

# THE IMAGE OF POLAND IN RUSSIA THROUGH THE PRISM OF HISTORICAL DISPUTES

Report based on a public opinion poll carried out by the Levada Center  
in Russia for the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding



Warsaw 2020



THE CENTRE  
FOR POLISH-RUSSIAN  
DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING

Report on public opinion research



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Report on public opinion research

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Graphic design and typesetting: Studio 27 ([www.studio27.pl](http://www.studio27.pl))

Cover photo: Lela Kieler/Adobe Stock

ISBN 978-83-64486-79-1

**Publisher**

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## Commentary

*By pursuing their particular, excessive ambitions it was the politicians in interwar Poland who submitted their nation, the Polish nation, to the German war machine and generally contributed to the outbreak of World War II.*

President of the Russian Federation  
Vladimir Putin, 19 December 2019.

This statement by President Putin was an all-important moment in a Russian information campaign aimed at undermining interpretations accepted by European historians over the last thirty years that do not put the Soviet authorities in a favourable light.

Historical revisionism has been a feature of Vladimir Putin's rule from the start. However, until Russia's attack on Ukraine 2014 it did not take a radical form. While a 'propaganda concert' was already under way, the lead came from Kremlin-serving journalists, political commentators or political activists outside the governmental structures. Vladimir Putin as conductor preferred to stay in the shadows, but even he would condemn the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact when necessary.

After 2014 other professionals joined the performance, all skilled in attacking Poland, Ukraine or the Baltic States: the then Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky, also head of the Russian Military Historical Society; Speaker of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin; the Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service Sergey Naryshkin; and Russian diplomats.

Finally, in December 2019 on four occasions President Vladimir Putin himself openly took the lead. He drew on documents widely known to historians to prepare an amateurish indictment that accused inter-war Poland of making an alliance with Hitler, of complicity in ruining

peace in Europe, and of anti-semitism. Putin played down to vanishing-point the totalitarian character of the USSR, its tactical cooperation with the Third Reich in destroying peace in Europe, and its aggression during the first part of WW II.

Each month then brought new moves with Poland in mind. First, the removal plaques in Tver commemorating victims of the Great Terror and Polish POWs murdered in the USSR's Katyn operation. Soon thereafter the State Duma appeared ready to cancel the resolution adopted by the Congress of People's Deputies in December 1989 which condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Finally, President Putin assumed the role of historian in addressing the Western audiences through an article in *National Interest*, a US international affairs magazine. It featured characteristic neo-Stalinist interpretations of the causes of World War II as promoted by Russian diplomacy, with Poland presented as one of the main guilty parties.

The scale and intensity of this operation prompted our Centre to ask about its impact in Poland and Russia. In May 2020 we presented a report *Information War and Propaganda About History*, based on a public opinion survey conducted in Poland by ARC *Rynek i Opinia*. The aim was to explore what Poles know and feel about Russia's use of propaganda in describing history, and how they see Poland's response.

We now invite you to read the discussion and findings from a public opinion poll conducted in Russia for the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding in June 2020 by the Levada Center, an independent social research institute in Russia with a well-deserved reputation. The detailed report on the findings was prepared by ARC *Rynek i Opinia*.

The research findings turned out to be so interesting that we decided to add a commentary to the report and share our observations, largely inspired by the unprompted answers provided by Russian respondents to open-ended questions.

## Knowledge and Ignorance

The survey aimed to explore what Russians know about key events in the history of Polish-Russian relations and how they interpret them. The emerging picture reflects current historical awareness of Russian society and certain features Russian political culture, including attitudes towards the admissibility of annexation and the politics of force or towards the 'pan-Russian' ideology, denying that Belarusians and Ukrainians can be nations.

Russians know about the former Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita* in Polish, *Rech Pospolitaya* in Russian) of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. They generally see it as a country not identical to Poland: either Polish-Lithuanian or Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian-Belarusian. Only one in six Russians reports negative connotations around 'Rzeczpospolita' (the Commonwealth) or the Polish word 'Pan' (Gentleman): more than 20% consider this term positive). Nearly one in three perceives the Polish word *szlachta* (gentry) negatively.

Those Polish expressions were used by the Soviet propaganda to denigrate pre-communist Polish past, to create and sustain negative connotations. To some extent they still persist, but the passing of time and the fact that they are not 'heated up' by the Kremlin mean that they are not now shared by a majority of Russians. A noticeable group of Russians have a positive attitude towards *Rzeczpospolita* and related ideas; the largest percentage of respondents are neutral.

However, 42% of Russians have not heard anything about the partitions of Poland. 71% of those

who have heard about them (39% of the total) know that Russia took part in them (far fewer know of other partitioning powers). This shows that their knowledge about Polish-Russian relations in the 18th century is shallow. Russians therefore are typically not aware of important context before the 20th century that might help them understand the historical perspectives of Russia's western neighbours. This makes them more susceptible to propaganda today.

This influence can be seen in answers to the question about the countries which were responsible for starting World War II. While more than 80% of Russians mention Germany in this context, one in five Russians points to the United Kingdom, one in seven mentions the USSR and USA, and one in ten indicates Poland. It is very likely that specifically the last number is a direct result of the Kremlin campaign that has been running for months, aiming to deny any Soviet responsibility for the start of WW II while blaming other countries for it. Yet, it is worth highlighting that 15% of Russians see the USSR as one of the driving forces in the conflict.

From the Polish perspective, Russian awareness of the Katyn massacre is startling: only some half of Russians (54%) have heard about it at all. Who do they think murdered the Polish POWs? 43% of those who have heard about the Katyn massacre say Germany. This represents 24% of the total respondents: in a Levada Center 2010 survey 18% of the respondents attributed the crime to Germany. Only 14% (19% in 2010) of all respondents blame the USSR's Stalinist authorities. This result with the underlying trend highlight the challenge faced by Polish institutions working to spread among Russians knowledge of this massive Soviet crime.

At the same time, Putin's 'monument' propaganda finds fertile soil. Nearly 90% of Russians have heard about Poland removing monuments to Red Army soldiers, but Poland can count on only some 12% of Russians understanding why this is happening. This issue has been used

efficiently by the Russian authorities to stir up negative feelings against Poland among the Russian public.

## Emotions

When asked what they associate with Poland/Poles, Russian respondents displayed significant negative emotions. This perhaps reflects the Kremlin's 'monuments' campaign. One in four respondents did not point to specific problems but gave pejorative expressions (ungrateful, traitorous, Russophobic, slippery, vindictive, hostile, lying, hateful). Nevertheless, one in three had no associations which shows that there is room for shaping attitudes.

Where is the current extreme negative campaign of the Russian authorities and their tame media against Poland leading? Social attitudes towards Poland and Poles in Russia may become ever more emotional, not only hindering the search for a *modus vivendi* but also legitimising the Kremlin's damaging plans. Propaganda does not create new cultural codes: it stirs up dormant prejudices and reinforces existing ones.

## Imperial attitudes

The different rationalisations used by Russians to justify Russia's occupation of foreign territory helps us get a better understanding of Russians' susceptibility to aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

The vast majority of Russians believe that Moscow's annexation of territory following both the 18th century partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the September 1939 aggression was justified. Unprompted comments help explain why.

While many beliefs derive from imperial thinking, the survey reveals a more varied (albeit not more optimistic) picture. The list of justifications

for Russia taking other state's land includes references to historical entitlement ('our' land); disputed legal title (*terra nullius*); historical/strategic necessity; crude Darwinism (the strong get more); humanitarianism (defence of brotherly nations, compatriots or fellow believers); and nationalism (by definition Russia is never the aggressor). All these motivations appear in official justifications for the annexation of the Crimea as devised for public opinion in Russia.

The survey findings have revealed a well-rooted belief in Russia that international relations are primarily a game between superpowers, with no rules protecting weaker actors: eternal imperial tendencies push stronger countries towards using force to satisfy their inherent needs. In this world the power of law has no weight against the rule of force. Echoes of social Darwinism and an anachronistic worldview ('the more land the better') are reflected in arguments developed by the current Russian authorities that openly promote the view that a territorially expansive foreign policy is an innate right of superpowers.

Unfortunately the overwhelming majority of Russians defend imperial policies of the USSR and/or the Russian Empire, justifying their views with arguments that stem from nationalism or the Russian identity shaped by the Russian Empire. This represents the biggest challenge to Russia's dialogue with western neighbours. As shown by this and other surveys, it is no coincidence that the number of Russian people who defend historical annexations is similar to the number of those who support modern annexations.

## Conclusions

In addressing difficult issues in the history of Polish-Russian relations, the present study has indirectly confirmed that most Russians share Vladimir Putin's thinking about history and foreign policy. When assessing the history of Russia's relations with Poles and with other nations



of the region, the Russian respondents express views rooted in nationalism: imperial Russian statehood is the point of reference. They also draw on clichés promoted by Putinist and Soviet propaganda, some dating back to the Russian Empire and its politics.

A minority of Russians seem ready for dialogue, showing solidarity with an anti-Soviet and anti-imperial perspective on Poland and Europe and being more likely to appreciate that other nations may have different historical perspectives. This minority is quite significant at some 40%. The challenge is to enlarge this group, which roughly corresponds to the number of those who favour de-escalating the dispute with Poland over monuments.

Cautious optimism also comes from the fact that a sense of distance from an imperial vision of Russian history is more common among young people aged up to 35 who no longer remember Soviet times. This is important for a future democratic Russia.

At the same time, one must not underestimate threats potentially arising from an imperial consciousness displayed by the majority of Russians, boosted by an officially manipulated account of history.

**Łukasz Adamski, Ernest Wyciszkievicz**

## Introduction – background and purpose of the study

As well as its regular surveys of Poles' opinions on relations with Russia, the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding has commissioned a public opinion poll in Russia that focuses on how Russians see relations with Poland.

This poll does not mirror issues covered in earlier opinion polls in Poland, but instead looks at the most important historical and political issues recently on the agenda between the two countries.

This report offers a perspective on how different historical events and ideas (and their contemporary interpretations) are seen by Russian respondents. This interesting perspective is at times surprising for a Polish audience. It also helps us understand misunderstandings and tensions produced by such issues as commemorations of Red Army soldiers in Poland.

The Russian respondents were also asked about events and concepts from the more distant past. Their interpretation casts light on prevailing

views on Russia's historical role as it has been variously presented.

An opinion survey on these issues is not a 'history test' for the respondents, even if it asks directly about their knowledge of events from the past. Rather it measures awareness of and sensitivity towards a history which features both facts and assorted interpretations as well as today's politics and historical propaganda. Many of the research findings presented here echo current official Russian messages that often present a critical view of Poland.

It should also be remembered that regardless of current propaganda or media 'messages of the day', the Russian view of history has consistent features dating back to the 19th century and differing strongly from a Polish perspective. It accordingly is all the more interesting and important to understand how Russians see the past and how it influences today's relations with Poland. Sharing understanding of different perspectives and sensitivities is one path of dialogue between Poles and Russians.

# Information about the study

## Methodology

The Levada Center in Russia carried out the poll. Its results have been processed by ARC Rynek i Opinia, the research agency which prepared this report.

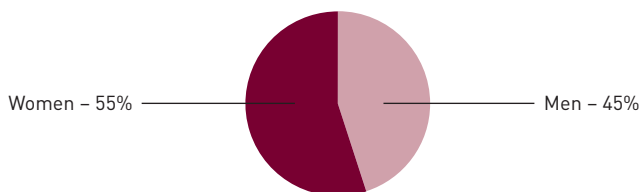
The study was carried out using Computer-Aided Telephone Interviews (CATI) on a random sample of 1000 adult Russians, using mobile and landline phone numbers.

The survey was conducted from 13 to 20 June 2020.

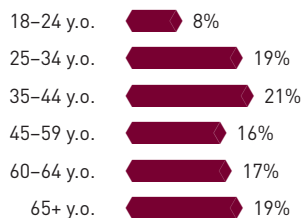
In some cases the numbers do not add up to 100%, for example in multiple-response questions. For questions with a single answer some slight deviations from 100% arise from rounding off percentages.

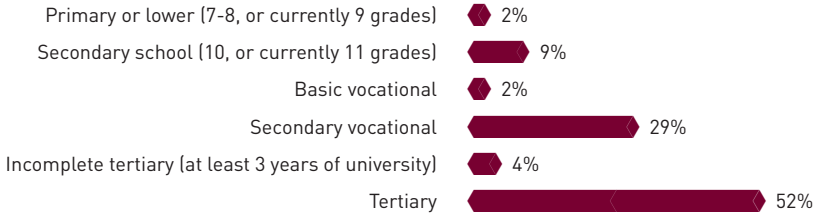
## Sample structure

**Figure 1. Gender**



**Figure 2. Age**



**Figure 3. Education****Figure 4. Financial situation**

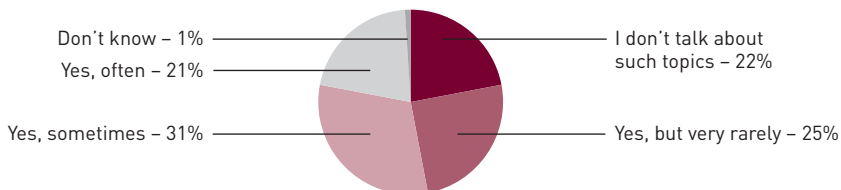
# Detailed findings

Russians often talk about international politics. Only 22% of those surveyed never talk about this topic. 52% talk about it quite often.

International affairs are most frequently discussed by older people and respondents with

tertiary education. 54% of people with primary education never talk about international topics: among people with tertiary education only 16% never do so.

**Figure 5. Do Russians talk about international politics?**

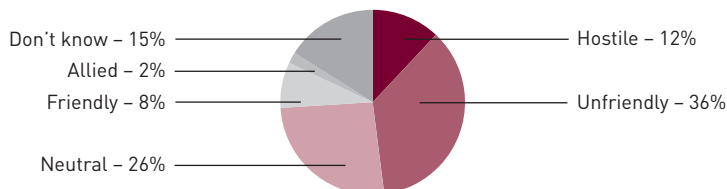


Half of the Russian respondents see relations between Russia and Poland in a negative light: unfriendly (37%), or even hostile (12%). A quarter of respondents see relations as 'neutral'. A positive view of relations between Russia and Poland (friendly or allied) is held by 10% of Russians.

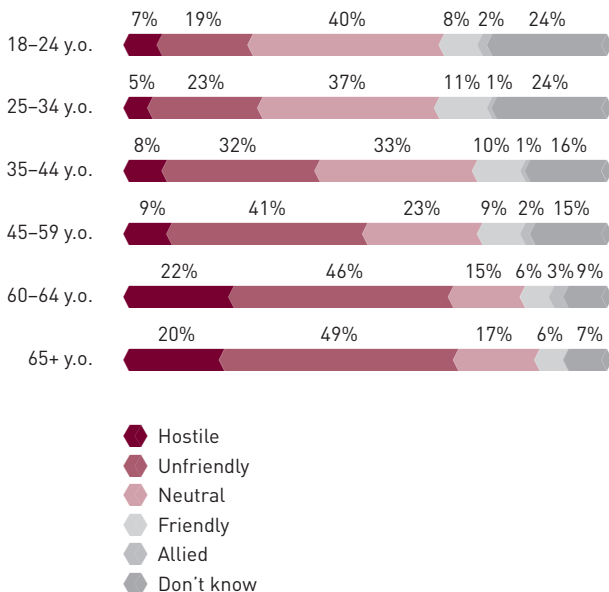
Age is an important factor: younger Russians are much more likely than older Russians to

view relations between our countries as neutral or friendly, and likewise much less likely to view them as unfriendly. Thus in the youngest group (aged 18-24) 26% of respondents see relations between Russia and Poland as hostile/unfriendly, while 69% of Russians aged 65 or older do so.

**Figure 6. Perception of relations between Russia and Poland**



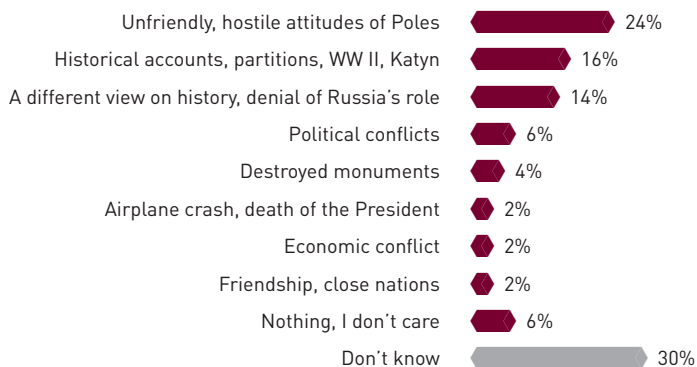
**Figure 7. Assessment of Russia-Poland relations**  
Answers by age



When thinking about problems in Russian-Polish relations, the Russian respondents most commonly mention historical issues and various painful episodes (including the Katyn massacres) as part of their different view of history and its interpretation.

One in five respondents talks unprompted about Poles' unfriendly or hostile attitudes. 4% of Russians recall the demolition of monuments to Soviet soldiers by the Polish side.

**Figure 8. Unprompted examples of problems in Russian-Polish relations**

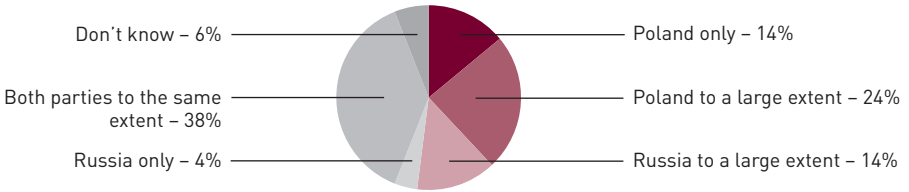


Russians are equally likely to blame the Polish side or both sides for today's not-so-good relations between Russia and Poland. Only 18% blame the Russian side only.

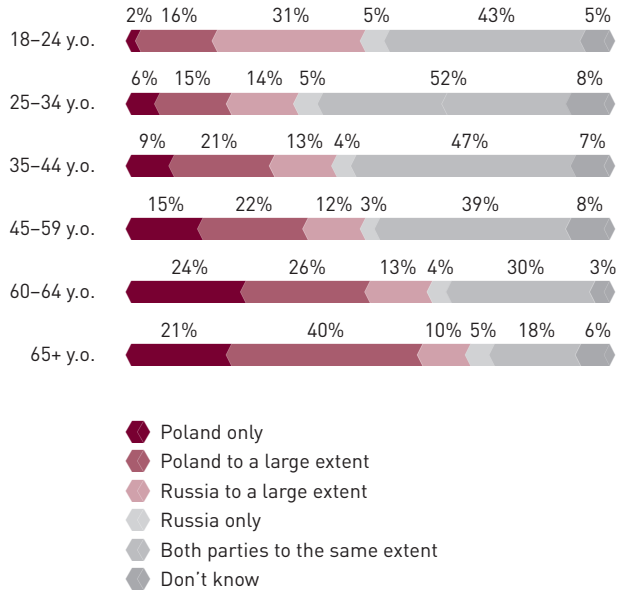
between the two countries. The youngest people (aged 18–24) are more likely to blame Russia (35%) rather than Poland (17%); the oldest respondents (aged 65+) are much more likely to blame Poland (61%) than their country (15%).

Again, there are age differences in opinions on responsibility for the current state of relations

**Figure 9. Which side is responsible for the current state of relations between Russia and Poland?**



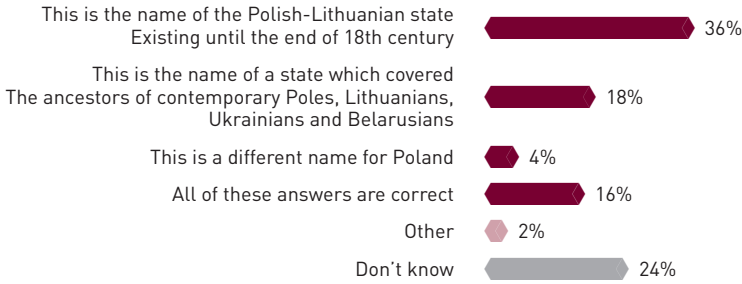
**Figure 10. Party responsible for the current state of Russia-Poland relations**  
*Answers by age*



The name 'Commonwealth' (Note: in Polish *Rzeczpospolita*; in Russian *Rech Pospolitaya*) has historical connotations for Russian respondents.

20% of the respondents recognise this name as another way to describe Poland.

**Figure 11. Meaning of the name 'Rzeczpospolita' (Commonwealth)**



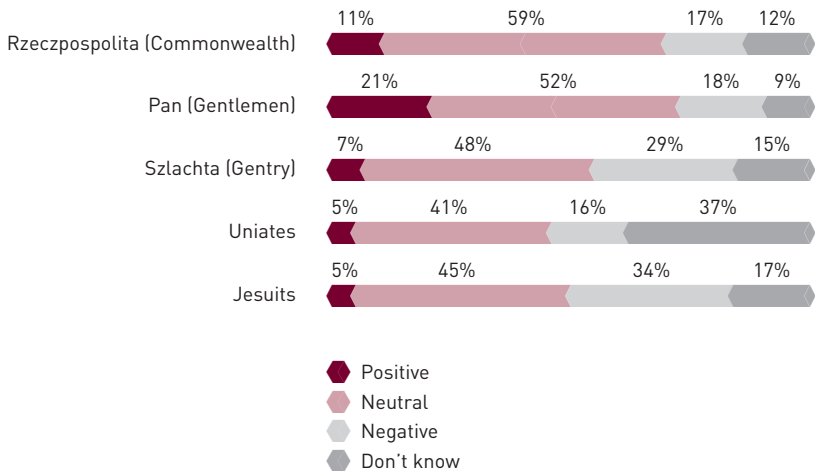
A majority of respondents (59%) have a neutral view of the word 'Commonwealth' while 17% have a negative attitude.

*szlachta* (Polish gentry - 29%). The word Pan (Polish for gentleman) evokes a negative attitude among 18% and a positive attitude among 21% of Russian respondents.

Russian respondents tend to have a negative attitude towards certain ideas or expressions in Russian culture of the 19th and 20th century connected with Poland and the former *Rzeczpospolita*, such as 'Jesuits' (34%) and

Older Russians are much more likely than younger Russians to have a negative attitude towards words such as *Rzeczpospolita*, 'Jesuits' and *szlachta*.

**Figure 12. Russians' attitude towards certain historical expressions**

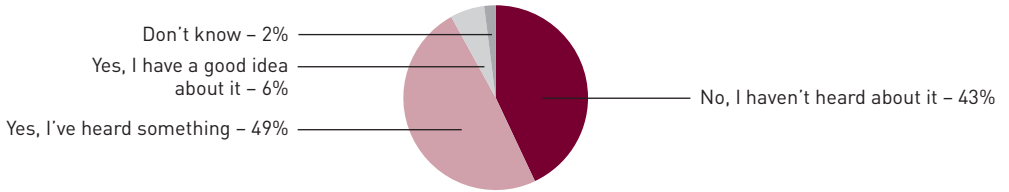




Slightly more than half of Russians (55%) have heard about the partitions of Poland, but only 6% of respondents claim extensive knowledge. 43% of respondents have not heard anything about the partitions of Poland.

Awareness of the partitions of Poland is more likely among respondents with tertiary education. Knowledge of this subject is not common among people aged 25–34, but younger people aged up to 24 do know about this topic: it may still be fresh in their minds from school.

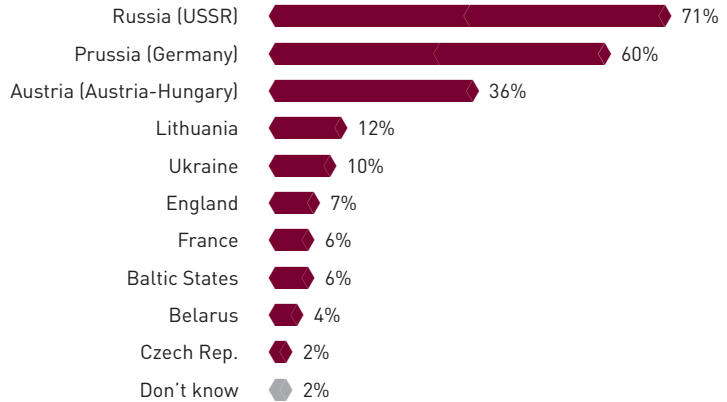
**Figure 13. Have Russians heard of the partitions of Commonwealth/Poland?**



Respondents who have heard about the partitions of Poland usually identify the countries which took part. 71% of respondents speak of Russia's role.

Some respondents mention countries such as England or France (7% and 6% respectively) among the partitioning powers.

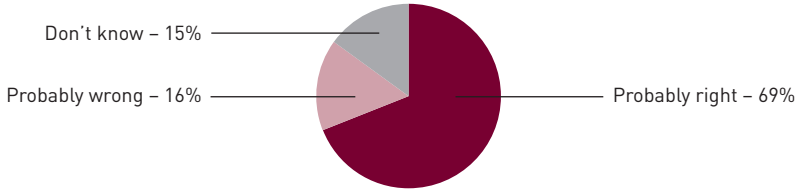
**Figure 14. Which countries were involved in the partitions of Commonwealth/Poland?**



A strong majority of Russians (69%) believe that the annexation of the territory of today's Lithuania, Belarus, part of Ukraine and Latvia to the Russian Empire was the right decision. 16%

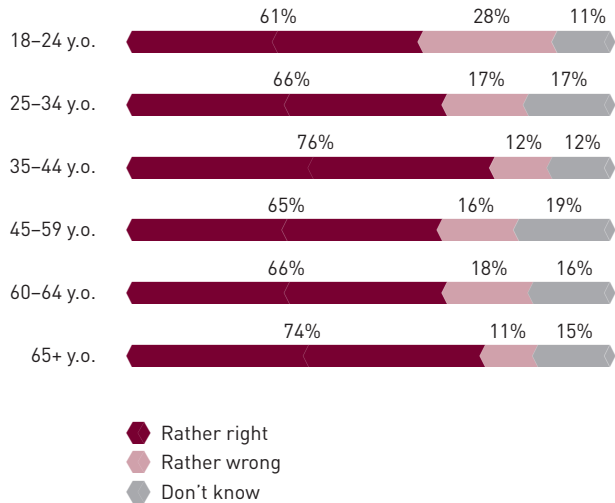
of the respondents believe that this decision was wrong. The youngest Russians are more likely than other respondents to view this decision negatively.

**Figure 15. Do Russians believe that annexation of the territory of contemporary Lithuania, Belarus, parts of Ukraine and Latvia to the Russian Empire was right?**



**Figure 16. Do Russians believe that annexation of the territory of contemporary Lithuania, Belarus, parts of Ukraine and Latvia to the Russian Empire was right?**

*Answers by age*



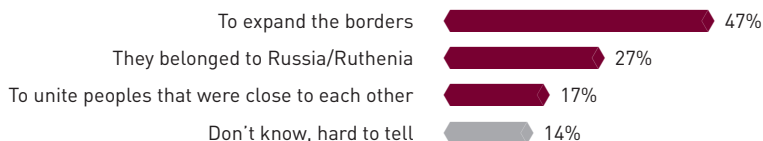
Russians most frequently justify the decision to annex neighbouring countries in terms of imperial motives such as 'to expand our borders'. Unprompted reasons include the following: 'the more land, the better' or 'a stronger country can do more'.

27% of those surveyed share the view that these territories had belonged to Ruthenia as identified with Russia, so annexing them was a logical consequence. 17% of respondents see in this decision the desire to unite naturally related nations.

**Figure 17. Why was that a wrong decision?**



**Figure 18. Why was that a right decision?**



On the chart below we can see results of an in-depth analysis of unprompted answers, that

reveals presumed motivations of the respondents, who endorsed the Commonwealth's partitions.

**Figure 19. The respondents who believe that the partition of the Commonwealth and the annexation of its Eastern part was quite right explained their answers by referring to:**



A non-trivial minority of the Russians (16%) do not think that the decision to annex the neighbouring lands was right: they emphasise that taking these distinctive states by force led to unnecessary conflicts.

The survey asked a question intended to measure support for the view commonly held in Poland and Ukraine about the reasons for the 1920 war between Poland and the People's Republic of Ukraine on one side and Russia and Bolshevik Ukraine on the other.

This view is not shared by many Russian citizens. 52% of Russians believe that the term 'liberation of Kiev/Kyiv' to describe the 1920 occupation of Kiev/Kyiv by the Polish Army and the Ukrainian army is incorrect, either because Kiev was a Russian town at the time or because the Soviet authorities were simply 'theirs' and closer.

One in three respondents believes that this issue cannot be unambiguously assessed: every nation can look at history in its own way.

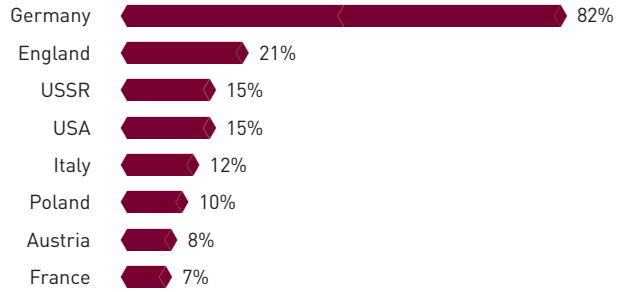
**Figure 20. Do Russians believe that the term 'liberation of Kiev/Kyiv' referring to the 1920 occupation of Kiev/Kyiv by the Polish Army and the army of the People's Republic of Ukraine is correct?**



Answers to another question on responsibility for starting World War II suggest that Russian propaganda of recent years is working. Obviously, strong majority [82%] see Germany as

responsible for the war, but 10% of the respondents blame Poland. Russian respondents also blame other countries such as England, the USA or France.

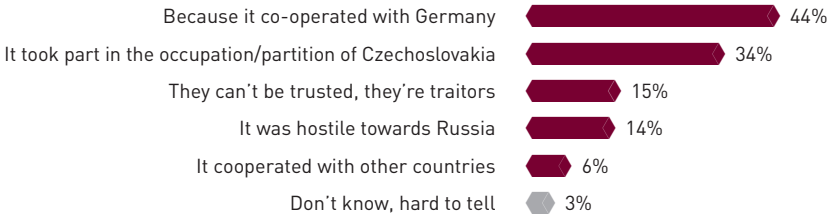
**Figure 21. Which countries are responsible for the outbreak of World War II?**



Those Russians who see Poland as responsible for starting World War II focus on Poland's alleged cooperation with Germany in the 1930s and the incorporation of the Czech part of

Cieszyn Silesia, following the Munich agreement, which is presented in Russia as Polish-German division of Czechoslovakia.

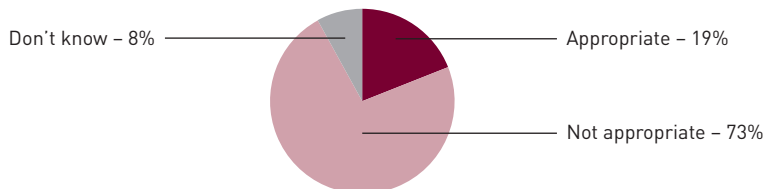
**Figure 22. Why is Poland responsible for the outbreak of World War II?**



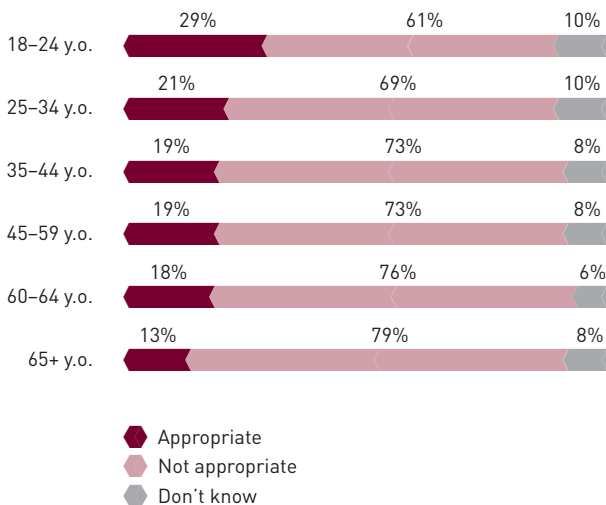
A large majority of Russians consider it wrong to describe as aggression the Red Army's entry into Poland in September 1939. The term aggression is more likely to be seen as appropriate

among the youngest respondents, although here too a large majority (61%) do not see it as aggression.

**Figure 23. Russians consider it appropriate to describe as aggression the Red Army's entry into Poland in September 1939?**



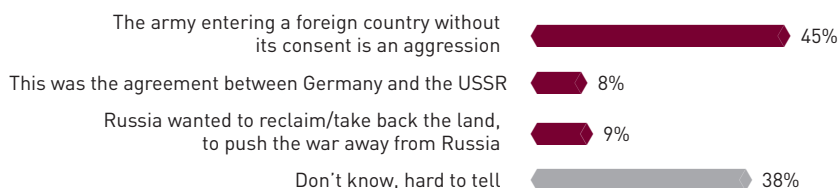
**Figure 24. Do the Russians consider it appropriate to talk about aggression in the context of the Red Army's entry into Poland in September 1939?**  
*Answers by age*



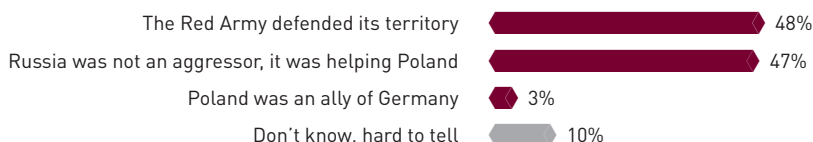
Russians don't term the Red Army's entry into Poland's territory in 1939 as aggression either because they think this action was intended to help Poland which was occupied by the

Germans, or because they see it as a consequence of war and the wish to push the war front away from their own borders.

**Figure 25. Why is aggression an appropriate term?**



**Figure 26. Why is aggression not an appropriate term?**



An in-depth analysis of unprompted answers reveals the presumed motivations of the

respondents rejecting the view that the Soviet Union committed the aggression against Poland.

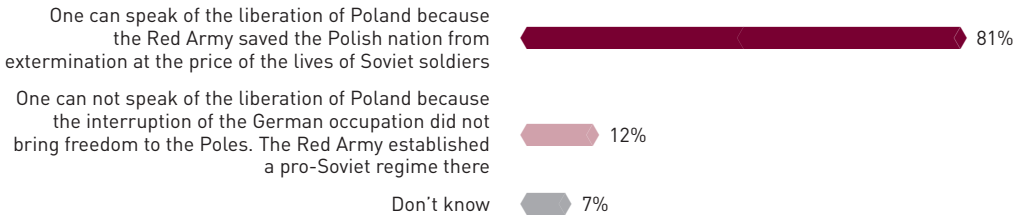
**Figure 27. When asked why the Red Army's entry into Poland's territory on 17 September 1939 was not an aggression respondents explain their view as follows:**



An overwhelming majority of Russians (81%) believe that the Red Army liberated Poland in 1945, saving it from destruction at the cost of Soviet soldiers' lives. Only 12% of respondents

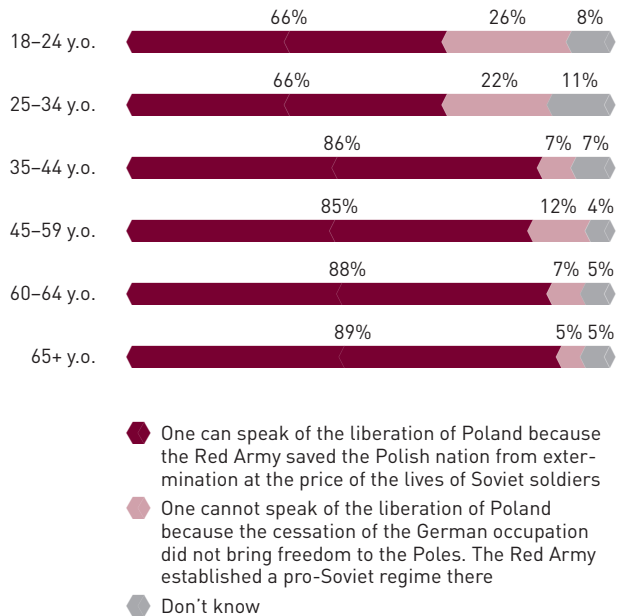
believe that the Soviet Army then established a pro-Soviet regime in Poland. The latter view is relatively more likely among younger Russians.

**Figure 28. Can we say that the Red Army liberated Poland in 1945?**



**Figure 29. Can we say that the Red Army liberated Poland in 1945?**

*Answers by age*

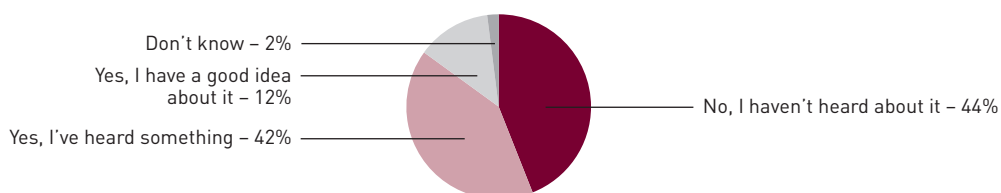




Slightly more than half of Russians (54%) have heard of the Katyn massacre. Only 12% believe they know the issue well.

Men are more likely than women to have heard about Katyn. Knowledge of this subject is lowest among least educated respondents and the youngest Russians.

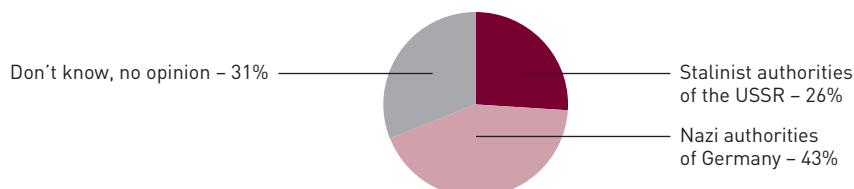
**Figure 30. Have the Russians heard of the Katyn massacre?**



Even if some Russians have heard about the Katyn massacre, they may not have learned the truth. The majority of those who say they know about Katyn believe that the Nazis organised

the killing of Polish officers. Only one in four Russians with some knowledge of the subject is convinced that Stalin's regime was responsible.

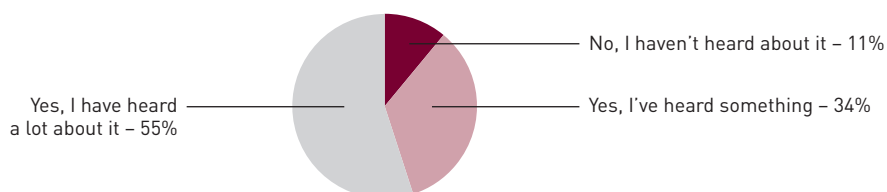
**Figure 31. According to Russians, who organised the killing of Polish officers in Katyn?**



The Russian media widely report on monuments to Soviet soldiers being taken down in Poland. Nearly all Russians have heard about it. 55% of

the respondents say that they have had a lot of such news. Only 11% have not heard anything about it.

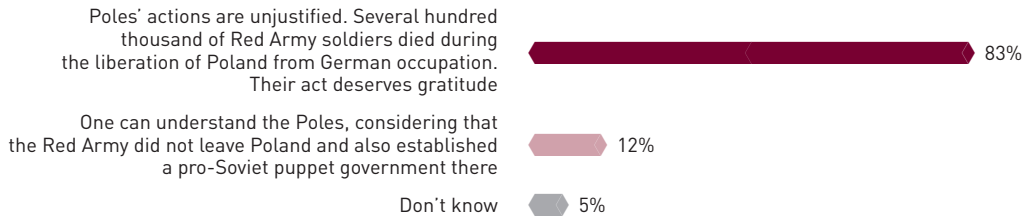
**Figure 32. Have Russians heard about the removal of monuments to Red Army soldiers in Poland?**



Considering how most Russians see the presence of the Red Army in Poland in 1945 and the wider role of the Red Army in Poland, Russians can be expected to have a negative attitude towards removal of Soviet monuments

in Poland. Only 12% of those surveyed see justification in the Polish position, namely that the Red Army did not leave Poland and established a pro-Soviet puppet government.

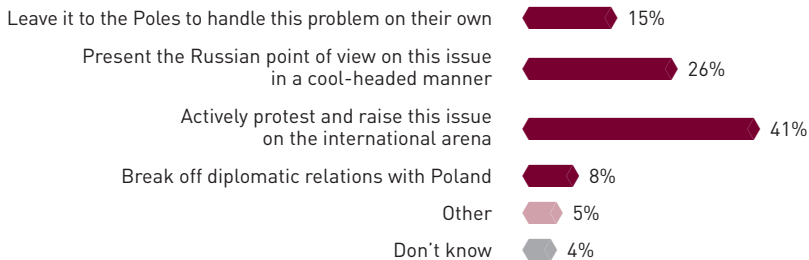
**Figure 33. What is the attitude of the Russians towards the removal of Soviet monuments in Poland?**



The majority of Russians believe that the removal of Soviet monuments in Poland requires a strong response, such as active international protests. 8% support breaking off diplomatic relations with Poland.

One in four respondents believes that Russia should respond to these Polish actions by calmly presenting its own point of view. 15% (mainly the youngest Russians) think that Poles should handle this issue on their own.

**Figure 34. How should Russia respond to the removal of Soviet monuments in Poland?**

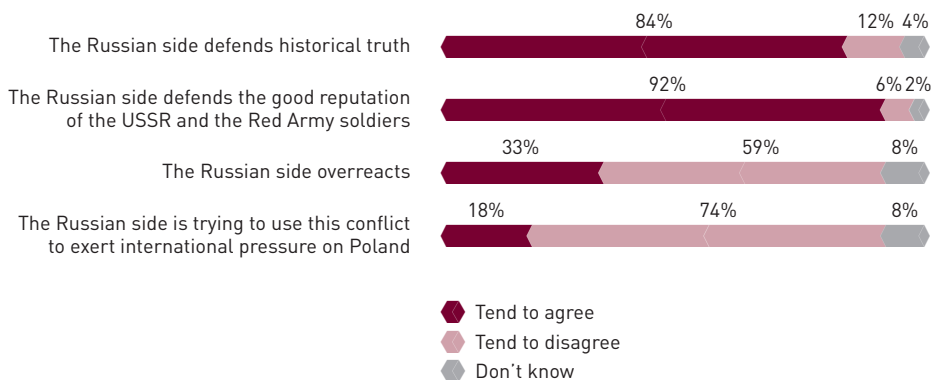


Nearly all Russians (92%) think that the Russian side is defending the good name of the USSR and Red Army soldiers and blame Poland for attacking the Red Army and falsifying history.

One third of respondents believe that Russia's reactions are too emotional. 18% believe that Russia is using these issues to exert pressure on Poland on the international arena.

**Figure 35. Why does the Kremlin blame Poland for falsifying history?**

*Russians' answers*



## Summary

This survey aimed to explore Russian public opinion on past and present relations with Poland and it produced interesting findings.

Above all the survey shows the high effectiveness in Russia of the creation and promotion of a particular interpretation of history used both for domestic and for international purposes, including pressure on Poland.

This conclusion seems to be particularly justified if we look at findings on the responsibility for starting World War II: 10% of Russians follow the Kremlin leadership in saying that in acting with Germany Poland shared responsibility.

Opinions about the liberating role of the Red Army in Poland are firm among Russians. Only a small proportion of Russian respondents (some 10%) agree that the wartime and post-war actions of the Soviet Union were aggressive and oppressive towards Poland.

Most Russians are unaware of the truth about the crime against Polish officers in Katyn. Even

those who have heard about Katyn tend to repeat the belief that the Nazis orchestrated the massacre.

On the other hand, negative stereotypes about the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) prevailing in Russian culture in the 19th century no longer play a significant role. A minority of Russians see such negative connotations.

One clear finding of this survey is that there are intergenerational differences in opinions and views on history and on current politics. The youngest Russians diverge from older Russians in blaming the Russian side for the current poor state of Russian-Polish relations.

This is broadly consistent with the findings from Polish public opinion surveys, which also show differences between the views held by younger and older respondents. Young people in both countries present an attitude which in a spirit of mutual goodwill may facilitate dialogue and understanding between Poles and Russians.

## Notes

## Notes



What do Russians think about Poland and the long history of relations between the two nations? How do Russians assess responsibility for the start of World War Two, the Katyn massacre of 22 thousand Polish POWs by the Soviet authorities, and the recent removal of some Soviet monuments in Poland?

The Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding tasked the Levada Center, an independent Russian social research organisation, to carry out a survey of Russian public

opinion survey in June 2020 on these and other important historical issues.

Their findings reveal a lot about today's Russians' knowledge, stereotypes and sensitivities concerning their country's history of relations with Poland and thereby Russia's wider foreign policy. Some attitudes reflect a familiar 'imperial' tradition of Russia's view of itself in the world, but there are also notable differences in how older and younger Russians now see things.



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