putin, Russia has also been pursuing an active foreign policy in the Middle East. Russian foreign policy toward the Middle East under Putin and Medvedev, though, is not so much that of an assertive great power as it is that of a prudent power pursuing relatively limited objectives. Primary among these limited Russian objectives are: First, keeping the North Caucasus from becoming an anti-Russian cause célèbre in the Muslim Middle East the way Afghanistan was in the 1980's; second, working with others to prevent the rise of radical Sunni forces in the Middle East that would be hostile to Russia; and third, pursuing Moscow's economic interests in the Middle East. Putin and Medvedev have pursued these objectives through seeking good relations with virtually all the Middle East's disparate actors and avoiding taking sides in the many disputes among them. Up to now, Moscow has been remarkably successful at this balancing act. Going forward, though, it may become more difficult for Moscow to do so.

Getting Along with Everybody

Since the rise of Putin, Moscow has sought good relations with all the Middle East's many governments, including both pro-American and anti-American as well as both Arab and non-Arab. Moscow has also established close ties with the two major Palestinian movements—Fatah and Hamas—and with the powerful Lebanese Shi'a opposition movement, Hezbollah. Basically, Moscow has sought good relations with all major actors in the Middle East except for Al Qaeda and its affiliates—and they, of course, are hostile toward all of the above and others besides.

Yet, while antipathy toward Al Qaeda and its affiliates is common to them, there are (as is well known) many disputes among Middle Eastern actors. The best known are the Israeli–Palestinian and Israeli–Arab disputes, but there are also disputes within the Palestinian community (between Fatah and Hamas), among Lebanon's many communities, within Iraq, between Iran on the one hand and the U.S. and America's allies (including Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the other conservative Arab monarchies) on the other, and more still. Moscow has managed to navigate all of these and stay on relatively good terms with each of the parties in these many disputes even though none is happy about Moscow having good relations with its opponents.

In the Arab–Israeli arena, Putin revived Russian–Syrian relations from the torpor they had fallen into during the 1990's. Moscow sells arms to Syria—including missiles that Israel claims Damascus has passed on to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Moscow has long been friendly with the secular Palestinian movement, Fatah, but under Putin has also established good relations with Hamas. On the other hand, Moscow has developed especially close ties with Israel since the rise

of Putin. The addition of Israeli technology enhances Russian arms sales to India and other countries. Russia itself has begun to purchase Israeli weaponry—specifically, unmanned aerial vehicles. Not only has Russian–Israeli trade grown substantially, but there are multitudinous cultural and human contacts between Russians and Israelis (especially the Russian-speakers among the latter). As with Hamas, Moscow maintains friendly ties with Hezbollah. But it also has good relations with the Lebanese government as well as Sunni, Christian, and other parties that are often at odds with both Hezbollah and Syria.

Not only Israel, but the U.S., EU, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab governments allied with Washington are both fearful of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and annoyed with Moscow for selling weaponry and nuclear know-how to Tehran. Russia and Iran do indeed have close relations in the petroleum, military, and nuclear spheres. Yet not only (as mentioned before) does Russia simultaneously manage to maintain good relations with Israel, but also with Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab states. Especially remarkable is the relationship that Russia has built up with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although the UAE and Iran have a longstanding territorial dispute over three islands in the Gulf and although Iran is a major purchaser of Russian arms, the UAE is also a major buyer of weapons from Russia. In addition, Russian firms have been allowed to operate in Saudi Arabia, and Russian arms sales to the Kingdom are under negotiation. Russia has also either maintained or built up good relations with other Arab states allied with the U.S., including Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Egypt.

While Russia (along with many other governments) strongly objected to the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq that

began in 2003, Moscow later established good relations with the post-Saddam elected government in Baghdad. Lukoil even won the contract to exploit the lucrative West Qurna 2 oil field (it had previously signed a contract to exploit this field with Saddam Hussein's regime, but he canceled it in late 2002). Russian firms are also doing business in the Kurdish north.

Reasons for Success

Being able to get along with so many disparate governments and movements is not easy, and Moscow's success in doing so is a significant accomplishment for Russian foreign policy. None of the governments and movements that Moscow now has good relations with is happy that Moscow also maintains good relations with its rivals. There is a risk for Moscow, of course, that seeking to maintain good relations with all sides in a quarrel could result in deteriorating relations between Russia and one or more of the parties involved. So far, though, this has not happened. This may be because Middle Eastern rivalries are so intense that each party fears that if it allows its relations with Moscow to deteriorate, Russia would do even more to help its adversary.

Israel, for example, has complained about Russian arms sales to Iran and Syria. Yet if Israel downgraded or even broke relations with Russia over this, Moscow might sell even more weapons to Damascus and Tehran. Similarly, Iran bitterly resents how Russia and China (at American and European urging) have voted in favor of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, how long Russia has delayed completing the nuclear reactor at Bushehr, and how Moscow (at Israel's and Saudi Arabia's behest, the Iranian press has claimed) has delayed delivery of S-300 air defense missile systems to Iran. But if Iran downgraded or broke relations with Russia over these issues, Moscow might vote for harsher Security Council sanctions against Tehran and increase its cooperation with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other governments that Iran sees as its opponents. Moscow's success, then, in making friends with all the major actors in the Middle East (except, as already noted, Al Qaeda and its affiliates) is not simply the result of a friendly policy toward all, but of the animosities in the region being so intense that the various actors cannot afford a deterioration in their relations with Russia despite their resentment of Moscow's ties with their rivals.

In addition, Russian foreign policy in the Middle East benefits from the region's highly ambivalent relationship with the U.S. While many governments cooperate closely with the U.S., their citizens often have an extremely negative view of American foreign policy and don't like the fact that their governments are closely

associated with it. Leadership meetings with top Russian officials, buying Russian weapons or other goods, or just talking with the Russians about doing so all help foster an image of Middle Eastern governments as being independent of the U.S. and even willing to defy it. Yet while Moscow is able to exploit the region's anti-American sentiment to make diplomatic and economic gains, Russia's ability to export to and invest in many countries of the region is enhanced by the American-sponsored security order that helps keep these governments in power and able to make deals with Moscow.

Challenges Moving Forward

Although Russian foreign policy toward the Middle East since the rise of Putin has been highly successful up to now, there is reason to believe that it might not continue to be so. The plight of Muslims in Chechnya and elsewhere in the North Caucasus and Russia in general has not become an anti-Russian cause célèbre in the Muslim Middle East. Neither the Middle Eastern governments nor the major opposition movements (except Al Qaeda and its affiliates) support Russia's domestic Muslim opposition against Moscow either. But if this somehow changes (through a spike in conflict or some other reason that focuses the Muslim Middle East's attention on Russia's Muslims), Moscow's problems in the North Caucasus could come to resemble those that it faced in Afghanistan in the 1980's. Yet even if Muslim Middle Eastern governments (along with Fatah, Hamas, and Hezbollah) continue to refrain from assisting radical Muslim forces in the North Caucasus, they are unlikely to prove willing or even able to help Moscow combat them if the situation in this region deteriorates.

In addition, while Moscow has been able to benefit from anti-Americanism in the Middle East while also benefiting from the American-supported security order there, Russian interests could well suffer if the American presence in the region weakens or declines. The withdrawal of American combat forces from Iraq in August 2010 and the projected withdrawal of its support forces in 2011 will provide an early test as to whether the Iraqi government will be able to maintain even the fragile degree of security that the U.S. has helped established, or if the situation deteriorates. The latter could negatively impact Moscow if it means that petroleum firms from Russia (as well as elsewhere) are unable to operate in Iraq and if Al Qaeda in Iraq—which has taken action against Russia over Chechnya in the past—makes a comeback. Similarly, a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan (whether or not U.S./NATO forces remain there) could have a very negative impact on Russian interests if it resumes its pre-9/11 support

for Islamist groups opposed to the Moscow-backed secular regimes of Central Asia.

Finally, Moscow is fortunate that both pro-American and anti-American regimes in the Middle East all oppose radical Sunni Islamists, and that radical Shi'a Hezbollah and even radical Sunni Hamas are focused on events in Lebanon and Palestine respectively. Moscow, though, has little capacity itself to prevent the rise of more anti-Russian Sunni radicals in the region; it depends on others to do this instead. The unpopularity and incompetence of so many Middle Eastern dictatorships combined with the declining appetite of the U.S. and its allies for military intervention in the wake of the Iraqi and Afghan imbroglios increases the prospects for radical Sunni Islamists gaining power in one or more of these countries. These new radical regimes, of course, will undoubtedly see America, Israel, and the West in general as their main enemies. But they might well identify Moscow as an enemy too, and decide to help radical Muslim groups fighting against it. Nor will Russia's

having had good relations with the regime(s) ousted by Sunni radicals serve to endear Moscow to them.

The negative scenarios for Russia outlined here, of course, might not arise. The Muslim Middle East may continue to ignore what is happening in the North Caucasus, and thus do nothing to exacerbate the problems Moscow faces there. Although America is retreating from Iraq and may well retreat from Afghanistan, radical Sunni forces there and elsewhere in the Middle East may yet be kept at bay. Even if they do gain strength, they may be consumed by conflict with more immediate enemies in the region and with the U.S. rather than with Russia. The problem for Moscow is that there is not much it can do to influence developments in the Middle East that could impact Russia. Trying to be friends with everyone in the region willing to be friends with Moscow—plus trying to make economic gains wherever it can—may well be the best that Russian foreign policy can do in the Middle East under present circumstances.

About the Author

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ANALYSIS

Russia and Africa: Coming Back?

By Vladimir Shubin, Moscow

Abstract

As recent Presidential visits demonstrate, Russia is placing increasing priority on relations with African countries. However, this should not be viewed as a new phenomenon, positive relations between Moscow and many African countries date back several decades. An important challenge for these relationships is to improve economic trade links to match the recent increase in political interaction. Several common economic interests exist between Russia and certain African countries, and thus the development of these should be a priority for Russia's foreign policy, in order to consolidate these relationships.

The recent visit of South African President Jacob Zuma to Moscow represents the latest example of a process that is often regarded as "Russia coming back to Africa". Speaking in Moscow, President Zuma referred to Russia as "a historic friend of the South African people", underlining Moscow's past support for Africa, by stating that: "We [South Africa] have fond memories of that solidarity and friendship, which existed when

friends of the oppressed in South Africa and Africa were very few. It is the basis on which we can build stronger political, economic and social ties".

Similar perceptions about Russia are evident in other African countries as well. Not only did Russia never have colonies in Africa, but it made a vital contribution to decolonization in various ways: from initiating the Declaration on Granting Independence to Colo-

nial Countries and Peoples, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1960, to versatile assistance, including military, to the liberation movements, primarily in Southern Africa.

Russia's "return" to Africa was highlighted last year, when President Medvedev visited Egypt, Nigeria, Namibia and Angola. Indeed, this trip was unique, as no previous Russian leader had visited Tropical Africa, although in 2006 Vladimir Putin did cross the Equator to visit Cape Town.

Medvedev's visit provides convincing proof that the Russian leadership has at last turned their attention towards Africa. Medvedev has stated that "in the [19]90s we did not pay so much attention to distant continents, such as Africa and Latin America, but now we are simply obliged to do it", he said. Furthermore, in response to a journalist's question Medvedev admitted that "frankly, we were almost too late. We should have begun working with our African partners earlier, more so, because our ties with many of them have not been interrupted, they are based on decades of developing friendly relations".

Medvedev's remarks about uninterrupted ties between Russia and Africa are accurate. Indeed, the characterization of Russia as "returning" to Africa, which is often used by researchers and journalists, is inaccurate for a simple reason: Russia never left Africa. Even during the 1990s, when attention was diverted from Africa, Russia maintained nearly 40 embassies in African countries and thousands of African students continued to study in Russian universities.

Neglect of the Yeltsin Years

In the early 1990s, Yeltsin's Russia, led by his notorious first Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, sacrificed Africa and the South as important vectors for Russian foreign policy, in favor of the West in a vain attempt to attract soft credits and technology transfer. During this period, a number of Russian Embassies and Consulates in African countries were closed, along with the majority of trade missions and cultural centers. In addition, most of the economic projects initiated in the Soviet era were also terminated.

This approach can be explained by two main factors. At the time, the IMF's proposed (or imposed?) "reforms" were causing great damage to the Russian economy, leading to what Michael Cossudovsky terms the "Thirdworldisation" of Russia. Yet, the economic collapse in the early 1990s does not entirely explain the lack of attention paid to Africa. A psychological factor also played an important role. The right-wing media and politicians in Russia used Africa as a scapegoat for the country's declining fortunes, claiming that Africa had been

instrumental in the economic collapse by "eating Russia out of house and home". However, in reality, the USSR's economic co-operation with African countries was, by and large, mutually advantageous. Nonetheless, these false claims proved damaging and especially dangerous because they encouraged xenophobia and racism in "post-Soviet" Russia.

The Return of Africa as a Priority

In current day Russia, the foreign policy of the "Yeltsin era" is often regarded as a lost decade, and since then Russia has developed a new foreign policy strategy. This new approach to foreign policy is often seen as the result of the change in leadership from Yeltsin to Putin. However, the process of change in foreign policy strategy actually began with appointment of Yevgeny Primakov, an outstanding expert on the Third World, to the post of foreign minister in January 1996. By 1996, it was becoming clear that the one-sided reliance on the West in Russian foreign policy was not bearing fruit. In addition, Moscow became increasingly confident as the situation within Russia improved during the 2000s, with Russia able to pay off most of its state debts and accumulate big currency reserves, encouraging Moscow to pursue a more independent foreign policy.

Indeed, this greater confidence was reinforced with Russia's admission to the G8 (although not necessarily to the meetings of finance ministers), signaling its membership in a "group of the privileged". Russia must now conduct its relations with Africa with an awareness of this background. Although Russia's new status raises its international prestige, Moscow has to guard against hampering its traditionally friendly relations with African countries by joining the "club" of those who colonized and exploited African countries.

Unfortunately even with its improved economy, Russia is not in a position to act as an equal partner to the other members of the G8 in terms of the group's plans to provide "aid" to Africa, in order to lift it out of poverty. While, Russia has made a contribution to alleviating the debt of African countries (around 20 billion US dollars), and introduced a preferential system for traditional African export commodities (no import duties and no quota limitations), it has yet to develop a program of development assistance, or create a government body responsible for the delivery of aid.

Currently, the bulk of Russian aid is delivered through international organizations and funds, such as the Global Fund against AIDS, TB and Malaria, and these modest contributions are being "diluted" in the process. Russia's proclaimed objective is to provide a stable pattern of aid, via both multilateral and bilateral

levels, amounting to 0.7% of GNP, as recommended by the UN. However, Russia has a long way to go before it fulfills this promise.

Russia's Interests in Africa

Russia has several broad interest areas in Africa, and seeks to develop bilateral relations with African countries and cooperate with Africa's continental and regional organizations.

In the political sphere, Russia and many African countries have common concerns about individual states and regions dominating the international system. Indeed, Russian–African relations can play an important role in opposing the tendency of one country or a limited group of countries to impose their will on the rest of the world and, from the Russian perspective, in particular to prevent Russia from being isolated. Most African countries and Russia are committed to the idea of a multi-polar world, and consider that the UN should play the central role in this multi-polar world. The states of the African continent constitute about a quarter of the members of the UN, while Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and the UN is an arena in which Russia and Africa collaborate fruitfully.

Russia is also interested in issues of peace and security, and collaborates with African countries and the African Union on such issues. Russia participates in all current UN peace-keeping missions in Africa, and is involved in training 400 peacekeepers from Africa in Russia per year.

Taking into account Russia's interests and existing cooperation, it is hard to understand why, so far, Moscow (as distinct from a growing number of countries, including Turkey and Vietnam) has not convened a top-level Russia–Africa Forum, and is not planning to. As the successful June 2010 “Russia–Africa” International Parliamentary Conference demonstrated, such a forum would be welcomed by African countries.

During Medvedev's recent trip to Africa and other bilateral communications, it has been noted that economic ties between Russia and Africa are lagging behind political interaction. Nonetheless, there has been some development in economic and trade relations. In 2008, trade turnover increased and reached a peak of 8.2 billion US dollars (however, half of this was with one country, Egypt), although trade dropped considerably in 2009 due to the world financial crisis. However, this level of trade is well short of the full potential of economic cooperation between Russia and Africa.

Many analysts consider Moscow's more active policy in Africa as representing a “competition” with China for influence in the continent. However, Russia and China

have different niches in their relations with Africa. For example, Russia is not able to compete with China and other countries, in exporting cheap clothes or footwear, but, it is in a strong position to sell advanced technology. Soviet/Russian engineering and science has always been internationally acclaimed, and Russia continues to be strong in these fields and is able to find markets in Africa. For example, during Medvedev's recent visit, an agreement was signed under which Russian advanced technology and financial resources will be utilized to create an Angolan National System of Satellite Communications and Broadcasting (ANGOSAT).

Furthermore, there are many potential opportunities for Russian investments in Africa. At present, direct investments by Russian companies in Africa amount to approximately \$4 billion, which is about 4% of Russian direct investments abroad, while total Russian investments in Africa are approximately \$10 billion. Before the financial crisis, 17 large Russian companies were active in 13 African countries, with 44 existing and planned projects between them. The most active companies are Gazprom (8 projects), Lukoil (6), Alrosa, Rusal, Renkova, Rosatom, Norilsk-Nickel, Sintez (3 each). Of the host countries, South Africa hosts ten projects, Libya 7, Angola 5, Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Namibia 4, Nigeria 3, and Egypt, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo 1.

Also, Russia is very interested in developing collaboration with Africa in the sphere of natural resources. Although, as distinct from, say, China or India, the import of minerals is not a “matter of life or death” for the Russian economy, but it is a matter of expediency. Most minerals are available in Russia. However, the conditions for their exploration and use are becoming increasingly difficult, because they are found mostly in remote areas of Siberia and the Far East, which have a severe climate. As a result, 35% of Russia's minerals deposits, including manganese, chrome, bauxite, zinc and tin, are losing their commercial profitability.

Collaboration is also of interest to both Russia and African countries, because 60% of all of world resources, including biogenetical resources, fresh water and minerals, are located in either Russia or Africa. Therefore, both sides stand to benefit from joining forces to safeguard their sovereign right to control this wealth, especially in the face of attempts to declare these resources “an international asset”, under a false pretext of “reestablishing justice”. Practical areas of cooperation that would be mutually beneficial include working out a joint approach to relations with transnational corporations, as well as coordinating efforts in the global markets to counter, among other things, speculative spasmodic leaps in prices.

A peculiar sphere of Russia's economic relations with Africa is the arms trade. The Soviet involvement in equipping and often advising the armed forces of various African countries is well known. However, the situation changed drastically in the early 1990s, when, with the deterioration of the economic situation in Russia, the method of payment for arms exports was switched from credit to cash. At the same time, the so called "democratic" mass media in Russia launched a campaign against arms sales, portraying them as immoral. This led to the loss of a number of traditional markets for Soviet/Russian arms to Western, primarily American and British, suppliers. However, in recent years the situation has been reversed, but it should be underlined that the Russian government has strengthened its control over arms deals and observes all sanctions and limitations imposed by the UN.

Finally, there are good opportunities for cooperation in the sphere of education. Over 50,000 Africans completed degrees in the Soviet Union and, currently, 4,500 African students are studying in Russia. Moreover, the Russian government has increased the number of scholarships available for African students to 700, although these scholarships remain very modest and in reality only cover tuition fees.

State-Led Cooperation

In considering the development of Russia's relations with African countries, it is necessary to examine the role that the Russian state must play in strengthening ties. A consensus in Russia considers that, even in a free market economy, significant and sustained development in Africa will only be possible with the aid of strong support from the state. Up to the present time, by and large, only the biggest Russian companies have managed to find niche export markets in Africa, and

therefore state support is needed for small and medium businesses to make an impression. Besides, the actions of individual companies, even successful ones, cannot alone ensure a significant improvement in Russo-African economic relations. Therefore, a considerable contribution through the bilateral inter-governmental commissions formed with a number of African countries is required, although, unfortunately, some of the commissions are not active enough or have become dormant.

At the same time, there is a recent trend for Russian businessmen interested in Africa taking steps towards self-organization. A particularly vibrant and effective group, or at least the Russian part of it, is the Russian-South African Business Council, formed after Vladimir Putin's visit to Cape Town in 2006. It promotes technologies that are ecologically friendly and directed towards the rational use of natural resources. A further example is a new body, formed last year under the auspices of the Russian Chamber of Trade and Industry, the Co-ordination Committee on Economic Co-operation with Sub-Saharan African countries, chaired by Vladimir Dmitriev, Chair of the Vnesheconombank.

Conclusion

Russia and Africa need each other. Russia is a vast market not only for African minerals, but for various other goods and products produced by African countries. At the same time, Russia has shown renewed interest and activity in Africa, which strengthens the position of African countries *vis-à-vis* both old and new external players. The signs for Russian-African relations appear good—declarations of intentions have been made, important bilateral agreements signed—now it remains to be seen how these intentions and agreements will be implemented in practice.

About the Author

Professor Vladimir Shubin is Deputy Director of the Institute for African Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences and a Professor at the Department of Contemporary Asian and African Studies at the Russian State University of Humanities. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Russia and Africa, including *The Hot "Cold War", the USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008) and *ANC: A View from Moscow* (2nd ed., Jacana media, Johannesburg, 2008).

OPINION POLL

Influence in the World

Figure 1: African Views of Russia's Influence (selected countries, % by country, 2010)

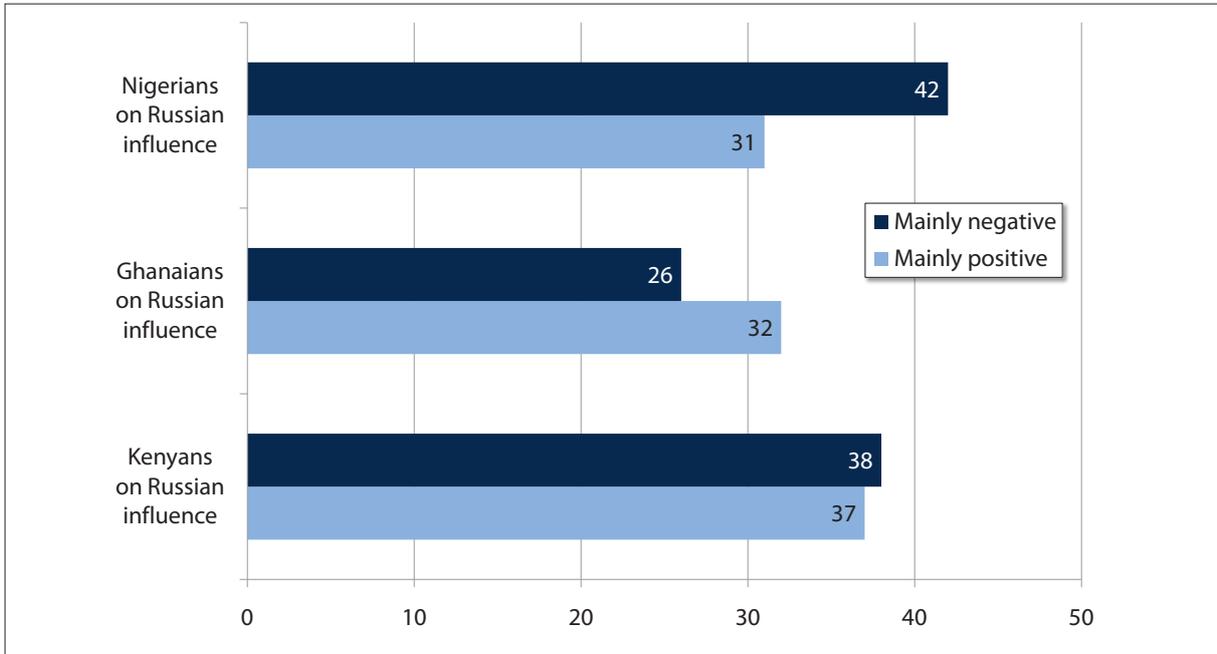


Figure 2: Russians' Views of Israel's Influence (% , 2010)

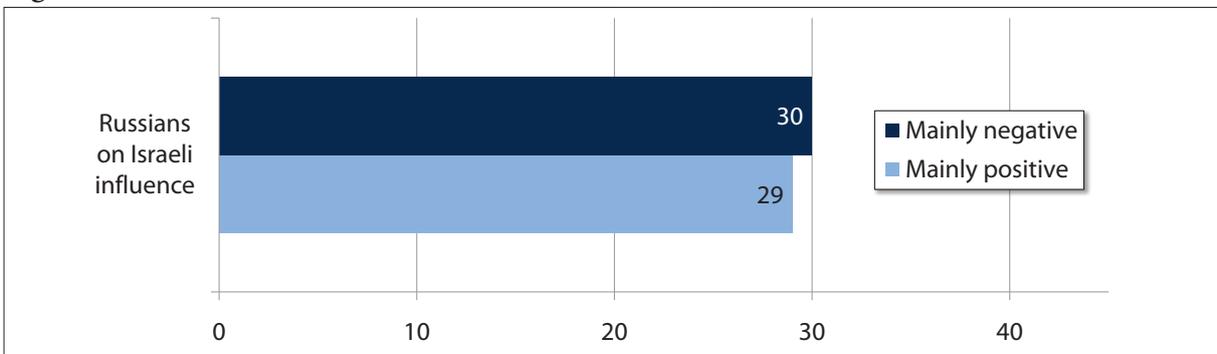
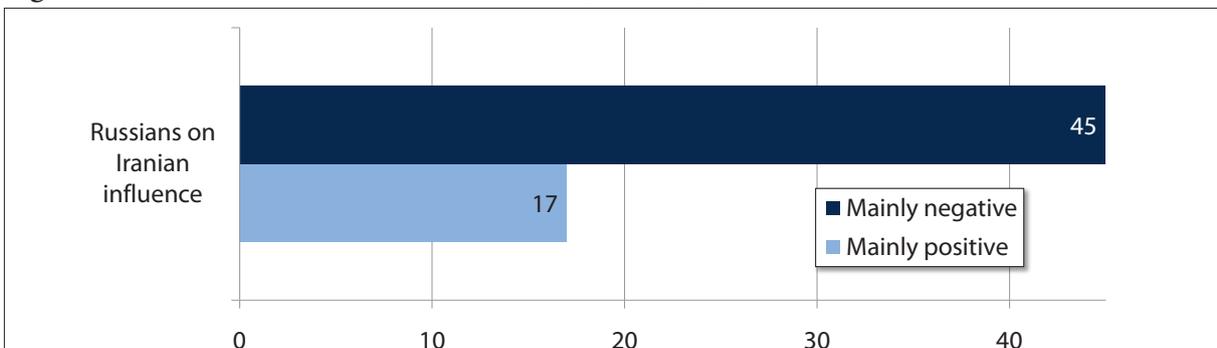


Figure 3: Russians' Views of Iran's Influence (% , 2010)



Source: representative poll by World Public Opinion for BBC World Service (April 2010), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pipa/pdf/apr10/BBCViews_Apr10_rpt.pdf.

Doing the Right Thing—Assessment of National Leaders

Figure 1: Ahmadinejad vs. Putin: *Russians* on world leaders: How much confidence do you have in each leader to do the right thing in world affairs? (%)

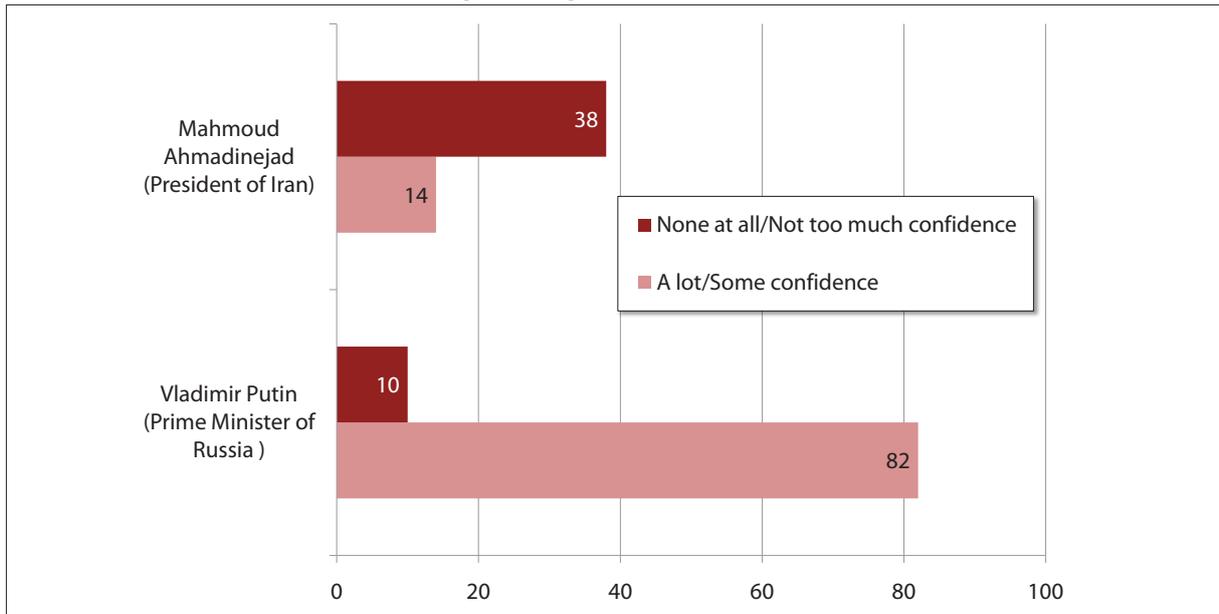
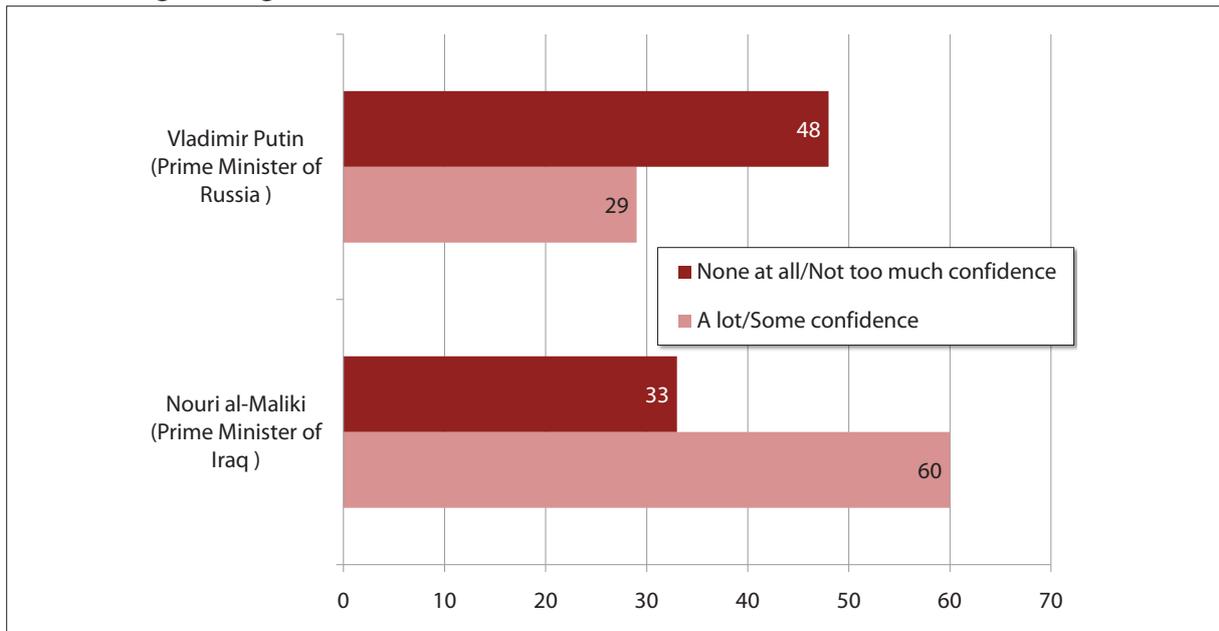


Figure 2: *Iraqis* on world leaders: How much confidence do you have in each leader to do the right thing in world affairs? (%)



Source: representative poll by World Public Opinion (June 2009),

http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jun09/WPO_Leaders_Jun09_countries.pdf.

Figure 3: *Palestinians* on world leaders: How much confidence do you have in each leader to do the right thing in world affairs? (%)

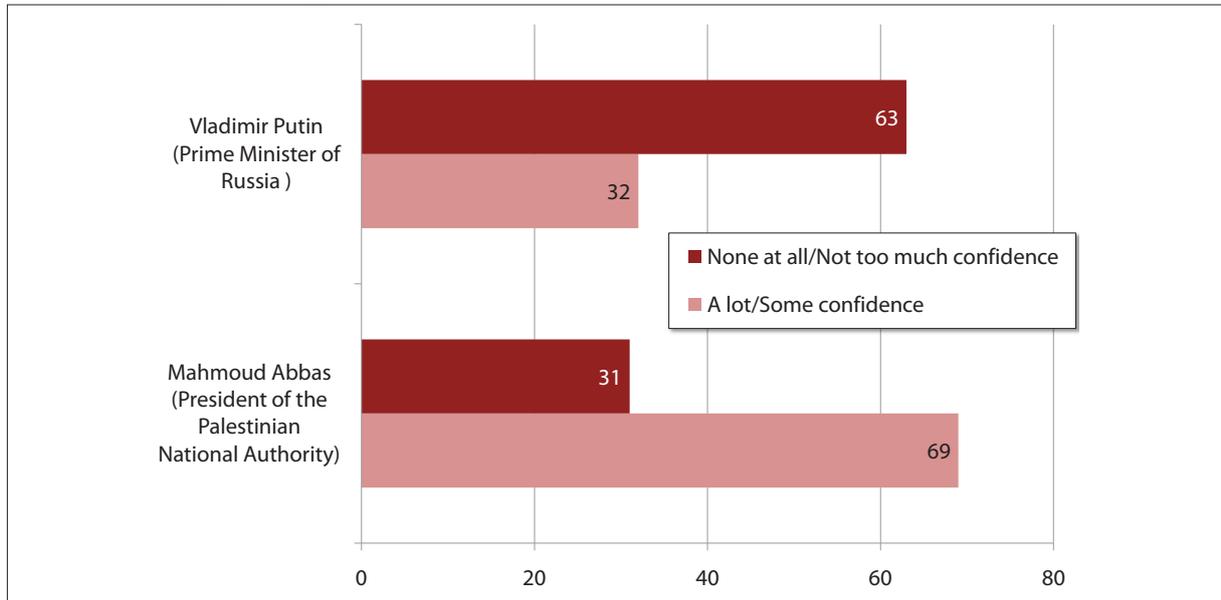
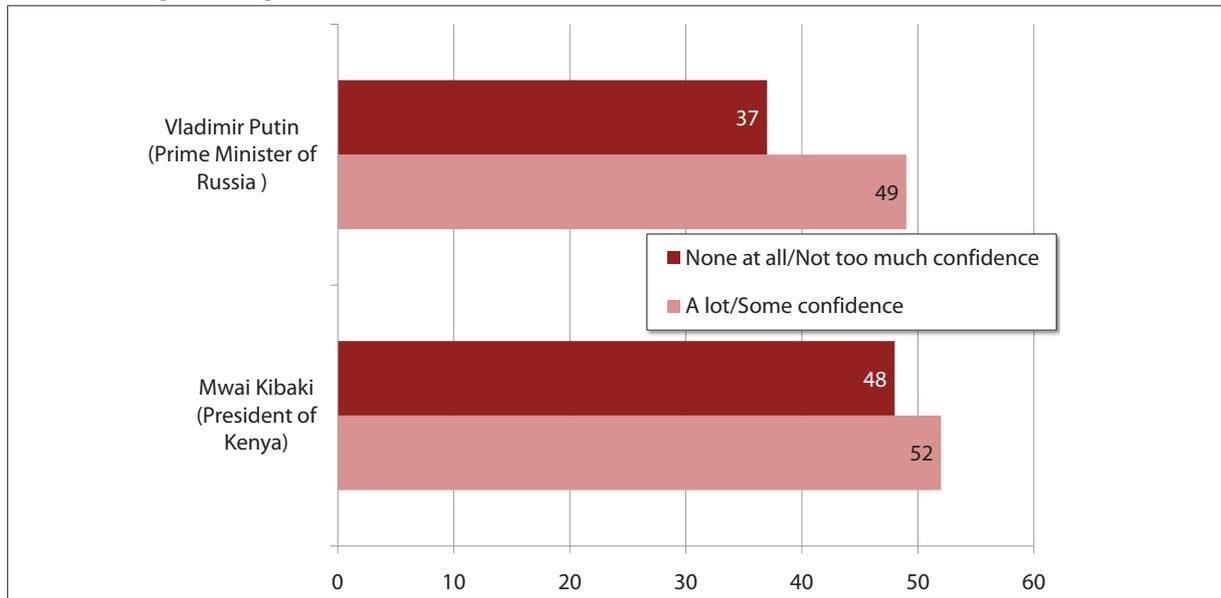
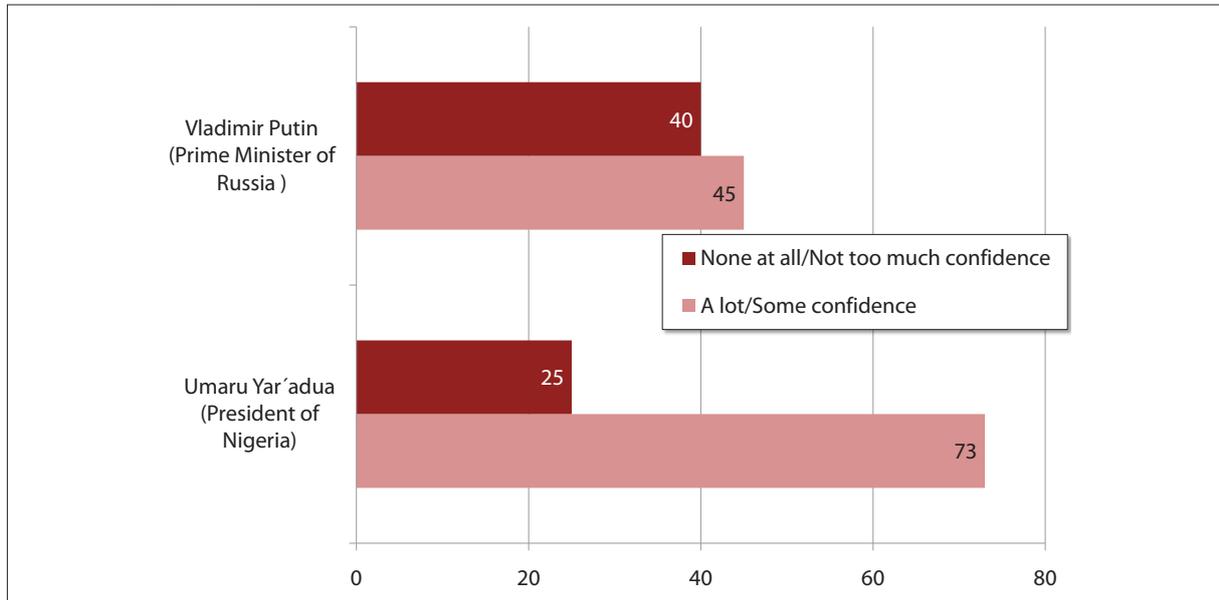


Figure 4: *Kenyans* on world leaders: How much confidence do you have in each leader to do the right thing in world affairs? (%)



Source: representative poll by World Public Opinion (June 2009), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jun09/WPO_Leaders_Jun09_countries.pdf.

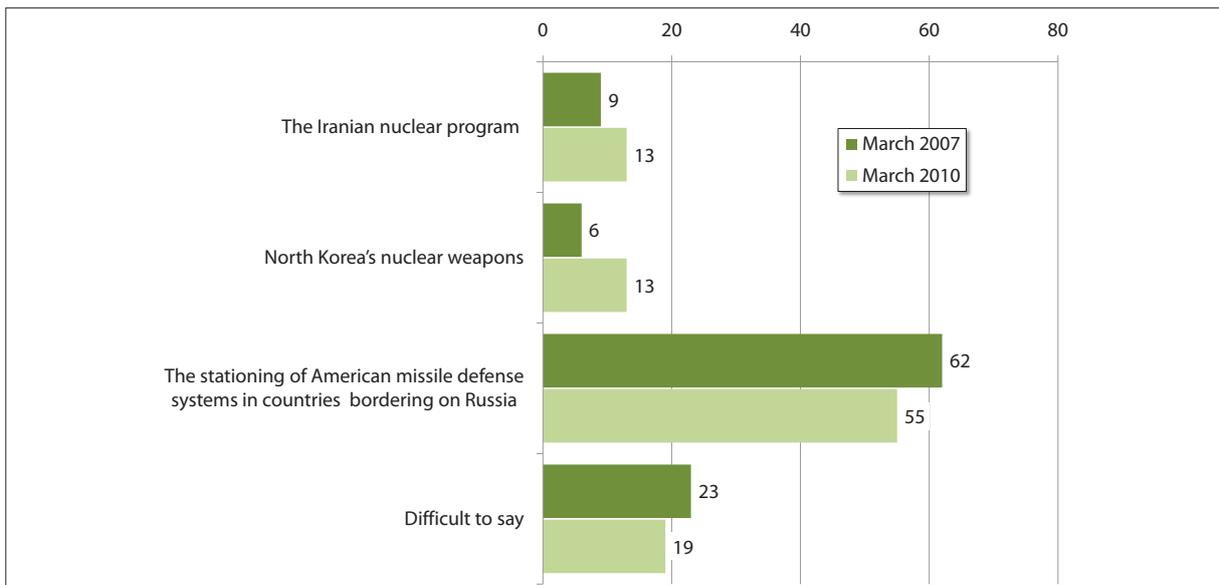
Figure 5: *Nigerians* on world leaders: How much confidence do you have in each leader to do the right thing in world affairs? (%)



Source: representative poll by World Public Opinion (June 2009), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jun09/WPO_Leaders_Jun09_countries.pdf.

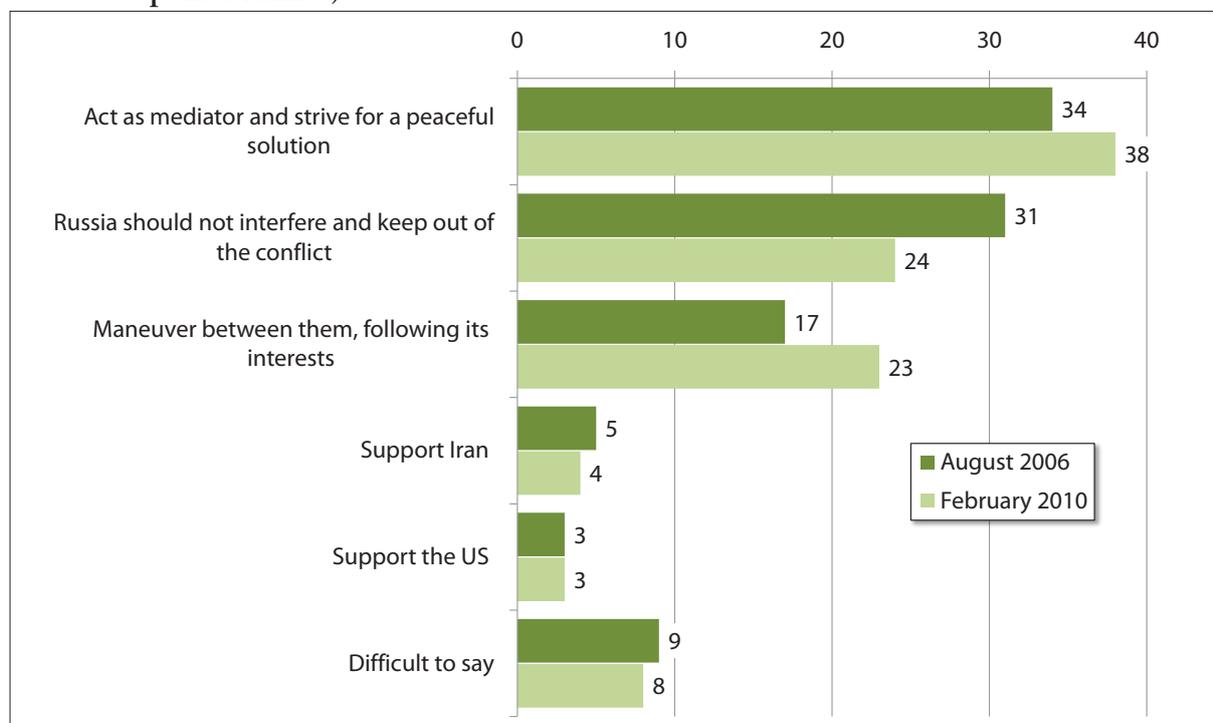
Russian Attitudes towards the “Iranian Threat”

Figure 1: In your opinion, what represents at the moment a bigger threat for the security of Russia?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center, 29 February–2 March and 19–23 March 2010, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010032606.html>

Figure 2: Tensions are increasing around Iran. If it were to escalate to a military conflict between the US and Iran, which position, in your opinion, should Russia take? (Responses ranked)



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center, 29 February–2 March and 19–23 March 2010, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010032606.html>

Figure 3: As you may have heard, for many years Russia provided assistance to Iran in its development of nuclear energy and missile technology. This raises protests from the United States and other countries which consider that this may help Iran produce WMD. Which of the following views comes closest to your own point of view?

Possible answers	1998	2007	2009
Sales of nuclear and missile technologies to Iran should be banned regardless of what commercial benefit they could bring Russia, because they can help Iran in developing nuclear weapons	65	34	45
Sales of nuclear and missile technologies to Iran should continue, because Russian companies are in need of the income from these sales and the danger of military use of these technologies is exaggerated	15	33	29
Difficult to say	20	33	26

Source: representative opinion poll by Levada Center, 19–22 June 2009, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2009063005.html>

Russian Opinions on the Conflict in Gaza (2009)

Figure 1: On whose side are at this moment your sympathies in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict?

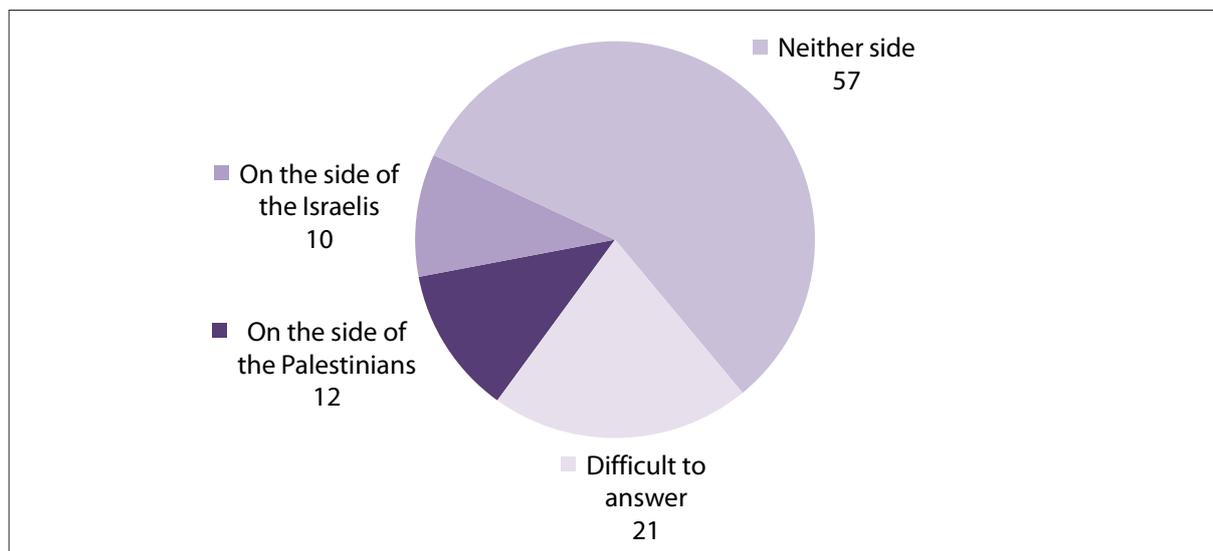
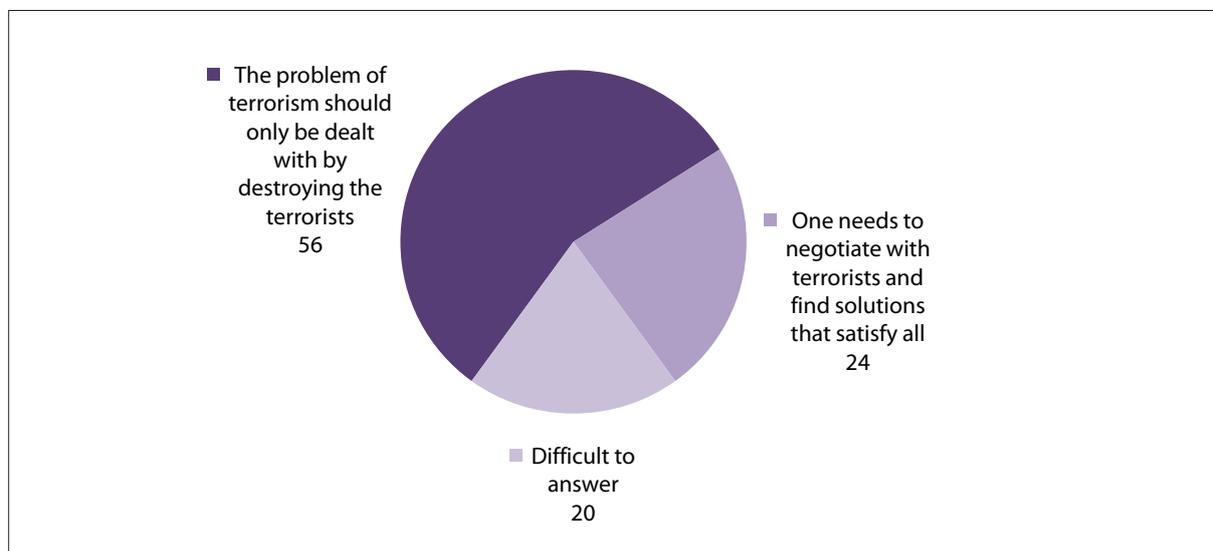


Figure 2: Which of the following points of view do you agree with?



Source: representative opinion poll by Levada Center, 16–19 January 2009, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2009063005.html>

Figure 3: Do you approve of Israeli military operations against the Palestinian organization Hamas in the Gaza Strip?

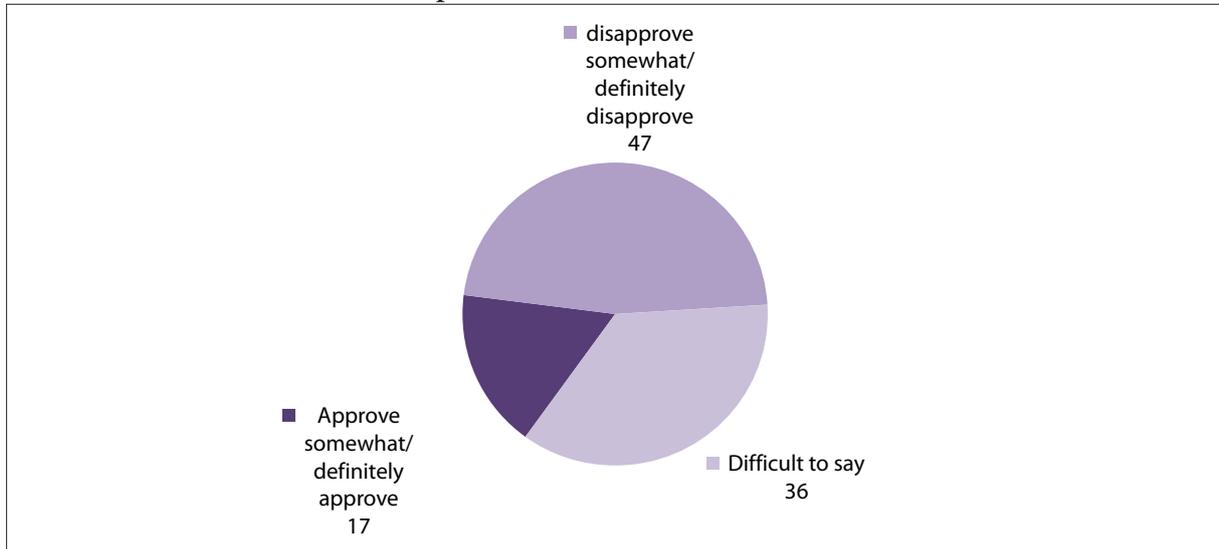
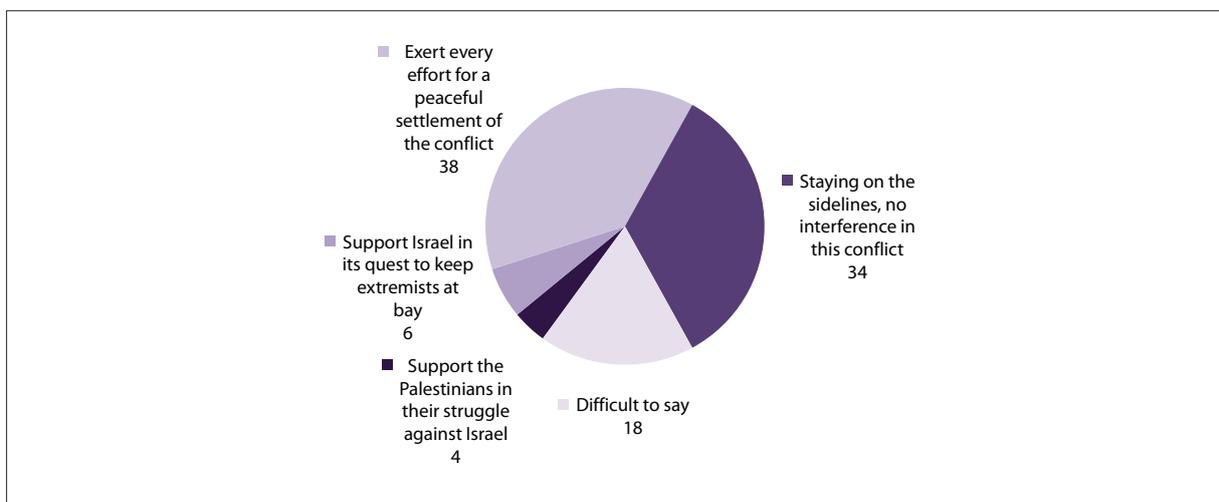


Figure 4: What should Russia's position be in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict?



Source: representative opinion poll by Levada Center, 16–19 January 2009, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2009063005.html>

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Resource Security Institute and the Institute of History at the University of Basel (<http://histsem.unibas.ch/seminar/>). It is supported by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russland-Analysen (www.laender-analysen.de/russland), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (www.res.ethz.ch), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen

Founded in 1982, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to socialist and post-socialist cultural and societal developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the area of post-socialist societies, extensive research projects have been conducted in recent years with emphasis on political decision-making processes, economic culture and the integration of post-socialist countries into EU governance. One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular email services with nearly 20,000 subscribers in politics, economics and the media.

With a collection of publications on Eastern Europe unique in Germany, the Research Centre is also a contact point for researchers as well as the interested public. The Research Centre has approximately 300 periodicals from Russia alone, which are available in the institute's library. News reports as well as academic literature is systematically processed and analyzed in data bases.

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public. The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, area studies, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) in public policy degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS); offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students; and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Crisis and Risk Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

The Institute of History at the University of Basel

The Institute of History at the University of Basel was founded in 1887. It now consists of ten professors and employs some 80 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 800 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History (<http://histsem.unibas.ch/bereiche/osteuropaische-geschichte/>).

Resource Security Institute

The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.

Any opinions expressed in Russian Analytical Digest are exclusively those of the authors.

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