

Pride and shame in collective memory of Russian and American youths

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This article examines collective attitudes of American and Russian students toward national historical events that elicit pride or shame. The authors use the results of a quantitative questionnaire and analysis of in-depth interviews among students of leading American and Russian universities to identify the temporal localization, the content structure, and the prevalence of either hard or soft power in students' attitudes of pride or shame. The authors argue that perceptions of the past have been a core component of national identity and may have an impact on citizens' political behavior in the present. The authors also stress that major differences in young people's understanding of the past may influence future US–Russia relations.

Keywords: collective memory; Russian students; American students; shame and pride

Introduction

This article presents a mixed methods analysis of collective attitudes among American and Russian students towards national historical events that elicit pride or shame. We draw on our analysis of a quantitative questionnaire and in-depth interviews we conducted with students at elite American and Russian universities. We believe it is fruitful to study the values and political views of students at leading universities in the USA and Russia, as these students are likely to become the political and economic elites. Understanding the commonalities and differences between Russian and American elite students is important for studying how they will interact in the future, once they become the political and economic elite and contribute to the formation of Russian–American relations.

Our paper begins by considering current relations between the USA and Russia, as well as the attitudes of Russian citizens toward the USA and American attitudes toward Russia, as reflected in mass media and public opinion polls. Hence, we seek to answer the research question, “What is the basis of Russian–American contradictions in terms of values?” To answer this, we attempt to address the collective views of young Russians and Americans about events in their national histories that they may be either proud or ashamed of (see Part II of the paper). The conceptual framework of this research project is based on collective memory studies. In Part II of the paper, we also offer our own framework for conducting comparative studies of collective perceptions of the past. This framework suggests that researchers can explore collective memory in different groups along three lines: temporal localization, types of pride that dominate collective memory (pride connected with soft power versus hard power), and character of important events (pride versus shame). In

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developing our model, we borrowed the concepts of “soft” and “hard” power, introduced by Joseph Nye, and applied them to the study of collective memory. We also built on works by Aleida Assmann and Barry Schwartz. In the subsequent parts of the paper, we show how the approach we offer can be implemented in an empirical study of Russian and American university students. The mixed-method techniques employed in the research are explained in Part III, and we discuss our major findings in Part IV, in which the model proposed in this paper is demonstrated in an empirical study. We conclude by highlighting promising issues for further analysis in Part V, in which we outline some distinguishing characteristics of collective memory among the Russian and American students we polled.

Collective memory: context and concepts

Over the past three years, in the wake of the annexation of Crimea, there has been an increase in tensions between the USA and Russia. In his speech at a security conference in Munich in 2016, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said, “One could go as far as to say that we have slid back to a new Cold War” (*Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 15 February, 2016).

Russian mass media have also portrayed current relations between the two states as either the beginning of a new Cold War or at least something very similar. *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, the Russian government’s official daily newspaper, mentioned the phrase “Cold War” 121 times between November 2015 and October 2016. Approximately half of those instances used the expression either in reference to current relations between Russia and Western countries including the USA or in connection with the West’s attitude toward Russia. American mass media used similar rhetoric in describing Russian–American relations. A search of the Factiva database shows that during the same period (November 2015 to October 2016), 820 publications in the American press featured the words “the USA,” “Russia,” and the phrase “Cold War.”

Public opinion polls also demonstrated a growth in hostile feelings in each country toward the other country. The majority of Russians considered the USA Russia’s main opponent. Negative attitudes toward the USA peaked in 2014, when 74% of respondents saw the relations as hostile (Levada, 6 August, 2014). One in four respondents was also convinced that Russia and Western countries, led by the USA, were engaged in a Cold War (WCIOM, 28 November 2014). Nearly one-third of respondents (31%) thought we faced a new wave of confrontation between Western states and Russia (WCIOM, 28 November 2014). And even though during the two years following Russia’s annexation of Crimea Russian citizens’ attitude toward America improved, a significant number still exhibited negative attitudes toward the USA.¹

Opinion polls in the USA show that Americans’ negative views of Russia have increased significantly since 2013. In February 2016, 65% of respondents held an unfavorable or very unfavorable view of Russia (Gallup 2016).

Given these findings, we can assume that relations between the two states in terms of public perceptions will not improve significantly in the long run.²

The basic values of the political, cultural, and economic elites who will replace the current generation of elites in the future are important for understanding how relations between the USA and Russia will unfold in the years to come. This article examines basic political orientations among young Russians and Americans studying at leading universities. Some of these students are likely to become part of the ruling elite and may eventually play a part in determining the direction of domestic and foreign policy in Russia and in the USA. Here, we focus on the collective memory of this group as a significant component of their political perceptions. This group’s values and views, as well as their

perceptions of their state's place in the world, will determine the future interactions between Russia and the USA. This holds especially true for Russian society, as researchers have noted in previous studies that the high level of anti-Americanism in Russian society stems not only from the Soviet legacy but also from the values of the current ruling elites (Gerber and Mendelson 2008; Shlapentokh 2011; Stent 2008).

A group's perceptions of the past, its collective memory, help shape its value system. In this article, collective memory is viewed as an important determinant of many political processes. Memory can play either an integrating or a disintegrating role in society. The historical events citizens remember and how they draw upon these memories have been key in determining the course and nature of political processes; in studying the role of these events in politics, it is particularly fruitful to analyze those that have become either positive or negative symbols for the nation, and those that are silenced either consciously or unconsciously. According to Jan Assmann, collective memory determines group identity through the feeling of a common past: "The society needs its past first and foremost for self-identity. The imaginable national collectivity requires the imaginable succession dating back deep into the centuries" (2004, 142).

Maurice Halbwachs, a representative of the French school of sociology, has been recognized as a pioneer in theorizing collective memory. He is best known for his fundamental study, "Social Frames of Memory," which is considered the first systematic attempt to conceptualize the notion of "collective memory" (2007). Halbwachs stresses that memory is social, which means that an individual can recall certain events only within the social boundaries of memory. According to Halbwachs, society has resources that can be mobilized to create mass recollections of certain events. He does not discount the individual aspect of collective memory (each person has their own memory, which does not overlap with memories of anyone else, which depends on the individual temperament and life circumstances), but to him this is merely

a separate aspect of group memory, since any impression or fact, even if it seemingly has to do exclusively with us, we retain a long-term memory of it only insofar we think about it, insofar we relate it to thoughts that we receive from the social sphere. (2007, 184)

Today, the phenomenon of collective memory is hotly debated among researchers. The arguments center around distinguishing collective memory from historical memory and identifying the main categories of individual and collective memory. More recently, Assmann (2014) proposed to analyze four types of memory by function and by the size of the collectivity associated with the memory: individual memory, social memory, political (national) memory, and cultural memory. If individual memory "is a dynamic way to work through individual experience" (21), then social memory is a communicative memory belonging to certain social groups and generations that have a consolidated idea about certain events. This kind of memory is formed from the "bottom-up" in society through negotiation and debate. Unlike social memory, political or national memory is a long-term and more unified construction formed by political institutions that act on society "from the top down" (Assmann 2014, 35). This kind of memory is produced and reproduced in national holidays, rituals, and monuments. Cultural memory cuts across generations and is based on symbolic forms of representation like literature, film, art, and museums. We borrow from Assmann the idea that collective memory comprises different types of memory, but we assume that the boundaries among the types are not always clear-cut. In this study, we have chosen to view collective memory as constituted by interrelated group perceptions of the past and present that exist in a certain socio-cultural context and that influence the political behavior of people in the future.

The collective memory of younger generations has become the object of a significant and growing body of contemporary research (Achugar, Fernández, and Morales 2013; Cheskin 2012; Dan, Todd, and Lan 2010; Lee and Man Chan 2013; McDonnell and Fine 2011; Mendelson and Gerber 2006; Schwartz and Heinrich 2004; Schwartz, Kazuya, and Sachiko 2005; Schwartz and Kim 2001; Toplak, Pikalo, and Luksic 2007; Zaromb et al. 2014; Zhang and Schwartz 1997). If we turn to these studies, we can find two major questions asked by the researchers: what is remembered across society, and how is it remembered? Researchers often focus on events deemed symbolic for the identity of the nation-state, and events that are, in contrast, consciously crossed off from the memory of generations. In terms of political science, the key point here is the link of memory with the construction of collective identity (Bell 2003; Eyal 2004; Gongaware 2010; Jõesalu 2012; Sorek 2011).

Our study draws largely on works by Barry Schwartz and his colleagues, namely from their study of the collective memory of students from the USA, Germany, Israel, Japan, and South Korea, titled “Judging the Past” (Schwartz and Heinrich 2004; Schwartz, Kazuya, and Sachiko 2005; Schwartz and Kim 2001; Zhang and Schwartz 1997). This study revealed a number of national peculiarities directly related to socio-cultural contexts. For instance, American students take pride in events associated with the founding of the USA, World War II, and human rights, while Korean students are proud of their 1988 Olympics and the 2002 FIFA World Cup (Schwartz, Kazuya, and Sachiko 2005; Schwartz and Kim 2001; Zhang and Schwartz 1997). Similar questions were posed to Ghanaian students: Erin Metz McDonnell and Gary Alan Fine used the tool kit of Barry Schwartz to interview students from the University of Ghana. They observed that besides some events from their history, the Ghanaian students were very proud of Ghanaian traditional hospitality (McDonnell and Fine 2011).

As Schwartz and other researchers working in this field emphasize, “Nations distinguish themselves by what citizens remember about their past, thus it is of vital importance to know how they remember collectively as well as how they conceive the virtues – and the sins – of their common past” (Schwartz and Kim 2001, 115).

Our study contributes to the strand of memory research that focuses on comparative studies. We propose to approach studies of memory by highlighting three main parameters of memory in our comparison: temporal localization, types of pride that dominate collective memory (pride connected with soft power versus hard power), and reaction to important events (pride versus shame). We believe that this new approach that focuses on three parameters of memory allows us to best compare how different groups recall their past. Below we explain each of these parameters in detail.

First, the temporal localization of key events mentioned by the representatives of a collectivity as events they take pride in or are ashamed of can show us what time periods are most present in or most absent from collective memory, which political communities the memories have to do with (the Russian Empire or the USSR; the colonies or the USA, for example).

Second, paying attention to those events that inspire pride or shame in a group is important. We understand “pride” as comprising two categories: pride in the realization of “soft power” and pride in the realization of “hard power” by a nation-state. We borrow these terms from Joseph Nye and understand “hard power” to be the ability of a state to meet its goals in the international arena through military might. We understand “soft power” to be the ability of a state to meet its goals through cultural values, the arts, and technology (Nye 2004). In our study of collective memory of important historical events, we consider military victories and victories in the arms race to be “hard power.” We consider “soft

power” to include cultural advances, human rights advances, and the battle for human rights, educational, and scientific breakthroughs, as well as sports.

Third, it is important to note which events dominate collective memory – events that people are proud of, or events that people are ashamed of? The latter would indicate how developed the culture of national shame is, and how far the collectivity is able to critically evaluate history and reflect upon mistakes of the past. The importance of events that inspire shame in a nation-state is discussed at length in Andreas Langenohl’s work “Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies” (2008), in which the author analyzes the role of cultural memory during democratic transition, when totalitarian or authoritarian regimes transition to democracy. For a well-established sustainable democracy, new institutions must not only be created, but also planted in the consciousness of citizens. Here, it is extremely important to focus on how the new democratic states treat the crimes of the old regime, whether the new generation feels responsible for the mistakes of the past generations, and how the past is spoken of and interpreted, so that those mistakes are not made again. In this case, Germany presents a vivid example, as it fully admitted guilt for Nazism and until now has been ready to bear the responsibility for committed crimes. Simultaneously, the memory of great victories and achievements that overshadow mistakes may be a serious obstacle to democratic consolidation. The author considers the collective memory in post-Soviet Russia, where memories of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II play a significant role, while Stalinism is insufficiently analyzed or incorporated into public debates.

Research methods, data, and methodological constraints

The empirical part of this paper is based on data collected in Russia and the USA. Between September 2014 and February 2015, the Laboratory for Political Studies of the National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE) conducted a study among 1399 undergraduate students enrolled in the three top-ranking universities of Moscow, namely Moscow State University, NRU HSE, and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO).³ Of the 1399 study participants who partook in the Russian stage of the study:

- 630 were male;
- 769 were female;
- 727 were in their first or second year; and
- 672 were in their third or fourth year.

All the students we polled were Russian citizens studying in Russia (this is what we mean when we refer to study participants as “Russian students”). Some questions in the questionnaire were open-ended. In addition, 136 in-depth interviews were conducted during the qualitative stage of the study. The transcripts of the interviews amounted to 890 pages.

The study compares these results to data collected in the USA, based on 382 American undergraduate students surveyed at Princeton University, of which:

- 153 male;
- 229 were female;
- 176 were in their first or second year; and
- 206 were in their third or fourth year.

All the students we polled were US citizens (this is what we mean when we refer to study participants as “American students”). Individual and group interviews with 30 respondents

at Princeton University were conducted as well. The transcripts of those interviews total 185 pages. We used the QDA Miner software to analyze the qualitative data.

This study focuses on a particular group of respondents we claimed to be the potential elite representative group – the elite student youth. Therefore, we do not draw conclusions about Russian and American youth in general but try to draw some conclusions about the students we polled.

The students of these particular institutions are ambitious and have more chances for economic and political advancement.⁴ It is worth mentioning that, in Russia, these are the students with the highest Unified State Exam scores and those who have won various educational contests. The average score required for admission is 90 of a maximum 100 points.⁵ Similarly, Princeton University is one of the three most difficult US universities to get into. In 2014, when these data were gathered, Princeton occupied third place in the “Top 100 SAT Scores Ranking” (tying with Yale).⁶

The sample in Russia was constructed based on quota sampling at each of the universities. Within the quota for each university, we also constructed a quota sample for gender and for younger students (first and second years) and older students (third and fourth years). Within each quota, we used snowball sampling to recruit participants. At Princeton, we also sampled students by constructing quotas for gender, as well as for younger students (first and second years) and older students (third and fourth years). Within these quotas, sampling among Princeton students was random.

We used quota sampling in order to create groups that we could compare with one another between Russia and the USA, which also helped to minimize the specificity of the universities we sampled. A slight departure from our planned quotas (50% male and 50% female; as well as 50% students from years 1 and 2 and 50% students from years 3 and 4) did not affect our results. After rescaling the sample, our results did not change.

It is important to note that our study has several limitations. First, it does not disclose any information on the structures of individual perceptions among study participants. Instead, the study allows us to compare the prevalence of certain values and perceptions among different groups. Our results do not allow us to reflect on youth in the USA and in Russia at large, or even on students of elite universities at large.

Moreover, we should emphasize a very important methodological limitation of our study that stems from differing strategies of data collection in the USA and in Russia in the quantitative part of our study. In the part of the study that was based on questionnaires, both our sampling and data collection methods differed between Russia and the USA: in Russia students filled out questionnaires in the presence of a research coordinator, while in the USA the questionnaires were distributed via email in the form of an online survey. We employed two differing data collection strategies for a number of reasons. First, an increasingly tense political situation in Russia has led to falling levels of trust in society, which made it difficult to motivate students to answer surveys online, while personal arrangements with a research coordinator and the distribution of paper questionnaires to groups of students increased the possibility that students would be willing to anonymously fill out the survey. Second, many of the divisions of Russian universities do not have centralized lists of student emails for distribution of an online survey. At Princeton, we could easily distribute the questionnaire online using the services of the university’s Survey Research Center, which structures sampling and uses a single contacts database to reach students.

Importantly, this difference in data collection strategies resulted in differences in response rates. As many scholars have noted before, respondents tend to skip questions much more frequently in online questionnaires than in questionnaires that are conducted

in person on paper (Couper 2000; Tourangeau, Conrad, and Couper 2013). This explains the many unanswered questions or skipped questions in the survey conducted in the USA, where the open-ended questions were skipped particularly often.

Despite these differences in the numbers and strategies of collecting surveys among Russian and American respondents, we were able to triangulate our quantitative results using the qualitative part of our study, which was based on in-depth, face-to-face interviews with students in the USA and Russia. Our analysis of this qualitative data allowed us to generate categories of student political perceptions, which were also echoed in the quantitative results, despite the latter's limitations. The qualitative interviews we conducted included some of the open-ended questions present in our quantitative survey, which helped to correct for the lack of answers to those in the American survey case. We found that our qualitative interviewees had no difficulties in answering the same questions that a large portion of those who completed the quantitative survey skipped. Despite our best efforts to triangulate the data, the limitations discussed here should be taken into account as we discuss our results.

Due to constraints of space, in this article we will focus our analysis of students' responses to the following two open-ended questions based on Barry Schwarz's methodology of studying historical pride and shame.

- Please give three episodes/events in the history of our country that you believe we should take pride in.
- Please give three episodes/events in the history of our country that you believe we should be ashamed of.

Both of the questions may be found in the questionnaire as well as in the questions asked during our qualitative interview. By analyzing these results specifically, we hope to make up for some of the methodological constraints we mentioned above.

Empirical research results

We analyzed the responses to the questions above by grouping all the events mentioned by Russian and American survey participants and interviewees into categories. When analyzing events students take pride in, we found 46 categories in the answers of American respondents and 131 categories in the responses of the Russian interviewees. When analyzing events students claimed they were ashamed of, we identified 91 categories in the American case and 173 categories in the Russian case.

The tables below (Tables 1–4) illustrate the categories we can attribute to 1% or more of respondents. In our analysis, we focus on these. Before moving on to the discussion of the substantive conclusions we can draw from this, we will describe the quantitative parameters of these data (taking into account the methodological limitations noted above).

First, we can say that the Russian students name a greater number of events in their answers to both questions, which may be caused simply by a larger number of respondents to the Russian questionnaire. Yet, the data indicate that American respondents exhibit a more unified voice regarding the major historical events in the USA that inspire pride or shame.

In addition, when analyzing the lists of the events eliciting pride or shame, we noticed a difference in the kind of consensus students exhibit in characterizing their countries' past: while in the USA, the students we polled were more unified in their listing of shameful events, in Russia the unanimity of responses clustered around events students are proud of.

More American students than Russian students had difficulty in naming events they are proud of: 40% of American interviewees could not think of any events they were proud of, or said that such events did not ever take place. Just 31% of respondents had difficulty in naming events from American history that they were ashamed of, or said that there are no shameful events at all. Moreover, in their comments to the open questions, American respondents frequently wrote that there had been many shameful events in the history of their country, while the events they took pride in often were limited to no more than three points.

The answers of the Russian students stand out in stark contrast to the American survey results: only 23% did not find any events to be proud of, when almost half did not see anything to be ashamed of.

Temporal localization

As mentioned, one of the principles for comparison between the Russian and American students in our samples rests on the temporal localization of the main events they mention as either inspiring pride or shame.

After coding and subsequently categorizing all events named by students as shameful or as inspiring pride, we matched each of them with a certain year or years when they took place, which made it possible to graph the spread of events along a temporal scale. We looked at every year of the country's history individually, and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries we also analyzed each decade.

One of the major differences in the perceptions of the past by students was that Russians, unlike Americans, rarely associate events with current reality or with their own life. Only three of the events frequently mentioned as pride-inspiring⁷ and only two shameful events⁸ have occurred in the contemporary period of Russian and American history (the 2000s), when the students had already reached a mature age. As for the frequently mentioned events, the American students either take pride in⁹ or are ashamed of,¹⁰ 11 and 12 of them, respectively, refer to contemporary US history. Our analysis of the distribution of all the events along a temporal axis revealed that the American responses to the survey questions contained almost twice as many events evoking pride as the Russian responses did. The number of shameful events mentioned by Americans was almost four times higher than in the Russian case (40.3% against 23.5% and 79.2% against 20.3% of total references, respectively) (see Figures 1–3).

Figure 2 shows that most of the events the American students polled take pride in and mostly those they are ashamed of took place in the 2000s–2010s.

In addition, the graphs illustrate two more critical differences in answers given by the American and Russian students. First, Figure 1, which shows the distribution of historical events mentioned by the American students throughout the centuries, indicates that in the collective memory of Americans no such obvious “gaps” were observed, i.e. there was no particular period of time characterized by the total absence of any events that inspired either pride or shame.

Figure 3 (showing the distribution of historical events referred to by the Russian students through centuries) and Figure 4 (showing the spread of historical events mentioned by them throughout the twentieth century) clearly demonstrate that against the backdrop of the key events for the students' collective memory, several decades and even entire centuries are ignored together with the significant historical events that took place in Russia at that time.

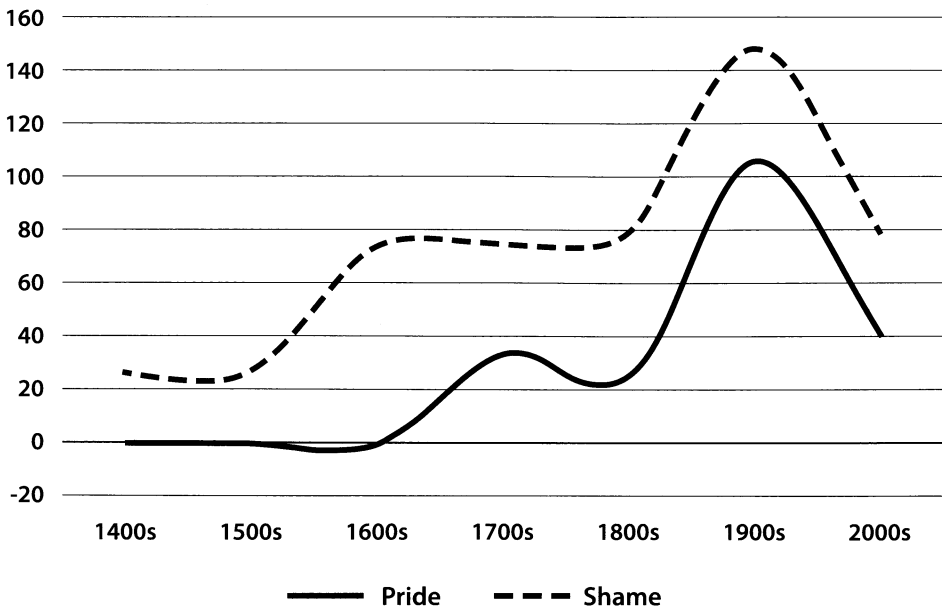


Figure 1. The distribution of historical events named by polled American students through the centuries (the total percentage of references against the total number of respondents).

Second, Figure 1 illustrates that the students named significantly more shameful events throughout American history than pride-evoking events, while the Russian students did the opposite (see Figure 3).

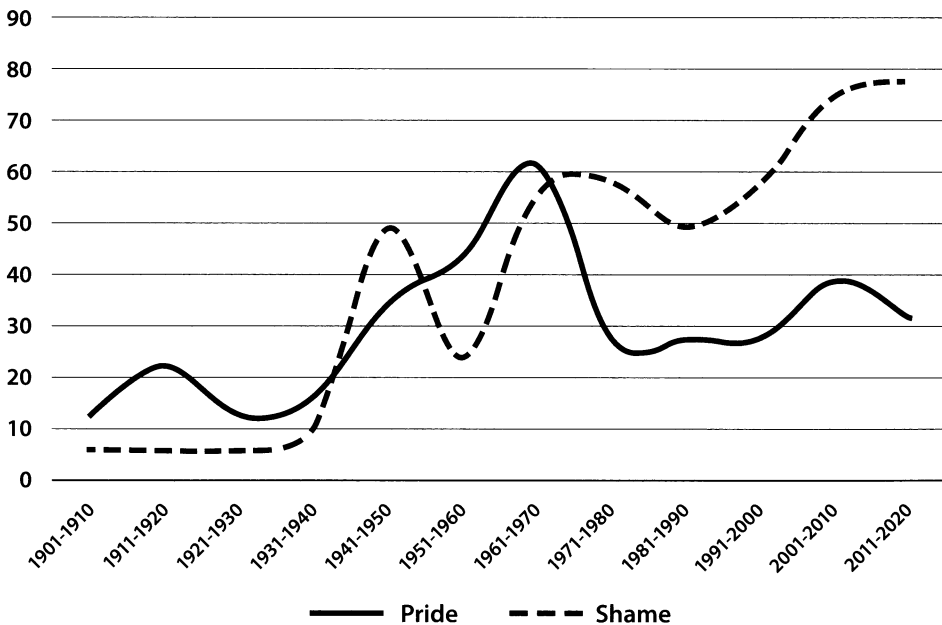


Figure 2. The distribution of historical events named by the polled American students throughout the twentieth century (the total percentage of references against the total number of respondents).

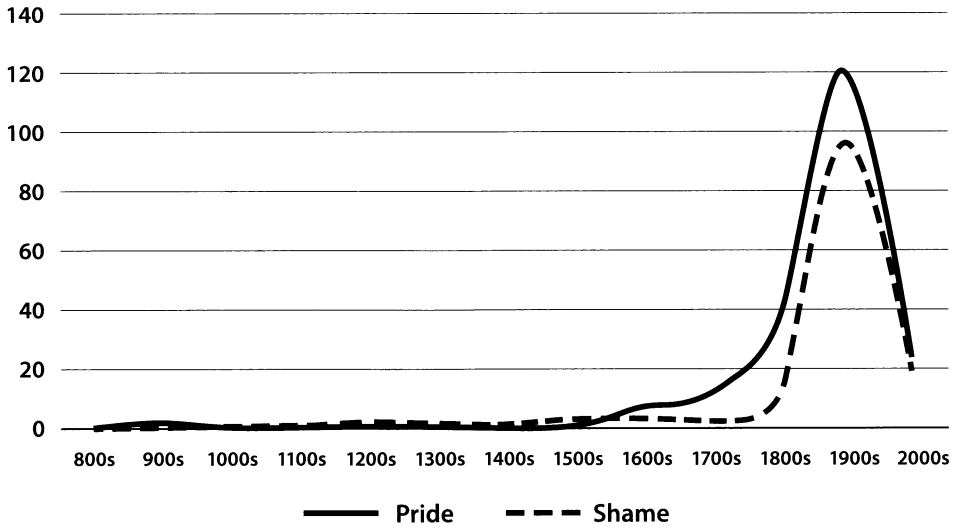


Figure 3. The distribution of historical events named by the polled Russian students through the centuries (the total percentage of references against the total number of respondents).

While the graphs depicting the distribution of events mentioned by Russian and American study participants are difficult to compare because of differing time periods, we nonetheless find it fruitful to be able to see which periods stand out most and whether they are evenly distributed.

Events that inspire pride: soft power versus hard power

As mentioned above, the second principle for comparison between the Russian and American students in our samples rests on events that inspire pride. These can be divided into

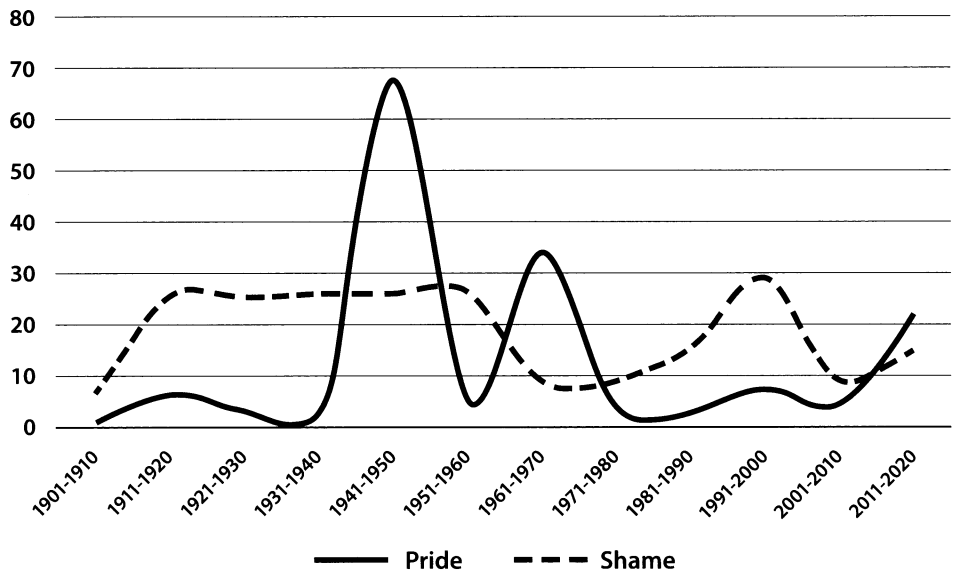


Figure 4. The distribution of historical events named by the polled Russian students throughout the twentieth century (the total percentage of references against the total number of respondents).

Table 1. The most frequently mentioned events that inspire a feeling of pride among Russian students ($N = 1399$).

Event	% of respondents who mention the event
Victory in the Great Patriotic War	63
First human journey into outer space	30
Russian Patriotic War of 1812	20
Annexation of Crimea, 2014	10
Abolition of serfdom, 1861 (reforms of Alexander II)	8
2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and Paralympics	6
Formation of the empire and reforms of Peter the Great	5
End of the Tatar-Mongol yoke	5
Scientific developments	4
Contributions to culture	4
World War I	3
Collapse of the USSR (Belavezha Accords)	3
1917 October Revolution and the creation of the USSR	3
The election of Putin, Putin's presidency	2
"Christianization of Rus"	2
Moscow's liberation from Polish invaders	2
1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow	1
Other	26
No such events	3
No answer	20

Note: Events named by $\geq 1\%$ of respondents are shown.

events connected with realization of "soft power" goals versus "hard power" goals. Tables 1 and 2 list the events most often mentioned by study participants.

Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that the answers of the Russian students polled were mostly connected with military aspects of history, and their choice was guided by how much the event enhanced or lowered the status of the country. The reaction of the American students polled, in contrast, was less connected with military aspects and more often domestically significant as opposed to externally significant, with human rights and liberties taking center stage.

The top three events Russian students we polled are proud of are connected with "hard power," or events the study participants themselves associate with military might. "Soft power" events gained far less attention from the Russian study participants (i.e. they were mentioned less often). Cultural advancements, for example, were named by only 4% of the respondents.

One of the most mentioned answers among the Russian study participants turned out to be the Great Patriotic War, which was cited by 63% of the Russian respondents. This fact is far from new: researchers have written about it as a core event in the system of historical cognition of Russian society in general, and of Russian young people in particular (Afanas'eva and Merkushev 2005; Emel'yanova 2002; Saganenko and Vorontsova 2008; Utenkov and Zakalkin 2000).

Nevertheless, it is important here to turn to the reasons that the study participants named the Great Patriotic War as one of the key events in history that inspires pride. Our analysis of the interviews shows that for many of the study participants, victory in the Great Patriotic War (which refers to the conflict fought by the USSR from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945 on the Eastern Front of World War II) is important because of the image of the USSR repelling

Table 2. The most frequently mentioned events that inspire a feeling of pride among American students ($N = 382$).

Event	% of respondents who mention the event
1960s Civil Rights Movement/The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963/ The Civil Rights Act of 1964	21
The American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) / The Declaration of Independence	17
World War II	16
Advances in space exploration (Neil Armstrong, Apollo 11)	13
Constitution and the Bill of Rights	10
Emancipation Proclamation	10
Equal voting rights (including women's suffrage)	9
Advances in science, technology, and medicine	9
Struggle against discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community	6
Election of Barack Obama	5
Social services, Obamacare	4
Desegregation	4
New Deal	4
Democratic ideals and freedom	3
Equality/equal rights	3
Reaction to crises, national disasters (including 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina)	3
Helping other countries (including the Marshall Plan)	3
Civil War/ Solidarity after the Civil War	3
Environmental policy	2
American higher education	2
World War I	2
Other	18
No such events	3
No answer	37

Note: Events named by $\geq 1\%$ of respondents are shown.

aggression, saving the entire world, and turning into a great power as a result. Respondents saw the victory as a moment of glory for the country:

The victory revealed that the whole of Europe was forced to be submissive in the face of one little country – Germany. But the Soviet Union withstood everything, which showed the entire world that Russians are a really strong nation no one should fight against. (Male, 21 years old)

The way the students responded to open questions seems to indicate that sometimes the event was given automatically, without reflection on the subject:

Maybe it's silly and predictable to mention this event, but it would be victory in the Great Patriotic War. I think it's cool when someone breaks your trust and attacks, and you're like, "Hey you can't do that." And you not only retaliate, but you make it all the way to the Reichstag, and to me this just really showed the strength of the country and its people. (Male, 17 years old)

In speaking of the victory in the Great Patriotic War as an event to be proud of, many of the respondents added that naming this event is banal, but logical. A high percentage of answers given without substantiation or argumentation, in our view, may be explained by the use of the theme of the war in Russian media and in official discourse. One interviewee even said,

I'm ashamed that the theme of the Great Patriotic War has become the subject of manipulation in our country today. They're trying to connect everything great about the country back to the war. The war is becoming the only idea used to unify people, consolidate them all, as there are no other common values. (Male, 18 years old)

With this in mind, despite the many who mentioned how important the Great Patriotic War is to them, they were not unanimous about the reasons to be proud for the country. For example, the second-most-frequently mentioned pride-inspiring event, the first human flight into space, received only half the mentions than did the Great Patriotic War. Thirty percent of students named the space flight, compared with 63% who mentioned the war. Such a large gap was not observed either in the answers of the Russian respondents about shameful events, or in the responses of the American interviewees about either shameful or pride-inspiring events.

The space flight was mostly regarded by the students not as a scientific and technological achievement but as a victory in the arms race (see Table 1). In the interviews, study participants said Gagarin's space flight "is a significant, groundbreaking achievement in the history of humanity at large, which, on top of that, allowed the Soviet Union to strengthen its position in the international arena in the context of the Cold War" (female, 18 years old).

Notably, the Russian study participants and the American study participants exhibited vastly different interpretations of space-related events in their respective histories (Gagarin's space flight in the Russian case and the Apollo 11 Mission in the USA). We can see from Tables 1 and 2 that both the Apollo 11 mission and Gagarin's space flight made it into the most-mentioned events the study participants are proud of, yet after analyzing the interviews we can conclude that the American study participants were more likely to describe this as the greatest physical achievement of humanity, rather than alluding to American leadership in the sphere of technology or in the Cold War. By contrast, as mentioned, the Russian study participants speak less often about Gagarin's space flight as a triumph of scientific progress. The flight of Yuri Gagarin to space was seen by Russian students we polled as an advance in the arms race that showed off the state's potential. One study participant said, "Gagarin's space flight ... makes our country, not the USSR, great – a strong power. It was OUR man who showed the whole world that people can fly to space, that we can develop in that direction" (male, 20 years old). Another participant said: "Yuri Gagarin's first flight – it's a victory in the space race between the USSR and the USA. This is the first thing that comes to my mind" (female, 20 years old).

As for the rest of the events mentioned as ones to be proud of, from the data we have analyzed, we can see that for the American students we polled, the main source of pride in their country was the civil rights movement, which started in the USA in 1954 and culminated with the adoption of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Addressing the importance of the movement for the rights of African-Americans, the respondents stressed the role of active participants, ordinary people, and their firm position of having the courage to fight for what is right, as well as their nonviolent activism.

Despite the fact that the second- and third-place events that inspire pride among American study participants (according to the quantitative survey) are the American Revolutionary War and World War II, the narratives (from the interviews we conducted) show that the interviewees do not interpret these events from a militarist or expansionist perspective. Our analysis of the interviews shows that the American Revolutionary War is connected with the birth of the American nation-state and the fight for rights, independence, and self-determination: "America's true identity was formed in those years; we became a nation" (male, 20 years old). American study participants' interpretations of World War II as a

pride-inspiring event were quite different from their Russian counterparts' interpretations of the Great Patriotic War. For Russians, the war was associated not only with "freeing the world again," but also with showing that "the USSR and Russia in particular can battle an aggressor and can overcome this and continue on successfully" (female, 19 years old). By contrast, American study participants said they consider World War II important because the USA helped the Allies and managed to secure world peace.

Shame and pride: the character of events

The third parameter for comparison of collective memories between our Russian and American study participants is the character of the events they mention, i.e. how many of the events our participants mention are related to pride, and how many are related to shame. We consider the mention of events that evoke shame to be an indicator of the ability to recognize the mistakes of the past. Tables 3 and 4 show the most-mentioned events that study participants claim to be ashamed of or proud of.

Table 3. The most frequently mentioned events that inspire a feeling of shame among Russian students ($N = 1399$).

Event	% of respondents who mention the event
Stalin-era repressions	18
Collapse of the USSR (The Belavezha Accords)	11
October Revolution, 1917	9
Execution of the imperial family	6
Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905	5
Annexation of Crimea	4
Civil War	4
War in Afghanistan	3
Sale of Alaska	3
World War I	3
Yeltsin's presidency	3
Soviet regime, "Communism"	2
"The freewheeling 1990s"	2
Serfdom	2
Chechen wars	2
Current relations with Ukraine	2
Reign of Ivan IV (Oprichnina)	2
Crimean War, 1853–1856	2
February Revolution	2
Mongol-Tatar yoke	1
Putin's presidency (the third term)	1
Perestroika	1
October events in 1993 (Russian Constitutional Crisis)	1
Khrushchev era (corn, the UN speech)	1
The Time of Troubles/ "Polish intervention"	1
"The Red Terror"	1
Gorbachev's presidency (Prohibition/Anti-alcohol Campaign)	1
Others	32
There are no events of that kind (No one can feel ashamed of the history of his or her country)	9
No answer	36

Note: Events named by $\geq 1\%$ of respondents are shown.

Table 4. The most frequently mentioned events that inspire a feeling of shame among American students ($N = 382$).

Event	% of respondents who mention the event
Slavery and Jim Crow laws/Segregation	46
Wars/ military interventions (including the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan)	36
Genocide of the indigenous population / "Trail of Tears" (Andrew Jackson)	27
Discrimination in contemporary America (racism, women's rights, discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community)	25
Internment of Japanese Americans	17
US prison system (including Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib)	7
Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki	6
McCarthyism and Red Scare	4
Capitalism and inequality	3
War on terror and Islamophobia after 9/11	3
Watergate scandal	2
Ecological issues	2
Civil War	2
Late entry into World War II	2
Cold War	2
Iran–Contra affair/ Irangate	2
Surveillance of US citizens	2
Chinese Exclusion Act	1
Corruption in contemporary America	1
Manhunt for Edward Snowden	1
All the events of America's contemporary history	1
Support of authoritarian leaders	1
Lack of arms control	1
Others	18
No such events	2
No answer	29

Note: Events named by $\geq 1\%$ of respondents are shown.

Table 3 shows that the Russian students are less inclined to be ashamed and more inclined to be proud. Only 18% of respondents claimed they were ashamed of Stalinist purges, while 63% were proud of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. It is notable here that when speaking of different military victories, the students associated themselves with the victorious people by using the pronouns "our" and "we:" "our victory," "we won." But when it came to the topic of shame with regard to events in national history, the respondents preferred to disassociate themselves from such events and to say that they do not know history well enough to answer such a question. Some of them added that they had never thought of such events before, or said that because they had not participated in any shameful events, they could not feel ashamed of acts committed by older generations.

A large proportion of respondents had difficulty in naming events in national history they were ashamed of. Thirty-six percent were not able to give a definitive answer and 9% said there were no such events in Russian history.

Our analysis of interviews showed that participants in this part of the study believe that "true patriots" must have a positive view of Russian history, meaning that a single event cannot be considered "disgraceful" or "shameful." According to the respondents, there may have been a few "unfortunate turns" made by the state and mistakes we should

learn from, but they should not be thought of as “abominable.” This view is illustrated in the following quote from a respondent:

Anyone calling himself or herself a citizen of the country cannot feel ashamed or disgraced by its history, since it’s impossible to rectify anything our nation has gone through. So that is why I think feeling ashamed of any historical event is a misconception, especially when we’re talking about our country, because we’ve actually gone through all of history with dignity: Mongol rule, the Time of Troubles, or the beginning of the 1920s. I don’t think our government policy of that time can be defined as shameful. (Female, 18 years old)

Every fifth respondent mentioned the Stalinist purges. However, our analysis shows that the polled students’ attitude to that historical period is far from unequivocal. We can divide those who said they felt ashamed of Stalinist repressions into two groups: some exhibited a kind of “façade shame,” and others did seriously realize the tragedy of those events. We identified the “façade shame” category through identifying those responses that characterized the Stalinist repressions as a dark chapter of history while offering justification for those events. Some respondents said Stalin got the country back on its feet and that the purges were necessary for the state to carry out its policies, although interviewees said that goal could have been reached without so many victims. “This is a topic for debate. There is no reliable information proving whether those events really took place or not. But, anyhow, those events are debated very often. Maybe this is a dark chapter of our history” (female, 20 years old).

The main event causing shame among American students polled was the period of slavery and then the Jim Crow laws, which refers to enforced racial segregation of black Americans in the USA (see Table 4). While social scientists and historians have likened serfdom in Russia to this period of slavery and segregation in American history, the serfdom period was much less prominent in the responses of Russian students polled. Only about 8% of Russian students polled said they were proud of the abolition of serfdom, and only 2% of the respondents named serfdom as something they are ashamed of in Russian history. The comments of the Russian students we polled also indicated that those who were ashamed of serfdom were ashamed of the “late” abolition of serfdom, not of serfdom itself. It is important to note here that the kind of attention the topic of slavery or serfdom receives in the USA and Russia differs. In the USA, slavery is linked to the problem of race, which is a key topic in American public discourse, but in Russia serfdom remains an episode from the pages of history books, and Russians do not tend to associate themselves clearly with descendants of serfs or serf-owners. Nonetheless, the gap in responses about slavery is possibly indicative of a broader difference in perceptions of human rights among our respondents in the USA and in Russia. This thesis would need further empirical study.

In the American case, events linked to military action were mostly named as shameful rather than as sources of pride for American students. An exception to this was World War II, which was depicted in students’ responses as a period when the USA helped its allies, rather than as a “victory.”

On the one hand, Americans demonstrated a higher “shame” line, as their key shameful events are not localized in some certain time period and are spread equally along the temporal axis (partly because they lasted for long periods of time). Russians hardly voice their shame for such events (such as those 2% who feel ashamed of serfdom mentioned above). On the other hand, this illustrates two different types of positions: being ready to admit your country’s mistakes and being confident that “one must not feel ashamed of the history of your nation, one should take it as it is and with this construct the country’s further development.”

Several additional minor differences between the results in the USA and the results in Russia should be mentioned. It seems that the pride-inspiring events named by Russian students were mostly studied in history classes at school: "I feel humiliation in recollecting the period when Russia was dependent on the Tatar-Mongol yoke, when our *kniazi* had to bow to the khans, when they forced them to pay that *iarlyk* [a type of tax] ... that's it" (female, 18 years old). The data gathered in the USA, by contrast, show that at least some of the students' answers to the questionnaire directly referred to events that had influenced either their own lives or the lives of their family members. For instance, when mentioning segregation as a shameful event, they shared their family life stories during interviews.

Equal voting rights for women (and women's rights more broadly) was mentioned as a point of pride by 9% of the American respondents. They associated this with the rights and opportunities present now in their own lives: "The struggle for the rights of women – if not for that, a lot would have never happened in my life" (female, 18 years old).

Another example worth noting is the war in Iraq. While Russian students hardly speak of events from the early 2000s, their American peers often address this period. The war in Iraq is mentioned in particular, as it had a direct impact on the formation of their perceptions of the USA:

The war in Iraq had an impact on the way my parents raised me, the way they talked about politics with me. That war damaged their perceptions of the country and of what it meant to serve it. The war made my brother and I doubt America and distrust it, made us feel more scared. Our father forbade us to speak aloud of what his family members thought about that war. (Male, 21 years old)

It was also interesting to note how interviewees drew associations between points of pride and points of shame. If American students mentioned the abolition of slavery as an event they were proud of, they often simultaneously added that it was disgraceful that slavery had existed and that it had taken so long to abolish it. The same may be observed regarding other events: if students took pride in reaching equality for members of the LGBTQ community, then they immediately balanced it with musings on the fact that people were forced to struggle for it; being proud of the country's contribution to the victory in World War II became darkened by thoughts that if the USA had joined the war earlier, the consequences of it might have been less tragic. September 11 was depicted in responses as an event triggering the nation's intention to unite against evil but was accompanied by remarks about the unfortunate growth of Islamophobia in society.

In their responses during interviews, the Russian students were less likely to associate pride and shame and to consider the negative effects of events they considered positive. In addition, one and the same event was treated by some Russian respondents as shameful and by others as evoking pride. This includes the October Revolution, the election of Putin as president, the annexation of Crimea, World War I (3% of respondents said Russia was a victor in World War I), and the abolition of serfdom. This points to a lack of historical knowledge among Russian students (Kasamara and Sorokina 2015) and to the absence of agreement among them, as well as among Russians more generally, on Russia's politics and its history.

Conclusions

In this article, we proposed an approach that allows researchers to compare collective memory and collective perceptions of the past between different groups along three lines: temporal localization, types of pride that dominate collective memory (pride connected with soft power versus hard power), and the character of important events (events

evoking pride versus shame). Our empirical study was based on this proposed approach, which has allowed us to reveal some distinguishing characteristics of collective memory among the Russian and American students polled and interviewed for this study. The results of this study may serve as a useful starting point for further large-scale empirical studies comparing Russian and American students and further testing our results, perhaps using a different sampling strategy and extending the empirical base to more universities in both countries.

In analyzing the temporal localization of events mentioned by study participants, we see that the American students we polled are oriented more toward contemporary history than their Russian counterparts. At the same time, Russian students are prone to naming twentieth-century events as those they take pride in. Few Russian students name any contemporary events as points of pride.

In analyzing the data we gathered with regard to pride connected with soft power versus hard power, we can conclude that Russian students' collective memory is very militarized, and the events most often mentioned by the students as inspiring pride can be characterized by "hard power." As noted above, military victories and the display of state power seem to evoke strong emotions among Russian respondents, while elements of soft power are missing from the discussion (young people hardly mention the Golden Age of Russian culture, ballet, or science). The collective memory of the students focuses largely on one particular symbolic event, namely Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War, which is described in the qualitative part of the study as a period during which the USSR saved the world and ascended to great power status. In stark contrast to the Russian students we polled, the collective memory of American students polled primarily draws on soft power: the major source of pride among American students are human rights and the struggle for them.

Third, in analyzing pride versus shame as characteristics of collective memory events, we see that the American students we polled are more prone to naming events they consider mistakes of the past or events they are ashamed of, while the majority of the Russian students we polled are not prone to naming events they are ashamed of.

The history of any nation-state contains lists of national victories and achievements, references to heroes, as well as other events that are silenced or missing from collective memory. National history is not only the basis for the formation of national identity, but it is also the subject and the target of political propaganda. Perceptions of the past are of great significance for shaping identity, and they have an impact on the political behavior of citizens. The students interviewed for this study will be determining the political course of the USA and Russia in decades to come. This study has revealed fundamental differences between how elite Russian and American students we polled observe the present and think of the past, which indicates a large difference in the core values of our study participants from Russia and those from the USA.

The research presented in this paper leads us to ask an important question that may be the basis for further discussion: what key factors shape our political perceptions of the past? Are these factors determined by elites, or do they stem from a political culture that is dispersed among the citizenry? We share the view that the political elite exerts considerable influence over the formation of collective memory, especially in Russia, where collective memory is characterized by a high degree of militarism, a focus on the past, and the reluctance to feel ashamed.

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Notes

1. For the last two years, Russian citizens have become more positive in their attitudes toward the USA. The share of those who view Americans favorably rose from 18% to 25%, while the share of those feeling negatively decreased from 74% to 66% (Levada, 28 August 2016).
2. The 2016 US Presidential Election has had a short-term effect on how Russian citizens perceive the USA, and, more specifically, how they perceive US President Donald Trump. The policies President Trump has implemented since being sworn in as President, as well as the continuation of economic sanctions against Russia, have led to renewed skepticism toward the USA among Russians, as evidenced by opinion polls. According to the polling agency WCIOM, in April 2017 82% of Russian respondents viewed relations between the USA and Russia as tense, cold, or hostile (WCIOM, 17 April 2017).
3. Four hundred ninety-six from Moscow State University, 363 from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and 540 from NRU HSE; see “Kachestvo platnogo priema v gosudarstvennyye vuzy RF po profilu – 2015,” Russian Education Ministry, available at: http://vid1.rian.ru/ig/ratings/Platniy_priem_2015.htm.
4. In particular, MGIMO (which operates under the auspices of the Russian Foreign Ministry) has traditionally educated future Russian politicians. These students have more opportunities than “average” Russian citizens to go abroad as part of their studies. They also have various online resources at their disposal. They generally speak more than two foreign languages; their views, as a consequence, are more susceptible to internationalization. They are taught by highly qualified staff, including current politicians and active public figures, who may facilitate the reproduction of political values and assist the students’ advance into the ruling class (Kasamara and Sorokina 2015).
5. The Unified State Exam (Edinii gosudarstvennii ekzamen) in Russia is in fact a series of exams every student must pass after graduation in order to enter a university or a professional college. Since 2009, the USE is the only form of graduation examination in schools and the main form of preliminary examination in universities.
6. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/schifrin/2014/08/04/top-100-sat-scores-ranking-which-colleges-have-the-brightest-kids/#313ff65d5bad>.
7. The annexation of Crimea, the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, the election of Putin. All the rest of the events, including achievements in science and culture, refer to earlier periods in Russian history.
8. Including the annexation of Crimea and Putin’s third term as president, though those events were categorized as “shameful” by a much lower number of the respondents.
9. Equal voting rights, scientific advances, technology, and medicine (including contemporary advances), the struggle against discrimination against LGBTQ, the election of Barack Obama, social services, and Obamacare, democratic ideals and freedom, equality and equal rights, the reaction to crises and national disasters (including 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina), help to other countries, environmental policy, American higher education.
10. Wars/military interventions, discrimination in contemporary America, the US prison system, capitalism and inequality, the War on Terror and Islamophobia after 9/11, ecological issues, surveillance of US citizens, corruption in contemporary America, the manhunt for Edward Snowden, all the events of America’s contemporary history, support of authoritarian leaders, arms proliferation.

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