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THE "RYSSKRÄCK" PHENOMENON IN SWEDEN: FROM PERESTROIKA TILL ITS CURRENT STATE

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ABSTRACT

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The author examines a specific phenomenon in Russian-Swedish relations - *rysskräck* (Russo-fear), and the form in which it exists nowadays due to the changes it has undergone over the past 40 years. This is an important analysis due to it draws a conclusion about the current state of *rysskräck* based on contemporary ideas of the inhabitants of Sweden about Russia and Russians. The main methodological basis for such conclusions was a multi-method approach, which includes a survey, quantitative and qualitative content analysis, and discourse analysis. The use of the concepts of social constructivism and historical institutionalism helped to shape the present context of Russo-Swedish relations that we study by empirical means. According to the results of the survey, the author concludes that the *rysskräck* phenomenon is split into "fear of the state" (Russia) and fear of the people (Russians), where the former plays the greatest role, and the latter has practically ceased to exist. The results obtained make it possible to clarify ideas about the current problems of Russian-Swedish relations, create a contextual basis for developing directions for their improvement.

Keywords: *rysskräck*, russo-fear, Russian-Swedish relations, the image of Russia and Russians in Sweden, Sweden, Russia, Russophobia, external shocks.

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I was also particularly inspired by K. Lidqvist, whose thesis I found during my bachelor's study. It was her conclusions about the image of Russia in Sweden that prompted me to study a narrower topic - the phenomenon of *rysskräck*.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research background: understanding rysskräck

In this paragraph, it is necessary to refer to the subject of the thesis, namely, the *rysskräck* itself. The term raises a translation question: in Russian publications one can observe a tendency to replace the word “rysskräck” with Russophobia; for example, the article “Den Nya Rysskräcken” by the Swedish *Aftonbladet* for the Russian-language Internet portal *INOSMI* was translated as “New Russophobia” (*Новая русофобия*, 2016). There are many reasons for that, beginning the fact that the word *rysskräck* in Russian, just like in English, does not really have an exact translation (except for explanatory translation in the form of “fear of Russians”), and ending with the fact that *rysskräck* and Russophobia are related concepts. First of all, we shall analyze their correlation.

According to the Swedish Academic Dictionary (*Svenska Akademiens ordlista*), the main dictionary published by the Swedish Academy, *rysskräck* is defined as “fear of Russia or Russians” (“Rysskräck,” 1907). It is also noted that the first written mention of this word was recorded in 1907 in a series of books called “Norrländska” (Småskrifter, utgifna af Norrländska Studenters Folkbildningsförening). At the same time, this dictionary separately highlights the word “Russophobia” (ryssofobi), which appeared on the pages of a written source in 1904 (“Ryssofobi,” 1904). Russophobia, according to this dictionary, is a strong fear and disgust for everything that is Russian. Date plays an important role, since both words were spread in writing at the same time, which really allows us to consider them as synonymous. However, it is important to note that “fear” in the description of Russian fear is *skräck*, while there is another word to define Russophobia - *fruktan*. Based on the semantic difference, we can conclude that *skräck* is something short-term, point-like, while *fruktan* has a longer lasting effect. Thus, Russophobia includes fear and hatred, therefore it is a broader concept, and the concept of *rysskräck* is concentrated only on fear, which means that it can be conditionally defined as a special case of Russophobia. In this thesis, the term “rysskräck” in the original spelling and its direct translation “Russo-fear” are considered to be synonymous.

This conclusion is also confirmed by M. Kott (2015) from Uppsala University, a researcher of the Baltic region. However, he also mentions that “rysskräck” began to be called a special type of Russophobia only in Russia, while in fact it is, rather, not a phobia, but “psychological

anxiety" about the Russian invasion of the "Swedish heartland", under which, apparently, the author means the Baltic region rather than just Sweden.

The nature of this fear from a political point of view is an essential issue to discuss. We believe that there is no reason to deny the fact that Russo-fear is primarily a political fear. For example, in the article "Political fear as a factor of modern politics" Professor of St. Petersburg State University I. Radikov writes: the feeling of fear of Russia on the part of Western countries does not just persist - it is growing (Radikov, 2017, 48). He also considers Russophobia to be a political fear; thus, as we equal Ryssophobia and *rysskräck*, we may conclude that the latter is a political fear, too.

In general, when discussing the topic of fear in political science and international relations, it is worth mentioning the book by an American political scientist K. Robin "Fear. History of a Political Idea" (2006). The author discusses the topic of political fear in the United States, but presents a complex theoretical picture describing the nature of fear. So, by political fear, Robin understands the people's worrying on the possibility of certain damage to their collective well-being. If the source of fear is from the outside, the political elites retain the initiative and derive even more benefit from this fear (Robin, 2006, 128). However, in our opinion, the author's other ideas do not fit our case: Robin discusses how cultivating a feeling of fear legitimizes the power and the right to violence of the elites, which, of course, is not Sweden's case.

A more relevant example of describing political fear can be considered in a book edited by H. Ramadan "Manufacturing Phobias" (2016), where the authors investigate this problem mainly on the example of the Middle East. Nevertheless, one can find some interesting conclusions, correlated with the example of Sweden, too. A. Mirfakhraie notes that the fear of the "other" is based on the creation of the image of the "other" as someone unjust, in a dependent, subordinate (to the state) position. At the same time, the category "we" is built on the categories of freedom, justice, independence (Mirfakhraie, 2016, 73). Later this conclusion will be useful to us for choosing the *rysskräck* criteria. And in the afterword, the editors of the book summarize: where there is no personal touch, and common values do not exist, phobias spread through the media, political platforms and forums become the main instrument of identity. This is an interesting conclusion - in relation to Sweden, this would mean that there is a direct connection between, for example, the frequency of contacts with residents of Russia and the level of Russian fear of this person. This idea will be confirmed later when analyzing the survey data.

Thus, *rysskräck* is a Swedish phenomenon characterized by fear of Russia and the Russians (a simultaneous vector towards both the state and the people is important for further conclusions). We refer to this kind of fear as political fear. Despite the seeming closeness of the concepts, we deliberately separate this term from the term "Russophobia", since we believe that it would be wrong to equate political fear with hatred.

1.2. Rysskräck: outdated and ongoing

Now it is time to move on to the *rysskräck* phenomenon itself. As already mentioned, in the most classical sense, *rysskräck* is fear of Russia or the Russians, and the term itself came into use in writing at the beginning of the 20th century. Here we see a distinction between fear of the Russians (of the people) and Russia (of the state). This is a really important point, and the evolution of views on Russia and Russians as a single organism and as separately existing actors could become another topic for a master's thesis. However, we will try to collect a small historical essay on Russian fear, paying attention to how different or, on the contrary, similar was the feeling of fear in relation to both Russians and Russia.

In order to dive into this story a little, let us turn to the analytical review of M. Ericsson "Historical outline of the research of racism and xenophobia in Sweden" (Ericsson, 2016). The author studies the roots of the negative attitude of Swedes towards different groups - religious, national, ideological, and so on. Speaking of Russia, Ericsson writes:

"In Sweden, for example, there is a long tradition of hostile perceptions of 'Russians' (ryssar), where Russia as a state and nation is portrayed as a security threat and an inherited enemy to Sweden. Russians are considered a cruel, undisciplined, rude, "Asian" people" (Ericsson, 2016, 132)

This opinion, according to the author, was recorded in Swedish diplomatic reports and reports on security policy at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries; also, such images could be found in silent films and on propaganda posters. The latter deserves special attention: historically, Swedish political parties, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, used a large number of intimidating symbols for their campaign materials. For example, the communist threat on posters is depicted as a red serpent (1928, *Allmänna valmansförbundet*), which euthanized the voter, or an octopus (1936, *Högerpartiet*), which is gradually entangling the

whole of Scandinavia with tentacles (Svenska Dagbladet, 2014). In this regard, Nicholas Håkansson, Associate Professor at the Department of Journalism at the University of Gothenburg, in an interview to *Svenska Dagbladet*, says the following: the octopus has been a symbol of evil for Sweden since the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, they began to associate it with communism and Soviet Russia. Such a propaganda poster should arouse a feeling of fear among the voters - if they make the wrong choice, then the communists will come to power, and the Soviets will follow them (Svenska Dagbladet, 2014).

An equally terrifying picture is offered by a poster of 1928, which says: "Whoever votes for the Labor Party votes for Moscow". It depicts another symbol associated with the image of Russia - a Cossack. Interestingly, the 1928 elections went down in Swedish history as the "Cossack elections", "*kosackvalet*" (Håkansson et al., 2014, 86). According to Swedish researchers of the time, the prehistory is that the *Social Democrats* united with the *Swedish Communist Party* and went to the polls under the general name "*Labor Party*". The rightists did not miss the chance to "beat" this cooperation for their own purposes, combining Russo-fear and anti-communism for their agitation, accusing the *Social Democrats* of being auxiliaries of the Soviet Union. Some posters of those years depict Russian Cossacks, and slogans urge voters to put the welfare of the nation above the class struggle (Jonsson, 2015, 8). Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, *rysskräck* entered the public space of Sweden as a part of political campaign.

This conclusion is supplemented in the book by O. Chernysheva "Swedes and Russians: the image of a neighbor". She writes that by the beginning of the 20th century, when Sweden experienced another peak of hostility towards Russians, there was already a tradition of a negative view of Russia and Russians as an inherited enemy (Chernysheva, 2016, 111). And, for example, a famous historian A. Kan notes that *rysskräck* is "the cultural alienation that has been implanted in entire generations of Swedes, which remains in their relations with Russians" (Kan, 1999, 19).

During the Cold War, as well as during the First and Second World Wars, neutral and officially non-aligned Sweden became, according to M. Kott (2015), the center of espionage and the search for geopolitical contacts between two hostile blocs. The Swedish leadership wanted to maintain neutrality, or at least prevent a Soviet invasion (when planning military exercises in Sweden, it was always assumed that there was an unnamed "enemy from the east"). Kott believes that after Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership hardly seriously considered the transformation of Sweden into a satellite state; rather, Sweden was to

become a strategically important territory in the event of a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact (2015, p.2).

During the Cold War, the threat of an invasion from the east was triggered by numerous episodes of Soviet submarines appearing in Swedish waters, most notably in 1981 near Karlskrona (Hoyer, 2018, p. 145). And during the last decade of the Cold War, when fears of a nuclear war between East and West peaked in Sweden, the number of such alleged incidents rose sharply, leading to a significant build-up of military defenses (Kott, 2015, p.3). However, in the late 1990s and early 1980s, the level of anxiety began to subside.

Of course, in this paper it is impossible to dive too deep into the history of Russo-fear of the first two thirds of the 20th century, since the focus of the study is aimed at the "Gorbachev" period and beyond. Nevertheless, it is important to understand how the relations between the USSR and Sweden looked like in the 1980s before the studied period and what place *rysskräck* took in these relations. Thus, in an article on Russian-Swedish relations, N. Andren (1986, p. 438) cites data from a social survey among Swedes. He writes that the changes in the international arena were reflected in the attitude of the Swedes to the outside world. In this context, we are mainly concerned with the perception of the USSR. So, in 1973, 75% of Swedes considered the USSR as a friendly state. Gradually, he suggests, especially after the Polish crisis in 1980 and the abundance of reports of incidents with submarines, this percentage began to change rapidly. In 1982, 32% of those respondents saw the USSR as a constant threat to world peace; 30% believed that the Soviet Union was inclined to act violently. By 1983, 80% of the Swedes had a negative attitude towards the USSR: 37% considered it to be a direct threat to Sweden, and 43% - an unfriendly state, although not carrying a direct threat. However, referring to the mid-1980s, N. Andren writes: modern (at that time) official Russian-Swedish relations are distinguished by the fact that both states are striving to normalize cooperation in the near future. Thus, despite serious difficulties in the relatively recent past, the *rysskräck* phenomenon in Sweden in the 1980s gradually fell into oblivion.

Also some particular interest may be raised with the study by O. Rondström (2008, p. 121) about the image of Russia in Sweden, which has been shaping for many decades. Studying this problem, the author comes to the following conclusions:

- Many expressions, catch phrases or terms that contain the category "Russian" have a clear "negative charge";
- This tradition has been going on since at least the 16th – 17th centuries;

- Negative overtones in such expressions in relation to Russians still take place throughout Sweden.

However, the author notes that in modern Sweden (as well as in Finland) there are no specific negative descriptions of Russians. According to the Swedes, Russians, he writes, live close enough to have an idea of their existence, but at the same time far enough away - so, few can boast of a friend from Russia, and this, in turn, creates the basis for its demonization and creating an image of the "other" (Ronström, 2008, p. 141). Rondström also makes an important remark: the definition of "us" (Swedes) and "them" (Russians) depends on a specific historical period, and stereotypes about Russians might not coincide at all with reality, because often such prejudices did not concern the inhabitants of Russia, but a certain set of negative characteristics that the Swedes would not like to have. For example, the author recalls the existence of the saying "*Are you Russian or what?*" in Gotland.

Of course, *rysskräck* cannot be viewed in isolation from the image of Russia in Sweden. This topic was the subject of my bachelors' thesis ("The Image of Russia in the Modern Swedish Media"). As the name implies, the main tool for identifying the image was the content analysis of the Swedish media, or rather two newspapers - *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* - for the five-year period 2014–2019. The analysis became possible thanks to the use of categories - keywords with the help of which the articles were sorted. The categories were such words as "Russia" (to highlight the total number of articles where Russia appears), "Russia" and "political" (without a case form for finding articles on political topics) and "rysskräck", the results of the analysis of which will complement the historical part of this work. Brief conclusions can be found in an essay published in the scientific electronic journal *Вестник ученых-международников* (Pimenova, 2020). The general conclusion about the image of Russia (as a state, as an actor of international relations) in the Swedish media is as follows: Russia opposes itself to the "Western" world, it is the cause of an unsafe and unstable situation not only in Sweden itself, but also in the Baltic region, in the EU in the whole. Russia is an "aggressive eastern neighbor" which has been the subject of political debate over NATO membership for several years. Thus, speaking in simplified polar terms, her image can be described rather as negative, or neutral-negative. Here, of course, it is important to remember that the chronological framework of media content analysis touched on a very painful issue - the topic of Crimea and the events associated with it, which strongly "shaded" the image of Russia for the worse.

Professor of political science at Malmö University B. Petersson also believes that the image of Russia in the media corresponds to the image that has developed in the head of the average Swede (Kyrk, 2011, p. 15). Partly, this paper will confirm or refute this thesis: a survey of Swedish residents will show how different their own perception of Russia differs from what is broadcast in the media.

1.3. Research Purpose and Questions

The master's thesis aims at *analysing how «rysskräck» phenomenon in Sweden has changed from the mid-1980s to the present*. This study has a great importance especially in the modern world: in an era when the international situation is tense to the limit, and the gap between Russia and Europe, of which Sweden is a part, seems to be getting bigger, it is important to understand and give an objective assessment of the moods prevail in the country. So, for many decades in Sweden there was a phenomenon called Russo-fear. It wouldn't be a truthful thing to suggest that *rysskräck* is always at a high level; on the contrary, this phenomenon is rather quiet during peacetime, but it is gaining wide scope with increasing international tension.

This study will raise these related research questions:

- **What form does the rysskräck phenomenon assume nowadays after the list of events within the 40-year period?**
- **What definition would be the most relevant to a modern form of the rysskräck phenomenon?**

I hope that the research findings that answer these questions will shed light on one of the important consequences of Russian-Swedish relations.

1.4. Thesis structure

The paper has the following structure. In the first chapter, we explained the subject of the study, some important characteristics, and the history of the phenomenon. This is necessary in order to see the difference, for example, between Russophobia and *rysskräck*, or to understand why its model in the 18th century does not resemble with the second half of the 20th century. Before moving on to the historical analysis, it is necessary to create pillars, on

which this chapter will be more structured. So, in Chapter 2 we will reveal the details of the hybrid approach of the categories of social constructivism and historical institutionalism, which will form the basis for the description of the third chapter. It will be devoted to the analysis of Russian-Swedish relations from the mid-1980s to the present day; among hundreds of events that have passed during this period, we will point out the most important, bright and politically loud - so-called external shocks. The fourth chapter will be the most essential part of the thesis: it will present the results of the survey of Swedish residents in 2021. On this basis, as well as on the previous research, in the final part it will be concluded whether there is a Russo-fear at all, and if so, what definition can be given to it and what place it takes in the life of modern Sweden.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, we shall introduce the hybrid approach for the historical study that includes concepts of external shocks, critical junctures, and path dependence.

2.1. "Exogenous Shocks" as a Constructivist Idea

The phenomenon of Russo-fear cannot be detected and described without an analysis of Russian-Swedish relations of a given period. The author's aim is to trace how the attitude towards Russia and the Russians was transformed after the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the Russian Federation within its new borders, and, therefore, is it possible to speak of some *rysskräck* waves of nowadays.

Since *rysskräck* appears as *reaction*, it is easy to assume that, in theory, there must be some kind of impulse, event (s) that arouses fear on the Swedish society. Thus, the description of Russian-Swedish relations, even within clearly defined boundaries, requires a special approach, a search for "points of support", which will be inextricably linked with the phenomenon of Russo-fear. In this paper, the definition of these points became possible with the help of a "hybrid" approach: the author offers to look at the history of relations between Russia and Sweden, synthesizing the categories of social constructivism and historical institutionalism. We will trace their relationship further.

The theory of social constructivism is multifaceted, it includes a wide range of terms, concepts and approaches. One of these is the concept of "external shocks" (exogenous shocks), which, from our point of view, is most successfully integrated into K. Lidqvist's thesis (2016) on the "cold neighborhood" of Russia and Sweden. In many ways, when describing Russian-Swedish relations through the prism of social constructivism, we will focus on this paper - there the author focuses on how Sweden's attitude towards Russia has changed after the collapse of the USSR. So, the concept of "external shocks", she writes, was borrowed from T. Berger's article "Norms, Identity and National Security of Japan and Germany" (1996). Berger writes that in order to understand the behavior of the state, one must take into account the cultural and institutional context in which polity arises. Berger explores this idea with the specific examples of Germany and Japan to explain why these states have embarked on an anti-militarism course. So, in this thesis, the author introduces the concept of "external shocks". Of course, the subject of Berger's study (Germany and

Japan) and our subject of study (Russo-fear) are different, but the idea of looking at the culture of attitudes towards Russia and the Russians that has developed in Sweden over the past 40 years, within the framework of certain events, seems fresh and interesting.

The biggest disadvantage of the studied concept is that neither historians nor researchers of international relations provide a complete description of it, any definition or key characteristics. "External shocks", as a rule, are mentioned in passing, as something understandable for all. It is obvious that this concept has passed into the science of international relations from economics. For a given industry, the definition would be the following:

Exogenous shocks are unexpected or unpredictable events that occur outside an industry or country, but can have a dramatic effect on the performance or markets within an industry or country (UNESCWA, 2021).

In the book "Military Strategy of Small States: Responding to External Shocks of the 21st Century" (Edström et al., 2018), which deals with the impact of external shocks of the 21st century on the military doctrines of the Nordic countries, it is also possible to point out some other clarifications to this concept. The authors write that external shocks challenge existing beliefs and undermine the narratives of the past. The paper also clarifies the existence of "strategic shocks". By noting that, the authors understand events that are perceived by the political establishment of a state as unexpected, having serious consequences and requiring a response. The latter is a key difference from "external shocks": they do not necessarily spill over into any form of response or countermeasures (for example, to a change in military doctrine). Accordingly, a strategic shock is a special case of an external shock that is related to the military sphere and implies an appropriate response to these actions. For this book, by external strategic shocks the authors mean the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the annexation of Crimea and the rise of ISIS. Thus, these are events that affect traditional security issues. The authors also combine the approaches of "external shocks" and "critical junctures".

Of course, this data alone is not enough to build a whole study. So, further we will try to expand the theoretical concept, and in paragraph 2.3. we will analyze the current hybrid approach in its entirety.

2.2. “Critical Junctures” and “Path Dependence” in Historical Institutionalism

To support this concept, which, as already mentioned, does not stand out in a clearly formalized approach, the author proposes to introduce the concepts of historical institutionalism - "critical junctures" and "path dependence".

Historical institutionalism is a new approach in the social sciences, one of four new directions of institutional streams. It explains how time, sequence of events, and path dependence affect institutions and shape the social, political, and economic behavior of actors (Hall & Taylor, 1996). With this approach, it can be found out that seemingly insignificant events can lead to dramatic changes and consequences, that the story does not have a subjunctive mood if the event has already occurred, and that their results may be ineffective. Followers of historical institutionalism tend to focus on history in order to analyze the reasons why an event took place. In other words, when studying Russian-Swedish relations, one should pay special attention to the “critical junctures” that reinforced or weakened the fear of Russia or the Russians.

This approach also has a limitation. As noted by J. Capoccia and R. Kelemen (2007, 342), outside of macro-historical research, the concept of "critical junctures" was used randomly, without methodological rigor, and the scientific literature gives a poor idea of how to implement this concept in research. The authors compare the use of "critical junctures" to "bookends" or "deus ex machina", meaning that this concept appears from nowhere, being the methodological basis of research at the same.

Thus, Capoccia and Kelemen try to give "critical junctures" a clearer methodological framework, warning researchers against inappropriate use of the concept. Their conclusions, in our opinion, can be introduced into the chapter on Russian-Swedish relations. So,

critical junctures are *rare* events in the development of an institution (in this case, Sweden); since the normal state of the institution can hardly be called critical - it is either stable or adapts to insignificant limited changes.

The main feature of the concept is also the presence of *unforeseen circumstances*, and when studying the "path dependence" it is necessary to rely on data obtained both theoretically and empirically (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 369). This is exactly what will

be done in the study of the *rysskräck* phenomenon, which can be considered as a part of the “path dependence” process in Russian-Swedish relations: in addition to what the authors called the “theoretical base” (a kind of reconstruction of the political decision-making process, that is, the actions taken by the Swedish establishment in response to external challenges), the paper will use data obtained empirically (conducting a survey among residents of Sweden).

When the two approaches are synthesized, it may seem that the critical junctures *are* external shocks. For example, J. Westberg (2016, p. 439) speculating on the Swedish position in the international arena, equates these two concepts (“... *så kallade kritiska brytpunkter eller externa chocker*”). However, we believe that their meanings are slightly different: critical junctures are the result of external shocks, or, more precisely, critical points are a special case of external shocks, rare and unforeseen events, that accumulate slowly and as a consequence become the reason of “path dependence”, which means that the future of Russian-Swedish relations will be influenced by the path traveled by states in the past. It is important to note that path dependence wouldn’t be a result of a single event; it rather appears as accumulation effect after a number of external shocks. After analyzing this conclusion a little, we sum up: not every external shock becomes a critical juncture in relation to Russia and the Russians. Looking ahead, we should say that, for example, the first Chechen war could not seriously raise the level of *rysskräck*; firstly, this event can hardly be called unexpected (Sweden perceived the conflict as a movement by inertia after the collapse of the USSR); and secondly, it ceased to be included in the category of rare events due to the second Chechen war that began soon after.

Thus, if we isolate this definition and add some author's peculiarities, then one can get a concept that fits perfectly into bilateral international relations:

External shocks or exogenous shocks are historical events that occurred outside of state A in state B (or with the participation of state B), the outcome of which (critical junctures) had an impact (both positive and negative) on the attitude of state A to state B and predetermines the further path of their development (path dependence).

2.3. Implementing into Russian-Swedish Relations

The next question that should be discussed in the study of Russian-Swedish relations is - what events from a theoretical point of view can be called “shocks”? As A. Kan wrote (1999,

p. 19), wars (or events) most often took place outside Sweden, but “in the very den of the Russian bear”. It is already known that these events should be external to Sweden, but related to Russia (that is why, for example, the migrant crisis 2015 will not be considered; it is really an external shock for Sweden, but it has nothing to do with Russia). Thus, list of external events can be endless, but not all of them fit into the category of shocks. Let us turn again to the paper on "cold neighborhood" by K. Lidqvist. The author writes: the idea lies in beliefs and values that are shared by the whole society and determine the further behavior of the state (2016, p. 51). Thus, we conclude: an event will become a shock if it affects the values of Swedish society, and this significantly narrows the scope of the study of Russian-Swedish relations. We suggest to highlight such criteria as follows: Sweden has been a member of the EU since 1995, which means that it has signed the Lisbon Treaty, one of the fundamental documents of the Union. In Chapter 2 of this treaty, we read:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail” (Publications Office of the European Union, 2007)

Sweden indeed approved this agreement in December 2008, which means that it automatically recognized the importance and steadfastness of the *European values*, or Europeanism (McCormick, 2010).

It is worth talking about it in details since the term "Europeanism" also has its own characteristics. For example, in the book by J. McCormick (2010), the author notes that the classical characteristics of this movement are difficult to dispute, all of them are listed in the Maastricht (hereinafter referred to as the Lisbon) Treaty. McCormick also recalls former Czech President Vaclav Havel, who, speaking to members of the European Parliament in 2000, formulated a "basic set of European values", including respect, rights, freedom and dignity of every person, the principle of solidarity, the rule of law and equality, the protection of minorities, democratic institutions, separation of powers, pluralism of the political system, respect for private property and entrepreneurship, market economy, assistance to civil society (ibid, p.3). However, the author writes, these values are not exclusively European; they are also shared in many different countries. Therefore, speaking of "European values", most often we mean a certain set of universal values, with the supremacy of which it is

difficult to disagree. The problem, according to J. McCornick, is within the commitment of member states to the EU - only 5% of respondents in 2010 identified themselves with Europe, while most of them called themselves either citizens of their country (Danes, Swedes, Poles), or both citizens and Europeans. So, it is difficult to talk about the common values of a united Europe, if not all of its inhabitants associate themselves with it in the first place.

As a next step, we will take a look at the current situation in Sweden: Eurobarometer studies (2018) show that since the fall of 2017, commitment to the EU has grown in 17 member states, and Sweden is in second place in terms of growth (51% in 2018, which means that now the majority of Swedish respondents feel part of the EU). Moreover, according to the level of attachment to Europe (not to the EU), the Swedes are on the second place (80%) among the rest of the European respondents (Ibid, p. 14). Thus, Sweden considers itself a part of both a greater Europe and the EU, and this gives us the right to assume that its inhabitants share the supremacy of European values, which in this work mean the ideals listed in the second chapter of the Lisbon Treaty (by that time formulated by Havel as a "basic set of European values").

To sum up, in the study of Russian-Swedish relations, the author will analyze the events, the echo of which can be found in Sweden - it will be called an "external shock". To select them, the author uses Europeanism as a criterion, pushing on which, both in a positive and negative sense, can cause a reaction and broad discussion in political circles, the media, and in public forums. Obviously, not every shock can radically change the attitude of the Swedes towards Russia and the Russians; also, not every event will cause an increase in the level of political fear in the form of *rysskräck*. Therefore, among all external shocks, the author will also focus on those rare but notable international events ("critical junctures"), the outcome of which will be an increase in the level of Russian fear in Sweden (and which will predetermine the "path dependance").

2.4. Data Collection and Methodology

As it was mentioned before, the logic of the study is as following: firstly, we create a special approach in order to examine a 40-year period in Russo-Swedish relations; secondly, we describe these relations based on the theoretical pillars made previously, and finally we

present the survey results that complement the whole idea and let us answer the research question on the rysskräck existence. This kind of research requires the usage of a various range of primary sources. Thus, it would be based on a number of Riksdag's protocols, statements made by the Swedish Foreign Ministry, as well as memoirs of Swedish diplomats and politicians, which will allow analyzing the reaction of the Swedish establishment to "external shocks" with the participation of Russia. In order to study the period 2014–2019 the list of primary sources will be supplemented with mass media data (from *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*, Swedish newspapers), since the author wrote a bachelor's thesis on the basis on a related topic (Pimenova, 2020). *Dagens Nyheter* is Sweden's largest daily morning tabloid newspaper published in Stockholm. It is considered one of the most influential media in the country. The newspaper publishes articles and comments by authors and politicians, which often become the subject of public discussion, and the geography of distribution is nationwide. The publication positions itself as an "independent liberal". *Svenska Dagbladet* is Sweden's second largest morning tabloid newspaper. It is published in both print and electronic form. The newspaper is published in Stockholm and covers national and international news as well as local coverage from all over the Stockholm region. In addition, most of the conclusions will be based on a public opinion poll conducted in Sweden in 2021 (see Appendix 2).

At each stage of writing this work, I used a different methodology. Methodological range includes quantitative and qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis (for Chapter 3) and opinion polling (for Chapter 4). Among all, content analysis examines a discourse by looking at the social and cultural contexts in which the necessary communications occur. This includes how, where, and when the discourse arises in a given social and cultural situation. (Berg & Lune, 2011, p. 191). Exactly this will be done for the historical chapter: while analyzing the history of Russo-Swedish relations from the mid-1980 till the present day, we are going to point out some pillars (that later will be called "external shocks") that a) make us look at the history contextually, not just like on a plain process, b) give a more structured shape for the research. Notably, the context may be blurred even with the usage of proper approach. This is how opinion polling supports the research: sometimes the context (in our case – existence of rysskräck throughout Russo-Swedish relations) can be seriously complemented on the individual level (Atkeson & Alvarez, 2018, p. 11). For this research, conduction a questionnaire becomes a clear way to collect the whole data on the issue discussed.

Details of data collection and analysis for the survey will be also discussed in Paragraphs 4.1., 4.2.

3. RUSSIAN-SWEDISH RELATIONS BASED ON “EXTERNAL SHOCKS” CONCEPT

3.1. Explaining Periodization: waves of rysskräck in Russian-Swedish Relations

External events that affect these values (violate or, on the contrary, support) can be called shocks. This determines the structure of the work. For convenience and compactness, I propose to analyze not all shocks (the list could be endless and debatable), but only those that can be called *rare*. Many of them coincide with the list proposed by K. Lidqvist (2016), but for this thesis it is important to look at the Russo-fear level, rather than on a particular image of Russia. Such limitation extremely shortens the number of events; however, it makes them less debatable and more generally acceptable as shocks. Thus, the focus of the analysis will be on the following episodes:

- Election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- The collapse of the USSR and the formation of the Russian Federation as an independent state
- The Chechen war(s)
- Election of V. Putin for the first presidential term
- Georgian war 2008
- Annexation of Crimea 2014
- Russian military operation in Syria
- Protest movement in Russia after the poisoning of A. Navalny.

Of course, there are a number of events, in addition to those listed, which also resonated in Sweden (for example, the murder of B. Nemtsov). The choice of such events was difficult and careful, since at first glance it seems that everything is important. It should be noted that not all events known to every Russian will be as familiar to every Swedish resident and will evoke any emotions in them (which is very important when defining “shocks”). However, if possible, the author will focus on them as well.

It should be noted that this list is devoted to “external shocks” and not “critical junctures”, which means that not every event from the list will cause any serious changes in the level of Russo-fear in Sweden.

3.2. Election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

It is believed that the final stage of the Cold War began with the election of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. The USSR maintains more friendly relations with the West and recognized that democratic values are the path to the development of fruitful cooperation. The Soviet Union recognized the sovereignty of the Eastern European states and launched troops from conflicts around the world (Gannholm, 2019, p. 30).

In the book by M. Göransson (2017) about the *ryssräck* in Sweden, we meet the following characterization of Gorbachev, belonging to I. Karlsson, the former Swedish prime minister: during his visit to the USSR in 1986, both Gorbachev and his prime minister (apparently referring to N. Ryzhkov) made a pleasant impression on him, and they even developed "spontaneously good personal relations" (Göransson, 2017, p. 244). In the same book, we find another opinion. So, the author quotes the Swedish commander Hans von Hofsten, who says that the new leader of the USSR is a "chimera": on the one hand, the program of disarmament and detente was in full swing, and on the other hand, he says, M. Gorbachev is "the first Soviet leader who understands how politics and propaganda works in the West," and the main question for Sweden now (in the 1980s) is whether Sweden will become the next Afghanistan (ibid, p. 246). Such caution, according to Göransson, was a reality of Sweden back then.

The general concern has also been fueled by the film *Förebudet*, which Göransson calls "the best film ever made by the military". It gave examples of how foreign power may plan sabotage and military actions in Sweden during the Cold War. The tape consisted of facts, interviews and war simulations, then it was distributed among employees of state institutions in the field of education, science, health, etc., that is why it reached everyone and had massive distribution (ibid, p. 251).

Thus, concludes Göransson, the society was divided: on the one hand, there were the military, experts, political opposition, military journalists, who believed that the USSR "had already captured Sweden". It was noted that the military still played a large role in the political decision-making process in the USSR, even despite Gorbachev's attempts to "push the soldiers back into the box" (Karlsson, 1988, p. 81). On the other side there was another section of the military, experts, journalists and the government itself, who were convinced that an era of security and freedom awaited them. These two sides agreed on one thing: the

USSR is in a crisis, the result of which some saw in the coming "world peace", while others - another threat due to the "violent death of the empire" (Göransson, 2017, p. 252).

"Official" Sweden positively assessed what the future of the USSR countries might look like under a new leader. A series of global political upheavals in the 1980s radically changed Sweden's view of the outside world: for example, the pursuit of a policy of detente under Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan (Kragh, 2018, p. 58). From the available Riksdag protocols, we may observe that the course pursued by the new leader of the USSR was warmly welcomed by the Swedish government; for example, in the protocol of February 5, 1986, we read:

"The government took note with interest of the proposal of Secretary General Gorbachev on a program for the elimination of nuclear weapons until 2000. We welcome the decision of the Soviet Union to extend the moratorium on nuclear testing" (*Riksdagens Protokoll 1985/86:70*, 1986).

And although negotiations with the US President on disarmament did not bring serious results, it can be stated that the Swedish establishment saw in M. Gorbachev the main initiator of world security and stability. Thus, Sweden, being committed to the idea of democratic values, officially approved his readiness to follow the path of democracy, welcomed political and economic reforms. The famous "Murmansk Initiatives" of 1987 also found resonance in the political field of Sweden, however it was said that this event deserves more attention than it was actually paid (*Riksdagens Protokoll 1987/88:16*, 1987). Thus, Riksdag noted that M. Gorbachev's speech "deserves special attention" (Westerberg, 1987), since the limitation of military actions corresponds to the calm tone of life in the Scandinavian region.

Gorbachev's image as a politician committed to the democratization of the USSR was periodically questioned - in particular, when discussing the events in Vilnius in 1991, the Riksdag quoted the words of the Estonian writer Jaan Kaplinski that the tank remains the main instrument of Soviet domestic and foreign policy (*Riksdagens Snabbprotokoll 1990/91:67*, 1991).

Thus, despite some tension that was transferred by inertia to the world arena after the long and protracted Cold War, the level of Swedish *rysskräck* during such an external shock as the election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary was at a rather low level.

It is worth noting that in this case we use the word "shock" in a positive way - and this is important, because, looking ahead, there will be very few events of the same emotional coloring in Russian-Swedish relations.

3.3. The collapse of the USSR and the formation of the Russian Federation as an independent state

It is interesting that in Sweden the disintegration of the USSR was viewed as an irreversible long process, and not as the sole mistake of M. Gorbachev. For example, the Swedish writer and historian T. Gannholm writes: "Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policies were steps in the right direction towards liberalization, but the situation in the huge country became too complicated, so Gorbachev was ready for the USSR to fall apart" (2019, p. 30).

After the collapse of the USSR, the Swedish Riksdag declared the need to help the former Soviet members in their transition to becoming democratic states, offered cooperation with new political parties as mediators. It was noted that cooperation with Russia has a great relevance on the background of the fact that a number of new democratic organizations, institutions, parties, newspapers and trade unions are emerging in it (Holmberg, 1991). The protocol notes that Sweden can and should provide economic assistance to the former USSR countries in their transition to a new form of existence, especially in conditions when an economic crisis is inevitable. The transfer of humanitarian aid to Russia, according to the conditions, was to take place under the control of its democratic forces. According to the protocol of the Swedish Riksdag, Russia, no longer burdened by communism and imperialism, creates new conditions and potential for the development of fruitful relations between Sweden and Russia (ibid).

However, one should not assume that Russia-positive perception was the only tendency of the political discourse. On the contrary, the echoes of fears that Russia would deviate from the chosen development path were an integral part of the discussions at the time. For example, Margaretha af Ugglas, Swedish Foreign Minister during the period described, stated that Russia is still a military power, and the greatest security threat to the world in the near future is a scenario in which democratic reforms will fail, and Russia will return to an authoritarian regime. In her opinion, even if Sweden in every possible way contributes to changes in the countries of the former USSR, it should be ready for such an outcome (Ugglas, 1992).

By helping Russia to embark on the path of democracy, Sweden and Europe as a whole have significantly reduced the threat to security. At the same time, it is interesting that when discussing the list of countries for providing economic assistance, not all of Russia was meant, but only the territory of St. Petersburg as a "neighbor in the Baltic" (*Riksdagens Snabbprotokoll 1990/91:67*, 1990). Thus, the relations existing at that time between Russia and Sweden can be defined as friendly, good-neighborly. Despite the fact that the history of the relationship was rather tense in the past, at that moment it meant a positive outlook on future cooperation. It becomes obvious that Russia was not viewed by Sweden as a threat; in the future, such a development of events was also not foreseen. Both states also recognized each other's sovereignty. History shows that Sweden needed a democratic Russia in order, as K. Lidqvist writes (2016, p. 34), to stabilize and secure the region, thereby reducing the risk that Russia will turn against the West and, ultimately, against Sweden itself. Thus, considering "rysskräck" as a wave-like phenomenon, we can conclude that in the first years after the formation of the Russian Federation, the level of Russian fear in Sweden showed negative dynamics: Russia, even though it was the legal successor of the USSR, was perceived in a new capacity, in which there was no places for rational or irrational fear. Let us recall that external shocks are precisely rare events, therefore the election of Yeltsin to the post of President of Russia, even though formally he was the first person to take such a post, will not be considered.

3.4. The Chechen war(s)

The next "external shock" for bilateral relations was the war in Chechen republic. Notably, two periods are distinguished in the history of this conflict - the First Chechen War (1994-1996) and the Second Chechen War (1999-2000, officially - until 2009). When Chechnya tried to withdraw from the USSR in 1991 and declare its independence, its prospects were as real as those of the former Soviet republics in the Baltic, South Caucasus and Asia. Then, in 1990, B. Yeltsin uttered his famous phrase - "Take as much sovereignty as you can absorb". On the Yeltsin Center portal, this promise is explained as follows: the question of complete state independence and secession from the USSR was not raised then, as a rule, relations with the federal center were supposed to be settled by concluding agreements with it in the future (*Борис Ельцин: "Берите Столько Суверенитета , Сколько Сможете Проглотить,"* 2015).

As A. Alexandrov notes, the leadership of the country, which found itself in a crisis after the collapse of the USSR, did not take into account the specifics of the region, considering it as an ordinary subject of the Russian Federation, and the conflict situation in it - a "local trifle" (Александров, 2011, p. 60). With the arrival of Dudayev, the ideologue of Chechen separatism, to power, lawlessness quickly spread throughout the region, robberies, raids and hostage-taking became commonplace, so the Russian government had to take action. In 1994, Moscow's military forces entered the region, which significantly aggravated the conflict (ibid, p. 61). Thus, it is obvious that the war in Chechnya is one of those conflicts in the post-Soviet space that was sharply criticized by Sweden.

Håkan Holmberg and Karl-Göran Biörsmark's 1994 motion emphasizes that Russia still does not have control over the territory of Chechnya, and the Ministry of Defense is not responsible for military actions that are already being actively pursued within this conflict. According to this motion, this doubts the democratic progress achieved by Russia earlier, and the undermined authority of Boris Yeltsin could strengthen the pro-Soviet forces in the country. The motion draws a link between the conflict that has flared up inside Russia and the general passivity of the Swedish government regarding the treatment of national minorities and the opposition in Russia. This, in the opinion of the parliamentarians, could have been avoided if the Western world and in particular Sweden had shown Russia in advance the difference between the "theory of democracy and its implementation into reality" (Holmberg & Biörsmark, 1995). Thus, the motion summarizes: Sweden is obliged to influence the Russian government, raise the issue of human rights protection and a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Chechnya through negotiations.

Historian I. Oldberg (2006, p. 7), while studying the issue of terrorism in Russia, noted that after Chechen militants began to take civilians hostage, separatism was immediately equated with terrorism and banditry - to some extent, this could become an excuse for waging a war in the eyes of Western countries.

This may serve as a signal that the level of *rysskräck* in the second half of the 1990s remained low, because, according to Riksdag, Russia posed a threat not to Sweden or one of its closest neighbors, but to its federal subject. For instance, B. Petersson, professor of political science at the University of Malmö, in an interview for the University of Gothenburg in 2011, notes that after 1991 the entire Western world romanticized the transformation of the new Russia, but the "euphoria of democracy" dissipated along with the first Chechen war. and Sweden, "learned to live with Chechnya (Kyrk, 2011, p. 15)".

At the same time, Swedish parliamentarian R. Pohanka called positive changes in the democratic field in the countries of the former USSR but added that along with this some new challenges appeared, including the Chechen conflict (Pohanka, 1994).

It seems to us that the most comprehensive conclusion was made in the paper of S. Henriksen about the image of Russia in Sweden. Describing the period of the Chechen wars, the author compares the approach of representatives of different political parties to the problem. The *Social Democrats*, who led the government throughout this period, were largely positive about the development of security policy in the region from the point of view of Russian-Swedish relations, and also stated that the country was turning into a stable democracy. Russia, in their opinion, did not pose a military threat to Sweden. This picture is partly shared by the Center Party, which believes that Sweden is going through a more peaceful time. Among those who questioned democratic change, Henriksen writes, were the *Christian Democrats* and the *Moderate Party*. The author says that the discussion of security issues in the context of Russia as a country with an unstable military situation was not thematic (that is, not permanent), but episodic. The event received wide media coverage, but interpretations of this war in terms of the threat landscape of different sides differ. While the *Moderates* view the Chechen war as an event that raises concerns about where the country is heading and how it might affect Sweden, the *Green Party* believes that this particular event is a threat to the outside world; moreover, Russia, in its opinion, will become so preoccupied with the Chechen war that it will “withdraw into itself”, trying to settle the internal conflict (Henriksen, 2013, p. 29).

The most capacious attitude of official Sweden towards Russia in the second half of the 1990s was reflected in his speech in 1995 by Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén. She noted that the tendency to continue reforms and close cooperation with European structures continues in Russia, and the Swedish policy towards Russia is consistent. At the same time, the minister says, “we make the same demands on Russia as we do on other European democracies. Russia's war in Chechnya is unacceptable. We will present this criticism until a political solution to the conflict is reached” (Hjelm-Wallén, 1995). In the same year, the Riksdag expressed fear that the Chechen war for Russia was a kind of rehearsal before “crossing the border”, which indicates the existence of anxiety that Russia may turn from the democratic path and begin expansion to the west (Lennmarker, 1995).

As a result, these data allow us to draw a short conclusion that the wars in Chechnya as an external shock, although they were the destroyers of the democratic values of Sweden, did

not become a serious reason for the *rysskräck* level to rise. After all, Chechnya was, in a sense, an internal business of Russia.

3.5. Election of V. Putin for the first presidential term

The next external shock for Sweden was the outcome of the elections at the intersection of the centuries. The new leader of Russia was treated with caution, but at the same time high hopes were pinned on him. During his speech at the Riksdag, Jan Eliasson, State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed hope that the democratically elected President of Russia V. Putin would give two signals: to end the war in Chechnya and to pursue closer cooperation with Europe. He also stressed that these two conditions must be met in conjunction, because integration with the EU is impossible without resolving the internal conflict (Eliasson, 2000). In addition, in this speech one can find confirmation of the previously indicated criterion for choosing "external shocks" - Europeanism; thus, the speaker states that the basis for cooperation with Europe should be not only common interests, but also values. This proves that the criterion for the study of Russian-Swedish relations was chosen correctly.

Swedish establishment saw in V. Putin a man who would continue the course of Boris Yeltsin's policy (Lidqvist, 2016, p. 31), while it was noted that his plan was to make Russia a great power, a respected actor in international relations, including at the expense of the armed forces (Henriksén, 2013, p. 4). At the same time, the writer T. Gannholm claims that Putin, the then unknown prime minister, raised his rating and popularity due to the Chechen war, and during the presidential elections a crowd of people who wanted to vote gathered around the Russian embassy in Stockholm; all these people were determined to change (2019, p. 99). K. Lidqvist in her analysis also notes the fact that in the eyes of the EU countries, including Sweden, V. Putin was viewed as a pro-Western candidate (Lidqvist, 2016, p. 30).

It is interesting that in the first few years of V. Putin's presidency, there was an improvement in diplomatic relations between Sweden and Russia, in the field of trade and investment. In 2000, the Russian president and the Swedish prime minister met in Moscow to discuss a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Chechnya; in 2001, six months after V. Putin's visit to the royal palace, the Swedish king Carl XVI Gustav paid an official visit to Russia at the invitation of the president. An interesting fact is that this was the second visit of the royal

couple to Russia since 1978, which may indicate, if not about established good-neighborly relations, then certainly about fruitful attempts to establish them. A year later, a meeting was held in St. Petersburg between Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson and Vladimir Putin, during which the Russian President noted the positive changes that have occurred in relations between the countries over the past few years.

On the whole, this positive attitude was noted during the first few years of V. Putin's presidential term; so, in 2001, a telephone conversation took place between the President of Russia and the Prime Minister of Sweden, in 2004 - Vladimir Putin awarded the Order of Friendship to Hirdman Sven Henrik - Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Sweden to the Russian Federation for his great contribution to the development and strengthening of the Russian -Swedish friendly relations. V. Putin also congratulated Göran Persson on his repeated victory in the parliamentary elections, expressing confidence that the fruitful contacts between the two countries would be further developed. The next time the Swedish monarch visited Russia in 2007, this time on an unofficial visit.

The rise of V. Putin to power as an external shock can be summed up by the words of the Minister of Defense of Sweden at the meeting of the Riksdag in 2000, a little after the inauguration of the President of Russia. Thus, he expressed the hope that the new president will be able to give the Russian people the stability they deserve, and increase their level of well-being, observing democratic principles. However, he noted that the events in Chechnya are still causing concern (Sydow, 2000). Historian I. Oldberg notes that the war on terrorism in Russia was an "annoying factor" for its relations with Western countries. Particularly, this was reflected in the diplomatic situation with Sweden: Russia expressed an official protest after the publication of an interview with Basayev in March 2005 (Oldberg, 2006, p. 20). However, within the framework of this work, we will not dwell in too much detail on the history of the Second Chechen War, because, as noted earlier in the theoretical part, it has ceased to be an event that can be described as "rare" due to its duration.

Thus, the coming of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000 can indeed be regarded as an external shock - and this time, as in the case of Mikhail Gorbachev, this event was a positive shock. Despite a number of fears for the future of the eastern neighbor, in Swedish political circles, at first after the inauguration, his image was associated with a desire for cooperation with Europe and Sweden in particular. The frequency of contacts at the state level began to gain momentum, the business, investment and economic sectors were actively developing. Fears that could be attributed to *rysskräck* (human rights violations in Chechnya or possible

deviations from the democratic path) still existed, but it was noted that Russia was no longer the USSR (Sydow, 2000).

3.6. Georgian war 2008

The next "external shock" for Sweden was the armed conflict in South Ossetia, which in Swedish historiography was called *Kriget i Georgien 2008*, and the events are perceived as a war between Russia and Georgia.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia are located in the northern part of Georgia, on the border with Russia. They, like Georgia, were part of the USSR until 1991, and after its collapse, they were able to enjoy an expanded form of independence under the sovereignty of Georgia. However, both regions put forward individual demands for both increased autonomy and de facto independence. Georgia agreed to negotiate on various concessions that led to increased autonomy, but never during grant the regions the independence they sought. Armed clashes were fought due to the fact that both sides accused each other of non-compliance with treaties. After the war, Abkhazia and South Ossetia actually achieved independence, but without broad international recognition (Sjövall, 2011).

It is obvious that the news of Russia's intervention in the military conflict has met some reaction in Sweden.

The general concern over the war in Georgia was actively discussed in the Riksdag. Carl B. Hamilton, a representative of the Liberal People's Party, noted that Russia was supposed to move along a peaceful democratic path and become "the same country as we are", but now it poses a serious threat, showing that it has the right invade other countries (Hamilton, 2008). Here, we note one distinguishing feature of this external shock: despite the fact that D. Medvedev was the president of Russia during this period, the war in Georgia was still associated with the name of V. Putin. In the same period, the term "Putinization" appeared, which K. Hamilton also uses - the seizure of border territories by Russia. Thus, the policy pursued by D. Medvedev in Sweden was also considered a continuation of the policy of his predecessor.

The researcher of the Baltic region M. Kott (2015, p. 4) writes that after the events of 2008, with the active support of the former Swedish Prime Minister C. Bildt, *rysskräck* returned to the discourse of regional security. Moreover, according to B. Peterson, it is C. Bildt who was

the reason for Sweden's more critical view of Russia. Sweden, he believes, has a "strong personality element" in the form of Bildt, and Sweden was hardly as famous for its attitude to Russia under another foreign minister (Kyrk, 2011, p. 15).

In this context, it is interesting to analyze what C. Bildt said and wrote about the issue. Indeed, his comments on the conflict were harsh and critical, obviously displeasing in the Kremlin. In his blog, the Swedish Foreign Minister drew a parallel between V. Putin's justification for intervening in the war in Georgia - over the Russians in South Ossetia - and Hitler's tactics regarding Czechoslovakia in order to "free" the Sudeten Germans. In 2008, he was already actively leading his *Alla Dessa Dagar* blog, sharing with the public his thoughts on the situation in Sweden and abroad. In August 2008, that is the strongest escalation of the conflict, he repeatedly wrote that the security and territorial integrity of Georgia were questioned, and it allows Russia to violate international law and threaten the territorial integrity of other states. Perhaps, Bildt wrote, we are at a tipping point, as reflected in this study: we call these tipping points "critical junctures". Interestingly, some of the blog posts are written in English, not Swedish, meaning that the recipient of this thought is no longer a Swede, but any citizen of the world. The entries collected several hundred comments, which is quite a lot within the framework of this blog, which means that the attention of many Swedes was focused on the situation in Georgia and on the opinion of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in this regard. In the post, the author also refers readers to the inviolability and importance of democratic values that are at stake in this confrontation; this once again confirms the fact that the criterion for distinguishing external shocks was found to be correct.

However, C. Bildt's anxiety about the future of Sweden cannot be called pointwise. For example, during the debate, when Hans Wallmark called Russia Sweden's biggest foreign policy challenge from history to modern times (Wallmark, 2008), the Foreign Minister said that he was "not sure if this is so", and Russia poses a threat rather not for Sweden, but for the whole world. As a solution to this issue, he suggested starting a search for support within Russia itself, among Russians who "see the world as they were forbidden to see it," who yearn for change. And Sweden's criticism of the events in Georgia or Chechnya should be such that "the voice of Sweden is the loudest in the pan-European choir" (Bildt, 2008).

Nevertheless, it is believed that by the end of Dmitry Medvedev's presidential term, fears about Russia have subsided significantly. So, B. Petersson, professor of political science at the University of Malmö, in an interview for the University of Gothenburg in 2011, said: despite the tendencies of reverse democratization in Russia, the aggravation of authoritarian

practices and restrictions on freedom of speech, the Swedes seem to be not at all concerned about this. In relations between Russia and Sweden, he says, there is no particular tension or special warmth. So, he concludes, it's hard to say whether "*rysskräck*" is dead in Sweden, or "just resting," but neutral time, according to Petersson, is over. There are many old negative militarized stereotypes about Russia, which, if something happens, can be "activated quite quickly" and allowed to "bloom quickly" (Kyrk, 2011, p. 15).

In 2015, when discussing the issue of Crimea, it was noted: when Russia entered Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it showed to the whole world that it wants to become a great power again (Lindestam, 2015).

Thus, there is a reason to believe that the war in Georgia was not just an external shock, but a critical juncture, which for the first time forced the whole world, including Sweden, to seriously think about its future. If the Chechen conflict was viewed as an internal event, it was also criticized and caused concern, now anxiety has reached a new level, because Russia took part in the war outside its borders. Official Sweden condemned Russia's actions, although it is clear from the context that in 2008 there was no talk of, for example, breaking off diplomatic contacts. On the contrary, some sides of cooperation were encouraged, and Sweden saw its mission in persuading Russia to take the previous course of reform and democracy. The first "alarm bells" that appeared during the Chechen wars were reflected in Georgia, and now it became clear that Russia probably wants to return the great-power status of the USSR. As noted above, Russia has increasingly been accused of an aggressive foreign policy towards its neighbors, which indicates a rise in the level of *rysskräck* in the media and among the political elite. If Russia continued to deviate from the democratic path, writes K. Lidqvist (2016, p. 36), Sweden together with the EU would take a number of measures to force it to correct its behavior in the international arena. However, this did not happen, and therefore it would be wrong to assert that the level of Russian fear has reached its historical maximum.

3.7. Crimean crisis

Obviously, the loudest "external shock", the very critical juncture that determined "path dependence" for Sweden was the crisis in Crimea. Crimea became a subject of the Russian Federation on March 18, 2014. According to observers' notes, the annexation of Crimea was carried out illegally, but Russia believes that this is nothing more than the protection of

Russian minorities and the return of their territories to the country. From the Russia's point of view, it was not an annexation that took place, but a legal reunification. The official position of Russia on the issue of Crimea is as follows: in March 2014, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol in a referendum proclaimed the independence of both territories and decided to join the Russian Federation, thereby exercising their right to self-determination. The legal basis for such a development of events is considered to be the situation when a coup d'etat with the use of force took place in Ukraine with outside support. This form of realizing the right to self-determination, declares Russia, was the only possible way to protect the vital interests of the people of Crimea from the radical national elements in Ukraine, which had and continue to exert a strong influence on the decisions taken in the country, which in turn leads to ignoring the interests of the Russian-speaking population (Address by President of the Russian Federation, 2014).

The attitude to the events in Crimea was unanimous. It was noted that there is a big difference between being able to seize the territory of another state and using this opportunity. This means, says the representative of the Social Democrats Åsa Lindestam, that Russia is ready to use its military force to achieve foreign policy goals, and Crimea and Ukraine were among the first to feel it. Thus, on behalf of her party, she condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and the violation of international law in eastern Ukraine. She also replied that Russia has finally become an autocracy (Lindestam, 2015).

Of course, the main difference between the war in Georgia or in Syria and the events in Crimea was that it happened in Europe; it was much closer to Sweden than Georgia in a geographical sense. This was seen in the Riksdag too; thus, 2014 was claimed to be not just a threat to Sweden, but a threat to the whole world, for which security has been built since the end of the Cold War (Enström, 2014).

The question of neutrality was on agenda back then. M. Kott (2016, p. 6) also sums up: this new wave of *rysskräck* again jeopardizes Swedish neutrality and the policy of non-alignment. *Rysskräck*, he writes, can lead to both complete inaction and stupor, and a series of rash decisions. The author compares this time with the 1930s but notes that now the question of maintaining neutrality is even more acute than before the Second World War.

As an additional source on the topic of events in Crimea, we can use the analysis of the media (2014–2019), which was carried out by the author under the bachelor's study. It was focused on two Swedish newspaper - *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*. We will partially present the conclusions below.

For example, *Dagens Nyheter* again introduced a special term - "Putinization", noting that this process began back in 2008 with the war in Georgia, but then "no one knew that Ukraine would become the next country to follow Putin's plan" ("Ukraina ingår i Putins plan," 2014), since, as already noted, in many European media, Putin is closely associated with Russia, regardless of who is in power at the moment. And after the Crimea crisis, *Dagens Nyheter* came down with harsh criticism of the country's actions. For example, Carl Bildt, Sweden's foreign minister in 2014, called the referendum on the peninsula "illegal" noting that Sweden would not recognize this "product of Putin's propaganda" ("Bildt: Folkomröstningen på Krim är illegal," 2014).

Dagens Nyheter has repeatedly raised the issue of strengthening cooperation with NATO against the background of the "threat from the east." Among other reasons for such an important step, the second place is taken by the problem of "security". Ulf Christersson, Swedish politician and leader of the Moderate Coalition Party, writes: "Over the past decade, the situation in our region has deteriorated dramatically. After the illegal annexation of Crimea and the conduct of aggressive actions in Ukraine, Russia violated the European security regime, and continues to do so to this day. We see the consequences of hybrid warfare in the modern Swedish media space due to the imperfection of our information security system" ("Sverige behöver ett nationellt säkerhetsråd", 2017). For example, in the *Debate* section, a traditional part of the *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper, it was noted that Sweden is ready to become a NATO member in all respects. The author of this article, G. Jonsson, believes that the country could long ago have joined the Alliance, if there was no its "fearful government" (Jonsson, 2018). At this stage, NATO and Sweden have a cooperation program, but as noted by Jonsson, the collective security system in the event of a threat will apply only to its members. "And let NATO come to Sweden rather than the Kremlin," the author of the article concludes (ibid).

In *Svenska Dagbladet* one can observe the similar picture. Russia's actions in relation to this issue are called "unacceptable". Sweden, like the EU, condemns Russia for the events of March 2014. In the article M. Holmström talks about the official point of view of Sweden through the words of diplomat Carl Bildt, who called the annexation of Crimea "a crime against the people" because "no one has the right to send troops into the territory of another country, period" (Holmström, 2014).

Moreover, the media has repeatedly raised the question of the future of Russia after the annexation of Crimea. Concerns are expressed for the security of Europe, especially in the countries neighboring Russia. It is noted that Russia has always been ruled by politicians

with a military mindset, and the current political elite is no exception. For example, Swedish naval attaché Christian Allerman discusses whether Russia will have enough of Crimea and whether its expansion further to the west will continue: "Will Putin stop after the events in Crimea? Or will it continue to change its point of view on the geopolitical role of Russia and its neighbors, referring to the National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine?" (Svenska Dagbladet, 2014).

The annexation of Crimea, further war in the east of Ukraine - these topics are being reflected in political debates in Sweden for several years. The question of whether it is worthwhile to continue to treat the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline as "business as usual", which is not affected by the international situation, has been repeatedly raised; for example, a member of the Swedish Riksdag, Mikael Oscarsson, noted that it is wrong to "help Putin" at a time when there is a war in Ukraine, Sweden is a leader in imposing sanctions against Russia, and the Russian president himself has repeatedly used the country's energy resources as a pressure tool (Oscarsson, 2015).

Without any doubt, the Crimea crisis became the largest external shock and critical juncture of the modern Russo-Swedish relations.

3. 8. Russian military operation in Syria

The next "external shock" for Sweden was the Russian presence in Syria. In early 2011, a series of demonstrations, anti-government protests and uprisings began in the Middle East, which later became known as the Arab Spring. Some population groups were tired of the dictatorship and the corrupt government. After the demonstrations in Syria, a civil war began with the aim of overthrowing President B. Assad. For Sweden, of course, this event was an external shock, but it received its full appearance in 2015, when the Syrian leader in an official letter addressed Moscow with a request for military assistance (Staff, 2015). From this moment, the analysis of this event will begin. Note that the official Russian intervention in the civil war in Syria took place just a year after the events in Crimea, therefore, when discussing security issues, these two topics often appeared together.

Of course, from the very beginning of the conflict, when Russia clearly outlined its position on the legitimacy of President B. Assad, the Riksdag criticized the actions of the UN as a peacekeeping organization for its inability to resist the veto imposed by Russia and China (Ahlin, 2012). It was also proposed to express disagreement with the domestic and foreign

policy of Russia, because violation of democratic principles for Sweden is unacceptable (Kronlid, 2012).

This is already seen as an indirect confrontation between Russia and Sweden: while Russia supports President B. Assad, Sweden, according to Foreign Minister C. Bildt, acts through EU institutions in order to strengthen the Syrian opposition. The minister also noted that the country's special envoy "maintains constant and confidential contacts with various groups of different faiths and origins, which oppose the brutal rule of Assad". The Swedish government has also committed SEK 100 million by 2013 and 2014. to promote democracy and human rights in Syria (Bildt, 2012).

In the Riksdag, the topic of Russia's military intervention in Syria was vigorously discussed for a long time, but, of course, the peak was in 2015. It is interesting that the *Social Democrats* were accused of being "stuck in the 1980s" because they still see in Russia a friend: "Unfortunately, says Lena Asplund, a representative of the *Moderate Party*, Russia is no longer our friend, although, of course, there are still friendly citizens among Russians, but V. Putin is not among them". Moreover, the parliamentarian called the "aggressive behavior" of Russia, including in Syria, as the reason for the instability of the Baltic region; she called on other parliamentarians to understand - "Putin is not doing this for the welfare of the citizens of Syria" (Asplund, 2015).

In September 2015, C. Bildt, already a former foreign minister, noted in his blog that Russia, by providing military support to Syria, firstly shows that without its participation this conflict will not be resolved (*Syrien och cyber*, 2015), and secondly, it distracts attention from the events in Ukraine (*En dag i Delhi.*, 2015). He also wrote that in recent years Russian politics has been characterized by unpredictability and decisions unexpected for the whole world, and these are not all the surprises it has prepared (*Och sedan, herr Putin?*, 2015). Thus, Russia, with which security relations were once truly constructive, has changed, and the former Swedish foreign minister does not see the possibility of cooperation with her until she returns to the democratic path (*Allt mer dynamiskt Berlin.*, 2015).

"The return of Russia to an undemocratic path of development and more authoritarian rule under Putin has caused alarm in the Swedish Riksdag," writes K. Lidqvist (2016, p. 43). Russia has begun to be viewed as a potential aggressor for Sweden, which for this study is a clear sign of Russo-fear. Since the Syrian civil war, Swedish rhetoric has grown increasingly negative, and the credibility that once pervaded debate about Russia's future has been challenged. Relations between states have gone through difficult times.

3.9. Protest movement in Russia after the poisoning of A. Navalny.

This study includes an unexpected event for the author that occurred at the end of the summer of 2020 - the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader A. Navalny, his further arrest and protest movement that began after that. It is worth looking at the situation from above to assess its scale. The fact is that now, in 2021, while writing this dissertation, there is no doubt that the case of A. Navalny is an event, an external shock that will become (or, perhaps, has already become) a critical point in relations between Russia and Sweden. Looking ahead, we note that according to the survey results, more than 75% of respondents noted that this case is the loudest and most discussed in the last few years in Sweden (see fig. 6 in the paragraph 5.1.). Nevertheless, it is very difficult to predict the actual level of “shock” for this event - as history shows, they flare up, find an instant response around the world, but then are being forgotten, leave the public and political discussion after a few months or even years. For example, no doubt that such events as the Chechen wars, the war in Georgia or the Crimean crisis will remain in Sweden's memory - this is confirmed by how often these topics are raised in everyday life. At the same time, the murder of the journalist A. Politkovskaya or the politician B. Nemtsov, which were once also heatedly discussed around the world, now seems to have gradually disappeared from public discourse. Thus, it is impossible to say for sure what mark the events of 2020–2021 will leave in Sweden, but it would be unfair not to mention them, at least based on the statistics of the survey results.

The events unfolded as follows: A. Navalny, a Russian opposition leader, allegedly poisoned by a neurotoxin in August 2020, was arrested immediately after arriving at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow on January 17. He returned to Moscow after staying in Germany, where he was recovering from poisoning for the past five months. Thus, the suspended sentence in the *Yves Rocher* case was replaced with a real one due to repeated violations of the probationary period. This caused discontent among opposition-minded Russians; mass protests took place in January and April (Максимова, 2021). The Navalny case did not leave indifferent the world community and caused a wide resonance, including in Sweden.

Official Sweden, along with many other European countries, adheres to the version of Navalny's poisoning by the Russian special services, and also demands the release of the oppositionist and full rehabilitation. Thus, the topic of Russia has reappeared on the agenda

in the Riksdag. In a motion sent to parliament after the events described, it was said that "the barbarity of the Russian regime is clearly visible from the assassination attempt on opposition leader A. Navalny," and "Putin's war" affected not only Russia's neighbors, but also its inhabitants, all of Europe and the whole world. The signatory parliamentarians criticized the periodically discussed proposals to restore relations with Moscow, as well as "talk that the Western world should try to understand Russia." The petition notes that all these attempts, unfortunately, do not lead to greater stability in Europe, but rather the opposite: "the only bulwark of stability in relations with Russia is that the country under the rule of V. Putin continues to violate international law" (Kristersson, 2020).

The Navalny case undoubtedly triggered a new wave of *rysskräck*, because in addition to condemnation and a call to release the politician, thoughts were again heard in Sweden that the "imperialist ambitions" of the Russian president go beyond this Crimea and Ukraine, and no one knows when he wants more (Malm, 2020). These words may be interpreted as base of anxiety and even fear for the future of Sweden and the world.

Soon after the Navalny case caused hesitations on the diplomatic level. In February 2021, Swedish Foreign Minister A. Linde announced on her Twitter account that in response to the expulsion of the Swedish diplomat from Russia, Sweden is also asking the Russian diplomat to leave the embassy in Stockholm (*Ann Linde on*, 2021). Also, the minister has repeatedly stated that Sweden supports the protest movement in Russia (Linde, 2021). The petition demanding the release of A. Navalny was signed by about 12,500 Swedes (*Kräv Att Ryssland Släpper Oppositionspolitikern Aleksej Navalnyj Fri!*, 2021).

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden C. Bildt also drew attention to the fact that the eyes of the whole of Sweden are again riveted on Russia (*Inför veckan som kommer.*, 2021). He writes that "the Kremlin launched a counteroffensive" because the ambassadors of Germany, France and Sweden were summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry and informed about new sanctions against various individuals who are believed to be responsible for these anti-Russian operations. The choice of countries is related to laboratories - in Sweden, the FOI laboratory in Umeå - which independently discovered the extremely dangerous nerve agent "Novichok" in the blood of Alexey Navalny after his arrival in Germany (*Brutala avslöjanden av Navalny*, 2020).

Thus, as it was said before, however the Navalny case was highly criticized in Sweden, as well as in many other countries, and undoubtedly brought a new wave of Russo-fear, it is hard to predict how it would change (if would) the Swedish attitude towards Russia in the

near future. Nevertheless, now it seems to us that Russo-Swedish relations are not able to reach a partnership stage due to the number of events happened in the past.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Collection in Survey

The main and only method of data collection for the survey was an online questionnaire since this particular option turned out to be the most viable during the coronavirus epidemic due to its sharing mainly through Internet sites. The questionnaire was created through the Google Forms Google utility and got distributed mainly through the social network Facebook, as well as on other platforms (for example, Steam or Discord) or through direct contacts, due to which it was possible to expand the list of potential respondents. A complete list of Internet sites where the link to the survey was sent can be found in Appendix 2. The choice of Facebook groups was made due to the following factors: firstly, the author was faced with the task of presenting the geographical diversity of respondents, which is why most of the Facebook groups are linked to the city or county (for example, "Vän i Umeå"), and secondly, the principal part of the survey distribution was the consent of the administrator or owner of this Internet site to post a link in his or her news feed. The main reasons for refusal were, as a rule, the inability to control respondents' anonymity and unwillingness to post content that forces their participants to disclose their political views. Thus, it is worth keeping these limitations in mind when analyzing the sample.

The next step is to explain the author's choice in relation to the target audience. At the initial stage of the distribution of the questionnaire, it was assumed that the main respondents for the study would be students, but it was impossible to exclude the likelihood of encountering an ethical problem: in Swedish universities, in addition to the citizens of the country, there are students who have not had a long experience of living in Sweden; so, the subject of the study could be completely unfamiliar to them. Studying the opinions of residents of one particular city or county also turned out to be unsuccessful: the difficulty was in the complexity of communication and the rapid and quantitatively worthy collection of questionnaires via the Internet. The inability to travel to one of the Swedish cities to conduct the survey also narrowed the range of sampling opportunities. Thus, it was decided to distribute the survey through Internet portals with the listed restrictions, which can be regarded as providing a random rather than a randomized sample. Realizing how sensitive this problem may turn out to be for further analysis, the author proposes to concentrate on describing in more detail the social portrait of the respondent in this study.

Before proceeding to the description of the respondents, it is necessary to consider in more detail the structure of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). It is written in English to avoid a language barrier between the respondent and the researcher; so, for both of them, English is not a native language, which makes them formulate their thoughts clearer, and this greatly simplifies the procedure for analyzing open questions. It should be mentioned that it did not pose a problem for the Swedish respondents, and only one potential respondent admitted that he or she does not speak English.

For many aspects, when compiling the survey and analyzing the data (f. e. the structure of questionnaire that is explained below), the author was guided by the joint research of the PetrSU teachers on the attitude of the inhabitants of Karelia towards Finland (Miljukova et al., 2017). So, the questionnaire consists of 47 questions, that can be divided into several blocks:

1. "*Demographics*". The purpose of this section is to collect general information about the respondents. It is important to understand the reasons why that the question of gender was excluded: firstly, the author does not aim to find out the difference in the perception of Russia between the male and female population of Sweden, and secondly, the concept of gender and self-identification in the modern world is much broader than the categories of "woman" and "man", that is why a part of the respondents can potentially be embarrassed to answer this question in its narrow sense.

2. "*Awareness Level*". This sector is devoted to determining the level of knowledge of the respondents about Russia. In order to form a certain objective opinion about the level of awareness of the surveyed Swedes about Russia, the questionnaire included questions a) in which the respondent independently determine the depth of their knowledge about Russia, b) questions, the answers to which require to have basic knowledge of Russian history and culture.

The first two sections will be included in the description of the social portrait of the respondent (see Paragraph 4.2).

3. "*Attitude Level*". In this block, the author analyzes the respondent's personal opinion about Russia and the Russians. It is important to note that the text of the questionnaire emphasizes the difference between Russia and the Russians, so all questions

here are doubled, so that the respondent has the opportunity to reflect on his or her attitude towards the country and the people separately.

4. "*Bilateral Relations Level*". This set of questions is aimed at assessing bilateral relations between Russia and Sweden, their future, past and present from the respondent's point of view.

5. "*Fear Level*". This block of questions is devoted to the *rysskräck* topic - respondents have the opportunity to independently assess the level of Russo-fear in Sweden from their experience of being a Swedish inhabitant. The conclusions of this section will subsequently be compared with those from the *Attitude Level* section, which will give solid basis for determining whether there is a Russo-fear in Swedish society, and if it does, in what form it turned out to exist.

A total of 206 responses were collected, but we shall clarify the details of data collection. As it was noted earlier, the main question that determines the relevance of the respondent's opinion on the subject, was the issue of citizenship. So, 191 people called themselves citizens of Sweden. However, it does not mean that the rest of the questionnaires were automatically rejected. Since the inhabitants of Sweden are not only its citizens, but also those for whom it is a country of residence, the author found it important to include the opinion of those respondents who, at the time of the survey being conducted, live in Sweden. Thus, 14 non-citizen questionnaires were also listed for further analysis. Based on this, only one questionnaire (be respondent № 198) was rejected during data processing. The total number of relevant public opinion questionnaires was 205. Processing and primary analysis of data was carried out using a program for working with electronic tables "Microsoft Excel". Further analysis was carried out manually.

4.2 Sociological Data Analysis Methods in Survey: Portraying the Swede

Before proceeding to the analysis of the survey results, I consider it necessary to make a small disclaimer. **This survey was conducted anonymously, however, I decided to make its results public** so that anyone who is interested in the topic, or disagrees with my findings, can independently familiarize themselves with the raw data. The survey results are

stored in a spreadsheet on the Google Sheets platform. You can find a link to it in the list of references, in the "primary sources" section (*Rysskräck survey, 2021*)

Now we are about to move on to the most important methodological question of this research - who are these very "Swedes" who answered the questionnaire and whose opinion in the study we will call "the opinion of the Swedes". Of course, we do not insist that the opinion of the surveyed group will coincide with the opinion of every inhabitant of Sweden, or that the respondent to our survey is some kind of "average Swede". It is also obvious that 205 respondents within the framework of a small Internet survey with a number of restrictions are not enough to claim that in the end we received an almost mythical answer to the question "What do the Swedes think about Russians?" Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that the conclusions drawn from the analysis will, to a greater or lesser extent, reflect the reality; they will help to figure out the Swedish approach to the definition of modern Russo-fear. We have already noted that in order to clarify questions about target audience, it is necessary to describe the respondents scrupulously. So, the "Swedes", that will be discussed below, are active users of social networks with good English language skills, as it was found out earlier. They are either Swedish citizens that reside in its territory (184 people), or Swedish citizens living abroad (8 people), or citizens of another country living in Sweden at a given time (13 people).

For a more accurate description of the respondents, the survey specified the region of their residence. Sweden can be divided into three parts, cultural and historical communities ("landsdelar"): Götaland, Svealand and Norrland, that is, southern, central and northern Sweden, respectively. Thus, the share of residents of Götaland among the respondents was 28%, Svealand - 53%, Norrland - 13%. This picture is consistent with the current population density in Sweden, where the most densely populated area is the central part of the country, including Stockholm (*Worldometer, 2020*).

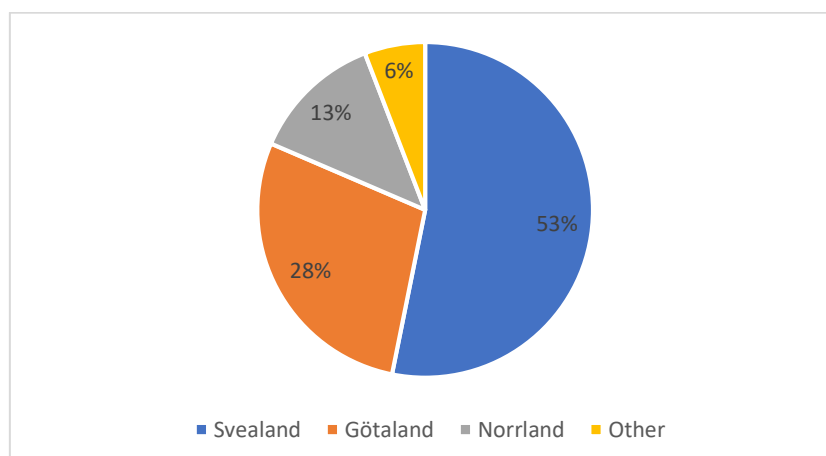


Fig. 1 The geographical diversity of the respondents, 2021.

According to the survey data, the average age of a “Swede” is 45, which has a positive effect on the overall context of the study, as these respondents were direct witnesses of the events described in Chapter 3. In general, the age of respondents varies from 16 to 81 years.

The diagram shows (Fig. 2) that the respondents’ education level is rather high; the proportion of people with higher education, including bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degrees, is 67%. At the same time, another 22% are high school graduates. It means that the vast majority of Swedes in this study (89%), among other characteristics, have a good level of education.

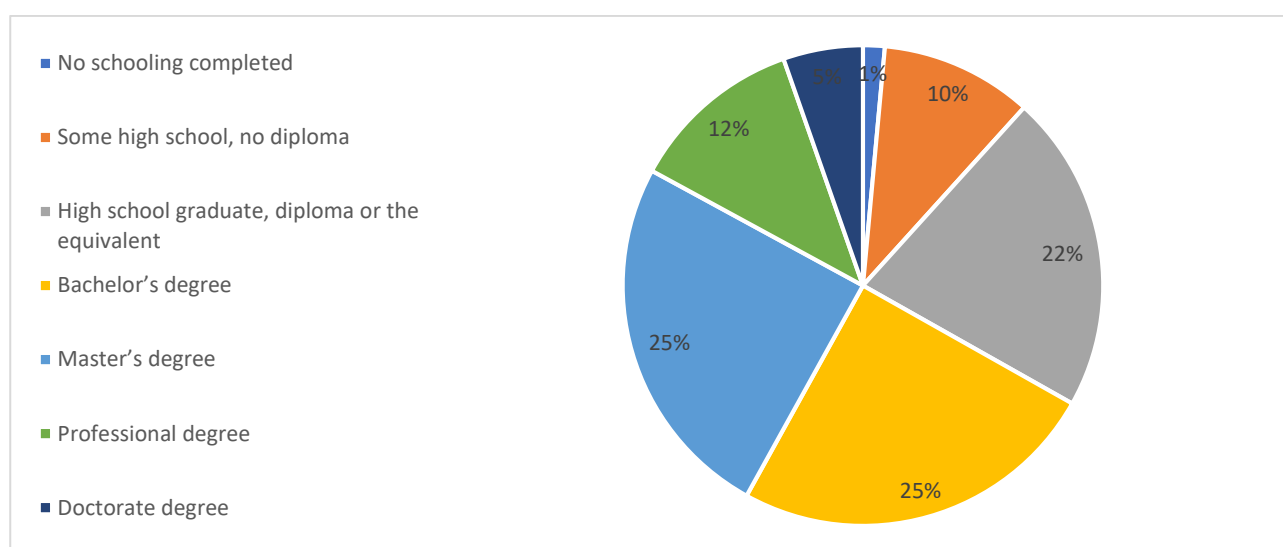


Fig. 2. The educational diversity among respondents, 2021.

Almost half (47%) of the respondents are employees, 23% are students, 18% are retired, 11% are self-employed. Only 1% of the total number of respondents currently have the status of unemployed (fig.3). For this study, it is important that at least 81% of the respondents are part of the work or student group, which means they can give a relevant assessment of how attitudes towards Russia and the Russians are represented in their small work or student teams.

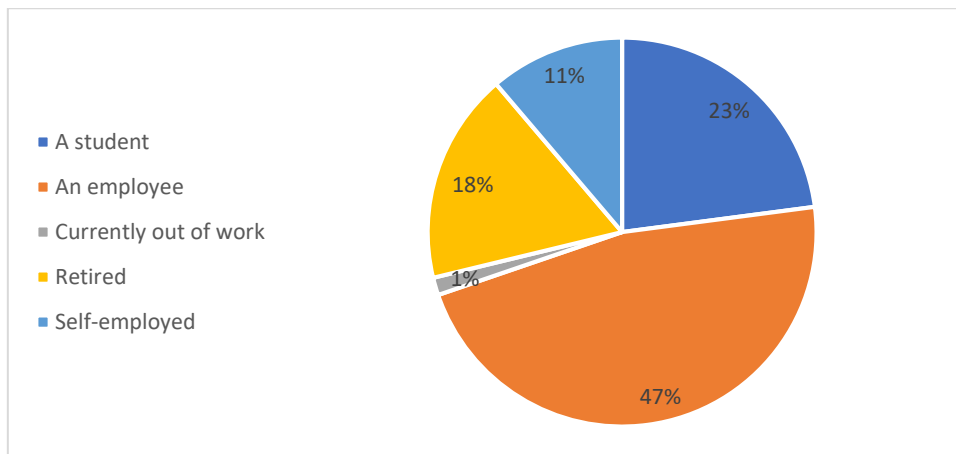


Fig. 3. Respondents' occupation, 2021.

The range of political preferences of the respondents is also quite diverse (fig. 4). The highest percentage of popularity (16%) belongs to the *Vänsterpartiet*. Interestingly, according to the 2018 elections in Sweden, this party is only on the 6th place measured by size. The second most popular answer is "Other" (15%), which means that a significant part of the respondents supports parties that are not represented in the Riksdag in 2021. 10% of the respondents admitted that they are not interested in politics at all. Also, among the popular answers we can mention such parties as *Socialdemokraterna* with 14%, *Moderaterna* with 9% and *Sverigedemokraterna* with 14%. This picture with some exceptions corresponds to the level of popularity and the number of seats occupied by these political parties in the Riksdag (*Valresultat för Riksdagsvalet: Sverige, 2018*).

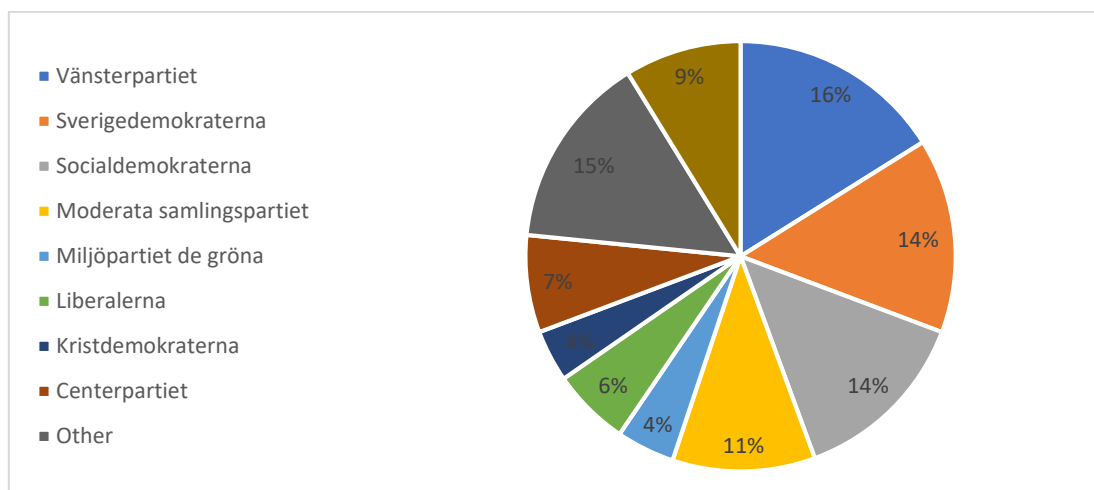


Fig. 4. Political preferences among the respondents, 2021.

Personal experience of communicating with residents of Russia also affects the image of the country and the possible level of fear. So, answering the question "Do you know any

Russian people in personal capacity?", 44% noted that they have good friends there. 30% of respondents consider their contacts with Russians "not too close", 12% admit that their experience of communication with residents of Russia is extremely small, while every seventh respondent does not have it at all. In general, the "average Swede" of this study has at least minimal contact with the Russians (fig. 5).

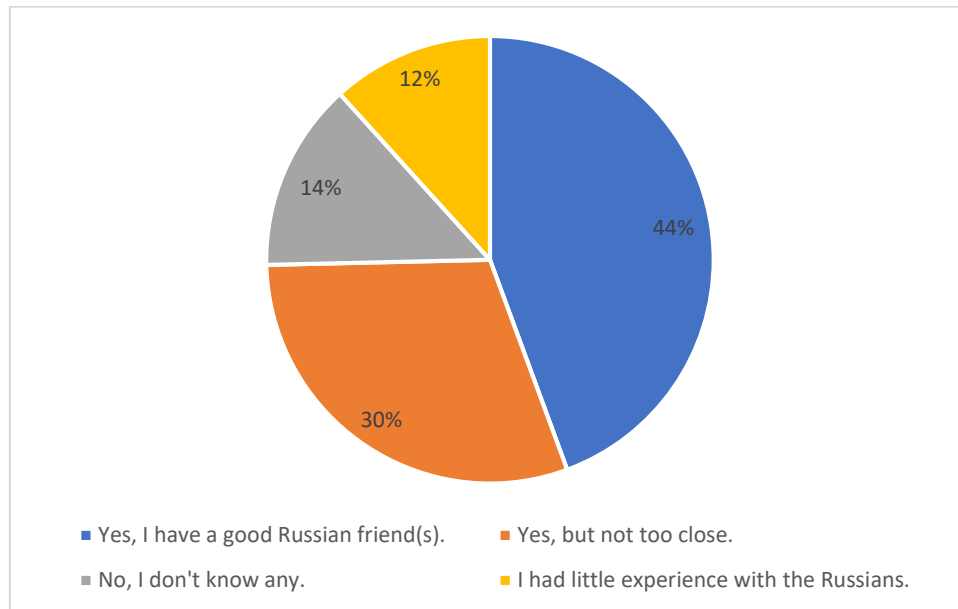


Fig. 5. "Do you know any Russian people in personal capacity?", 2021.

The answer to the next question is "*Have you ever been to Russia?*" - complements the received data. Thus, 58% of the Swedes have been to Russia at least once, while every seventh visits it regularly, and every third came there several times. The remaining 42% of respondents have never been to Russia, while slightly less than half of them plan to visit it as soon as the opportunity arises. Thus, respondents fell into two roughly equal categories (fig. 6).

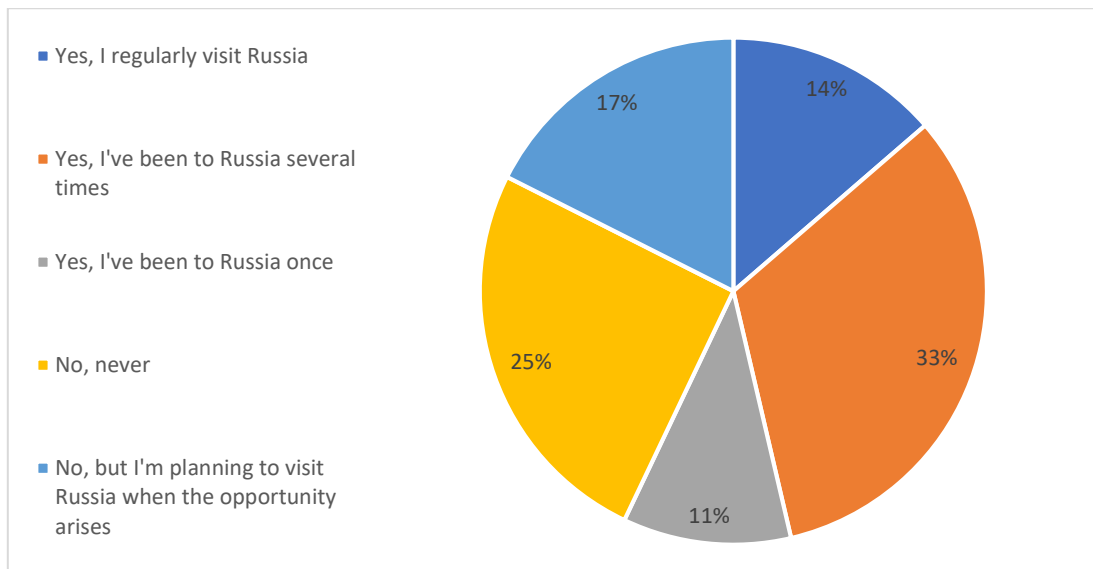


Fig. 6. “Have you ever been to Russia?”, 2021.

The respondents who visited Russia (fig. 7) named tourism as the most popular reasons for traveling (found in 57 questionnaires). The top-reasons are complemented with such answers as visiting friends and relatives (in 44 questionnaires), education and business (26 mentions, respectively).

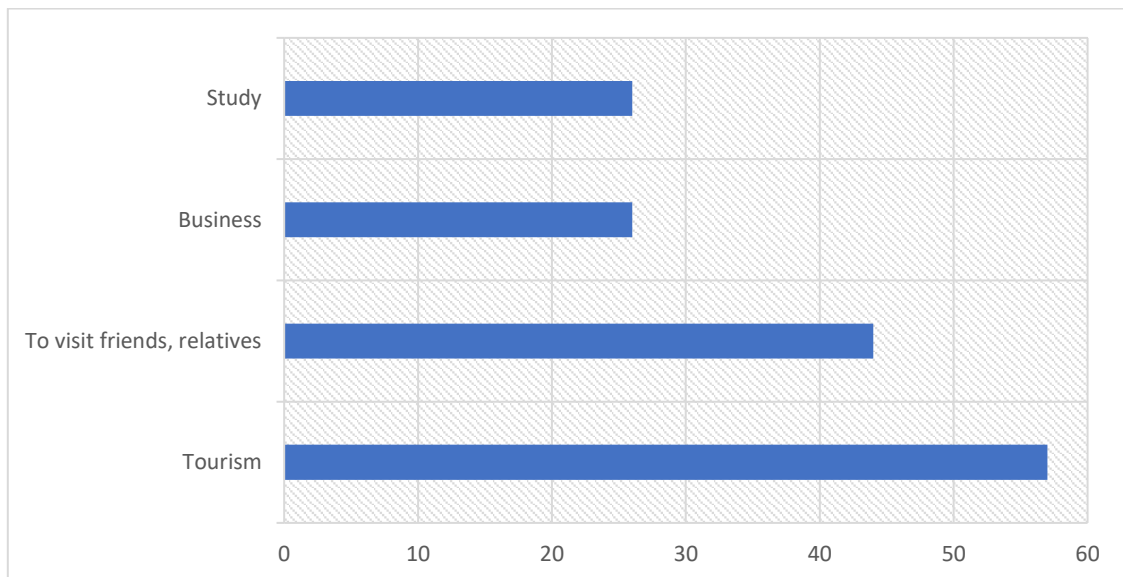


Fig. 7. “Have you ever been to Russia?”, 2021.

The next block of questions is dedicated to the level of awareness about Russia and Russians, the culture and history of the country and the people. This part is interesting due to the fact that at first the respondents are asked to independently determine the depth of

their awareness, and then there is a block of questions that require minimal knowledge about Russia. So, the first question of this section is "How familiar are you with the history of Russia?" (fig. 8) where 30% of the respondents believe that they know it very well, 36% are familiar with some historical periods, when 26% call their skills in Russian history "fragmentary". 4% of respondents noted that they studied the Russian history only in the context of the Swedish history; 3% found it difficult to answer, and, finally, for 1% of the respondents this topic was not interesting. Interestingly, the respondents of the last two categories previously indicated that they had never been to Russia, and their experience with Russians was minimized. In contrast, 96% of respondents who define their level of knowledge of history as quite high have traveled to Russia more than once.

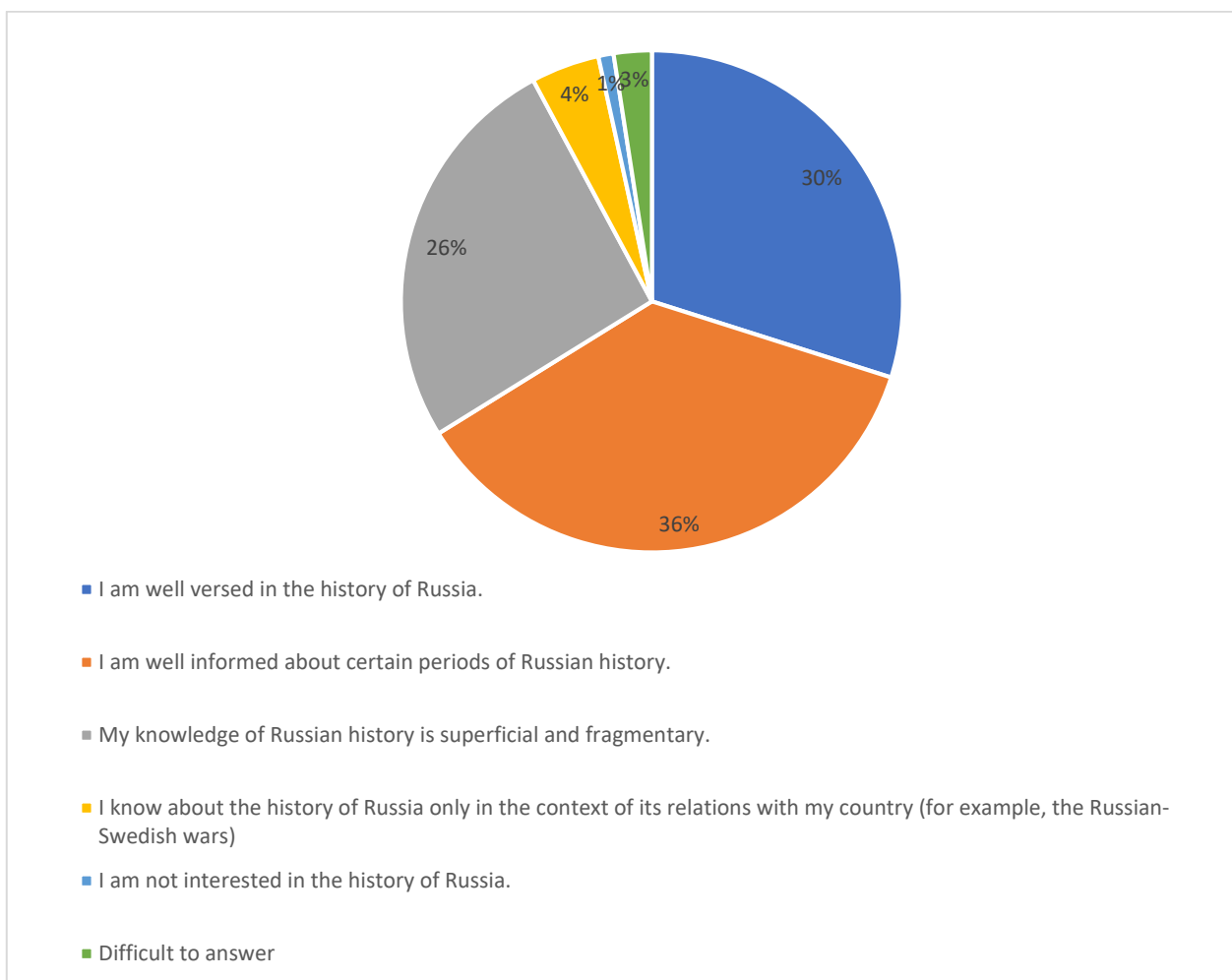


Fig. 8. "How familiar are you with the history of Russia?", 2021.

Another interesting question is how closely the respondents follow the news about Russia, whether they do it on purpose (fig. 9). Thus, every second Swede reads news articles about Russia if they come across the news feed. At the same time, 40 % note that they are

monitoring the situation in Russia on a daily basis. It is curious that 78 % of the remaining respondents, whose answers contained such options as “I am rarely interested in news about Russia”, “I don’t read news about Russia” and “Difficult to answer”, also did not manage to visit Russia or get good personal contacts.

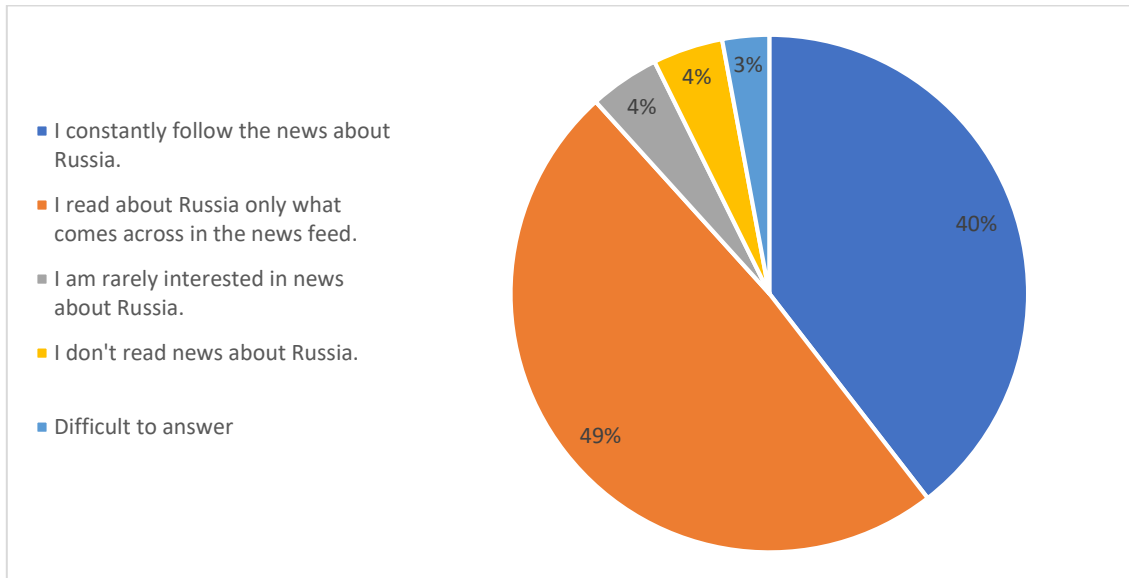


Fig. 9. “How closely do you follow the news about Russia?”, 2021.

In connection with this question, it becomes necessary to find out what sources of information the respondents use to form their opinion about Russia and Russians. Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) took the predictably leading option with 60.3% of the votes. The second and third places were taken by Russian foreign media and personal experience (46.6% and 42.7%, respectively). Every fourth respondent analyzes events in the world in Russian media in Russian; there it can be concluded that some of the respondents speak Russian at least at the reading level. By the way, according to this survey, the most popular Russian media in English is *Russia Today*; respondents often noted this fact (for example, respondent № 180, № 197), even though this option was included in the question. 35.4% of the respondents shaped Russia’s image based on the opinion of their friends, who often go there. Only 6.8% of respondents are not interested in Russia, therefore, do not follow the news about it (fig. 10).

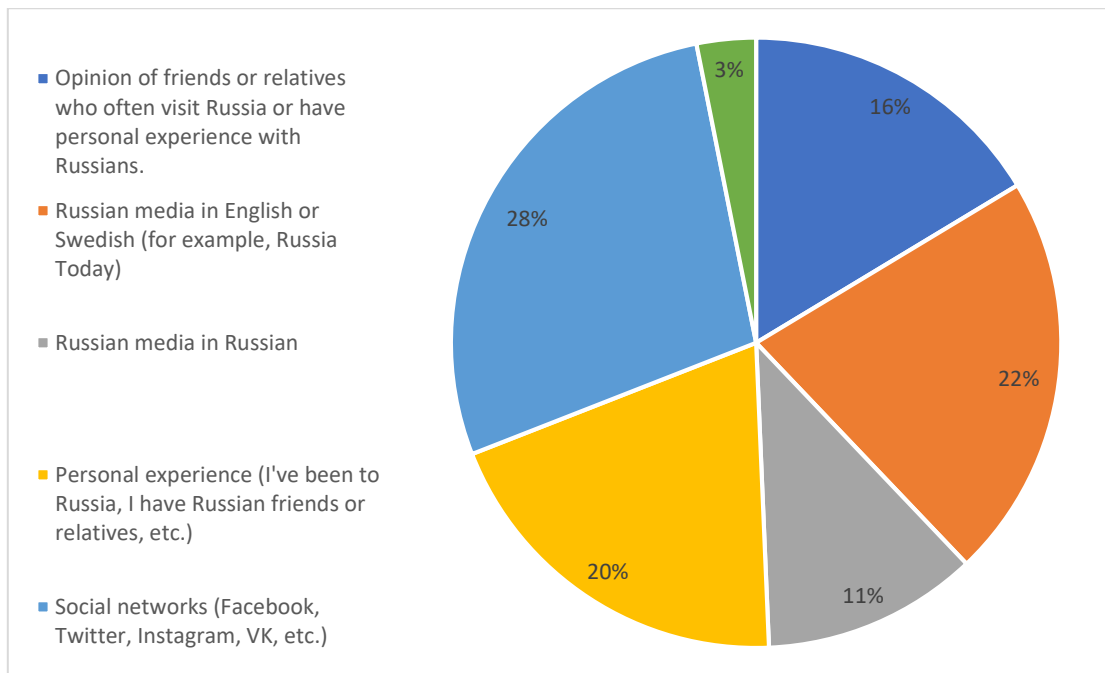


Fig. 10. “What sources of information do you use to form your opinion about Russia and Russians?”, 2021.

Now, when the respondents have generally determined their level of awareness, we will try to make this assessment more objective on the basis of simple test questions. First of all, they were asked to name the first president of Russia, pointing out the correct image of the Russian coat of arms of and determine the correct facts about Russia. Thus, 73% of the respondents correctly noted B. Yeltsin as the first president of the Russian Federation (while 16% indicated M. Gorbachev, but the possible confusion here is explained by the fact that he was the president of the USSR in 1990- 1991.) Notably, only three respondents who answered this question incorrectly previously rated their level of knowledge about Russia at high mark. The same percentage of Swedes (73%) correctly identified the coat of arms of the Russian Federation from the proposed ones; moreover, it is curious that the second most popular answer is “Difficult to answer” (15%); we can suggest that the respondents answered honestly, and did not try to guess the option. Among the facts about Russia, listed in the next question (fig. 11), the majority (56.3%) correctly noted that Russia has one state language (fig.8). However, the rest of the answers, including the correct ones, received less than half of the votes. Thus, 39.1% of Swedes unmistakably named the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, and 33.9% called freedom of speech the basic principle of the Russian Constitution. This observation can cause a separate discussion, because freedom of speech is officially enshrined as a fundamental principle in any country that calls itself democratic. According to the results of the survey, it turns out that only every third resident

of Sweden notes this as a reliable fact. Among the incorrect answers, the leading option indicated that Russia is the second largest country in the world (after the United States). This is the opinion of 20.3% of the respondents, and out of this number only 15% marked that they closely follow the news about Russia, and 46% called their level of knowledge about Russia as “well versed”. All in all, the results of the "test block" indicate that the Swedes who participated in the survey, firstly, have a balanced attitude to their level of awareness of Russia, and secondly, they are actually quite familiar with the context of its existence.

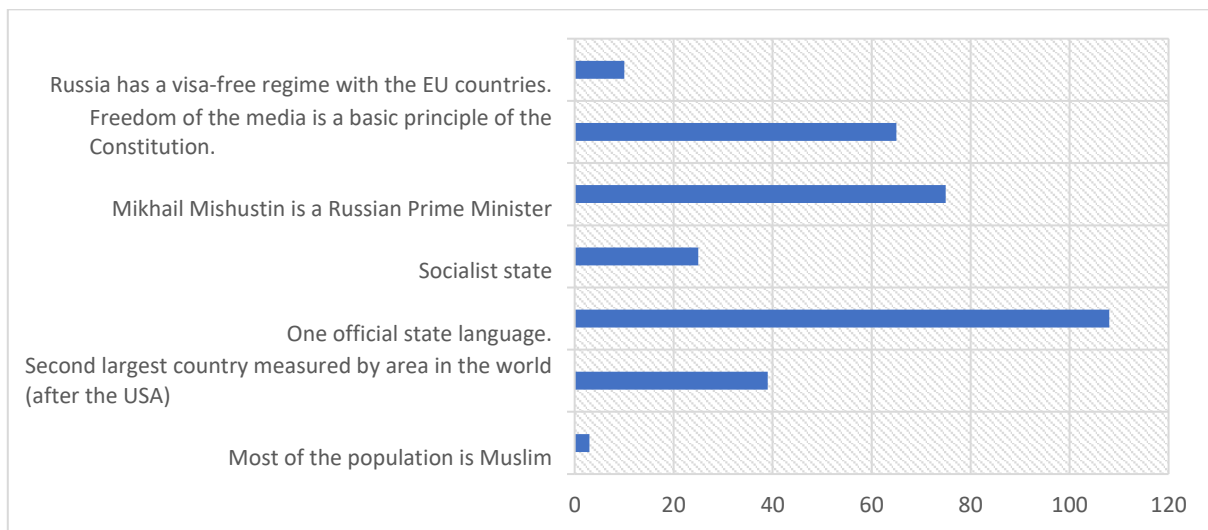


Fig. 11. “Which of the following facts are relevant to Russia?”, 2021.

Thus, we will try to briefly summarize the conclusions about the "Swede", whose opinion formed the findings of the research. To shape this respondent as an average person, we will count the most popular categories, where the respondents for the most part showed solidarity. So, the “average” respondent of this survey:

- either has Swedish citizenship or lives in Sweden,
- middle-aged (45 years old),
- speaks good English,
- uses social networks quite fluently,
- has high education diploma (or in a studying process)
- an employee or a student,
- quite familiar with the culture and history of Russia (at least with well-known details),
- has been to Russia at least once,
- is in touch with Russian inhabitants,

- from time to time follows the news about (or from) Russia, forming their opinion mostly through the online media.

In the end, we will note one small but important psychological factor that should be taken into account when speaking about the "Swede" of this study. Since the completion of the questionnaire was not obligatory or compulsory, there is a good reason to believe that people who were willing to spend 10-15 minutes of their time on this survey are at least interested in the topic of Russian-Swedish relations, the image of Russia in Sweden and reflection on the level of Russo-fear. For the most part, respondents were interested in commenting on this study, as evidenced by the wide range of complimentary comments within the survey itself. Consequently, some potential respondents could have skipped the survey post due to lack of interest in the topic or unwillingness to speak out on political issues. Therefore, we propose to add the factor of interest in this topic to the already listed characteristics of the respondents.

5. THE RYSSKRÄCK PHENOMENON IN MODERN SWEDEN: SURVEY RESULTS 2021

Before proceeding with the results of the survey, let us recall that the purpose of the survey is to analyze the perception of Russians and Russia through the eyes of the inhabitants of Sweden. Hence, in addition to the structural division of issues into blocks, the author also distinguishes between attitudes towards the people and the state. This is important because in the definition of the subject of research - rysskräck - these two "directions" are inseparable from each other. We also remind that by "residents of Sweden", "Swedes", "respondents", "interviewed" we mean only that group of 205 people who took part in this survey. We will consider this whole line of words as synonymous.

5.1. Attitude level towards Russia and the Russians in perspective of Swedish respondents

This block of questions (Attitude Level) concerns the personal perception of Russia and the Russians. In general, based on the answers of the respondents, we can conclude that their opinion adequately reflects the existing reality, where, despite the geographical proximity, the contacts between the two countries have not been at the proper level for a long time.

We also note that there was no significant correlation between the answers in this section and the social diversity of the respondents. This happened due to the fact that, despite rather active work in social networks, the author was unable to collect a larger number of respondents. So, conclusions about, for example, the relationship between the supporters of the *Socialdemokraterna* and the threat to security from Russia based on the survey results will be too generalizing and not respecting the reality. This study has a *pilot* type, and the sample, as already mentioned, has a number of limitations that prevent the author from splitting the survey into smaller sections. However, if any of the groups of respondents are large enough to draw a conclusion, this will be included in the overall study.

First of all, the respondents were asked to rate six pairs of opposite hypertrophied statements located on a segment on a 10-point scale. The answer "5", which is in the middle, we will regard as "difficult to answer": the respondent did not give any specific preference to the left or to the right, which means that either they cannot give an exact answer for their own reasons, or the question composed in such a way that it was difficult for them to decide.

This also means that for “approval on the left side” we will count options from 1 to 4, and for “approval on the right” - from 6 to 10. To avoid bias, option “5” will be taken into account separately.

Thus, when answering the question of whether Russia is building a secure world or is the reason for its instability, the hour of the scales, albeit with a slight advantage, leaned towards the second option (see Fig. 1). However, this question cannot be interpreted unambiguously, since the respondents showed a certain range of views in it: the most popular answer for this pair of sentences is “8” (17% of the total number of answers), while the left side of the graph is distinguished by rather high and stable estimates. It means that more than half of the respondents see Russia as a threat to international security, unanimously assessing this level as quite high; those who gravitate towards the option “Russia puts all its efforts to build peaceful and safe world” also turned out to be quite a lot, which indicates that opinions on this issue are divided, and an accurate conclusion cannot be drawn without future analysis.

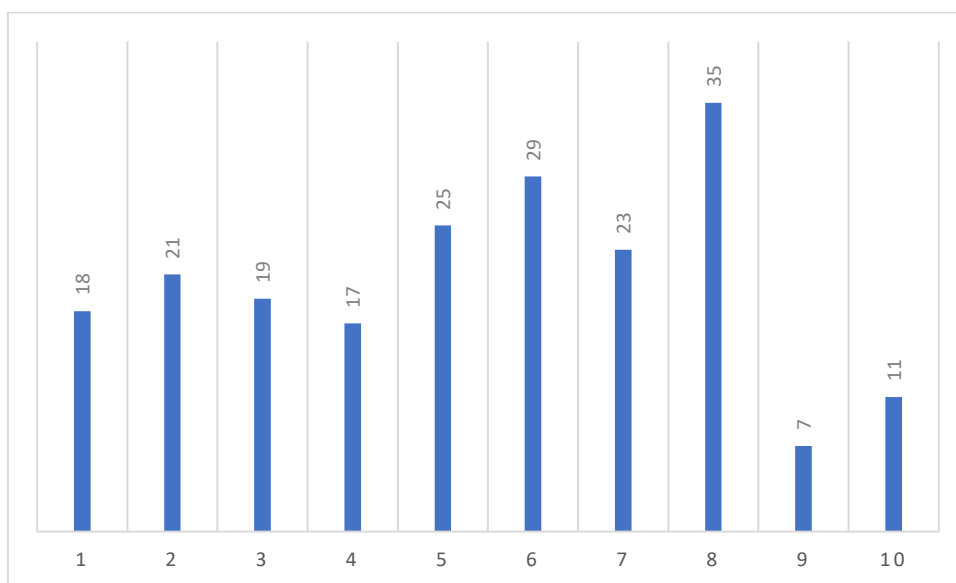


Fig. 1. “Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale”.
1 - Russia puts all its efforts to build peaceful and safe world.
10 - Russia is one of the main reasons of unstable and insecure world.

More unambiguous data were obtained when analyzing the second typical question (see Fig. 2). Choosing between the statements “Russia is committed to international law” and “Russia is committed to its national interests”, respondents with a large gap choose the second option (the most popular rating is “10”, and the average value is “7.2”). It means that the respondents believe that for Russia the “national” is higher than the “supranational”, and

the country's tactic in the international arena will not be limited by international law, therefore, it is more difficult to predict its actions in the future. In general, this result was expected, especially, for example, on the background of the 2020 events, when President V. Putin signed a law that deals with the supremacy of the provisions of the Constitution over international agreements¹.

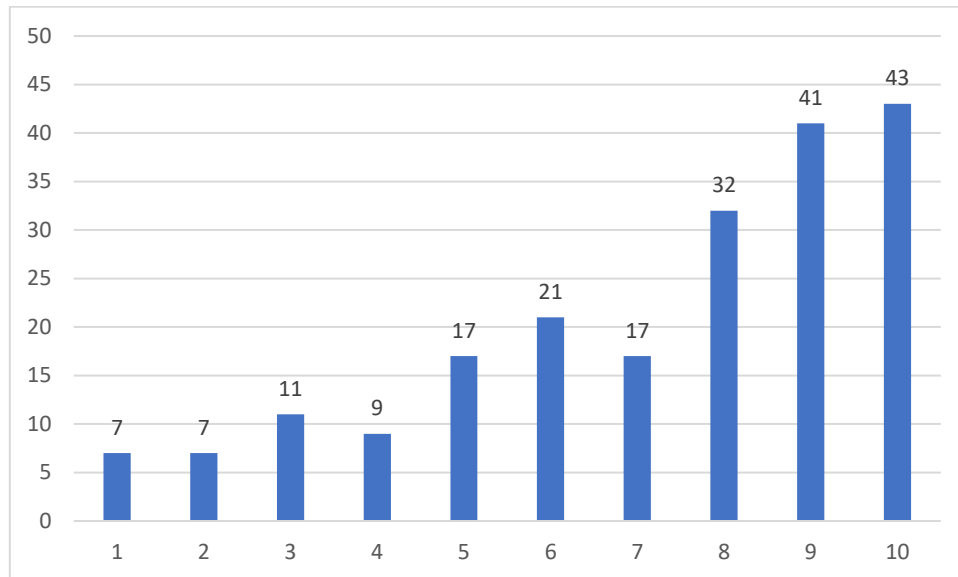


Fig. 2. “Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale”.
 1 - Russia is committed to international law.
 10 - Russia is committed to its national interests.

The answer to the next question (see Fig.3) also noted the unanimity of respondents: for example, 61.5% of respondents are inclined to believe that Russia's political leaders still live in the categories of the Cold War and its bipolar system, rather than adopt to a multipolar partner world. The same feature was noticed by the respondent №7 in the section reserved for comments. They explained that when by fear of Russia, the Swedes mean fear of its political elite, which "is nostalgic for the days of the USSR, when people really lived in fear". Respondent №105 highlighted the same trait among the older generation of Russians.

¹ (Федеральный Закон “О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации в части недопущения применения Правил Международных Договоров Российской Федерации в истолковании, противоречащем Конституции Российской Федерации” От 08.12.2020 N 428-ФЗ (Последняя Редакция), 2020)

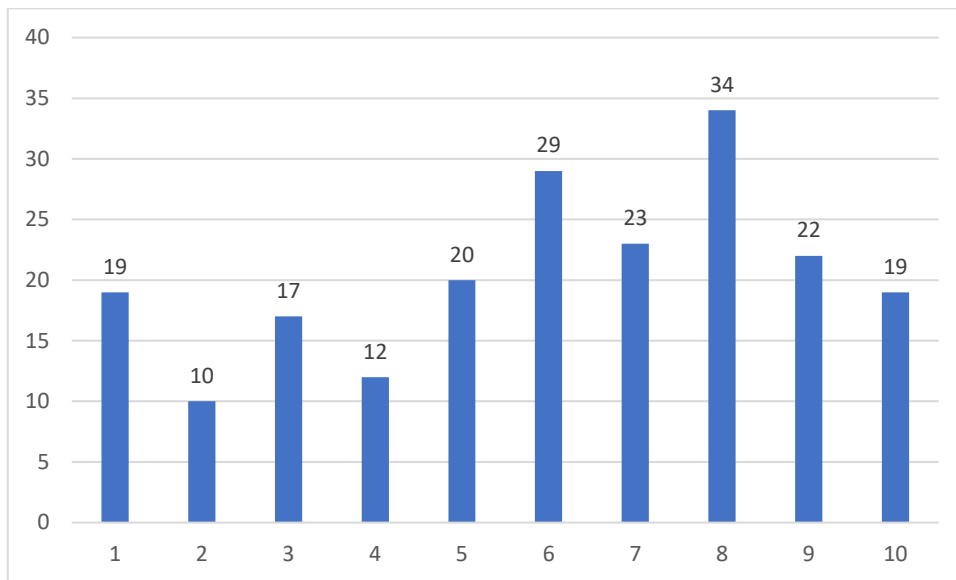


Fig. 3. “Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale”.
 1 - Russia's political leaders consider all other countries to be equal partners.
 10 - Russia's political leaders still think in terms of the cold war.

The results of the question of respecting the territorial boundaries of other states seem to be very indicative (see Fig. 4). 60.5% of the Swedes believe that, if desired, Russia can seize the territory of any border country. In this question, as well as in the question of national interests, the most popular option is "10", that is indicates that a large category of respondents chose such an unambiguous and extreme option. In fact, this is one of the most important questions in the survey, because Sweden can also be classified as a “border state” along the sea border, which means that most of the respondents see Russia as a direct security threat.

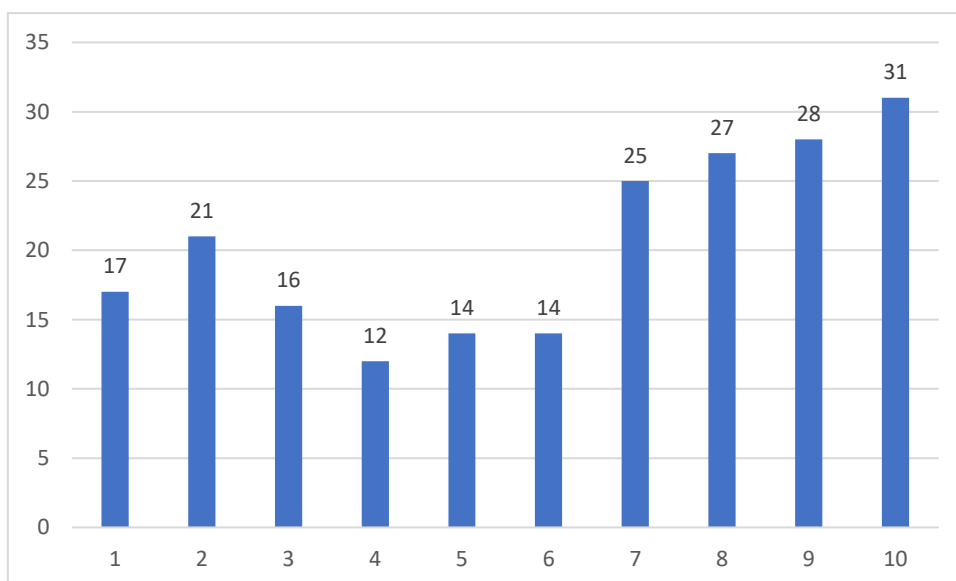


Fig. 4. “Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale”.
 1 - Russia respects the territorial integrity of other states.

10 - If desired, Russia can seize any border state.

In the same connection, there is a clarifying question to the previous one - do the respondents consider Russia a friendly country, or, on the contrary, for them and their homeland it increases the sense of danger (see Fig. 5). The answers here are ambiguous: 45.6% really perceive Russia as an unfriendly, unreliable and unsafe country for its neighbors, but the most popular (aka average) answer is "5". As mentioned earlier, "5" in this case can be regarded as "difficult to answer", or lack of sufficient experience and observations to answer, or simply an incorrectly composed question for the respondent. However, we dare to suggest that for a given pair of statements, a certain hesitation of the respondents in answering means that they do not feel confident for their words, they cannot answer unequivocally in favor of a militarist-minded Russia, but they also cannot call it a friendly state. Given the context of the past 40 years, as well as the "external shocks" we have identified, half of which are related to war and armed conflicts, it is difficult to dispute these results.

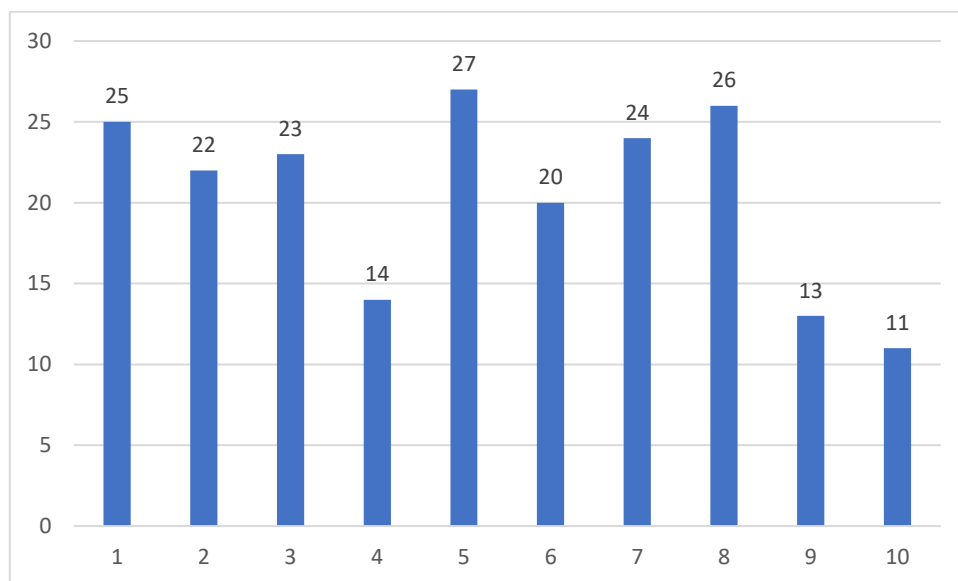


Fig. 5. "Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale".

1 - Russia is a friendly, reliable and safe partner of my country.

10 - It seems to me that Russia threatens the security of me and my country as a whole.

At the same time, it is interesting that in the next question of the questionnaire, the respondents almost unanimously (59.7%) noted that the media, including the Swedish ones, like to demonize Russia (see Fig. 6). This leads us to an interesting conclusion: from the analyzed block of questions, it follows that the media are biased for demonizing Russia, however the country in the eyes of the respondents is not a friendly state anyway (its foreign

policy is unpredictable and aggressive, and political leaders think in outdated categories of the 20th century).

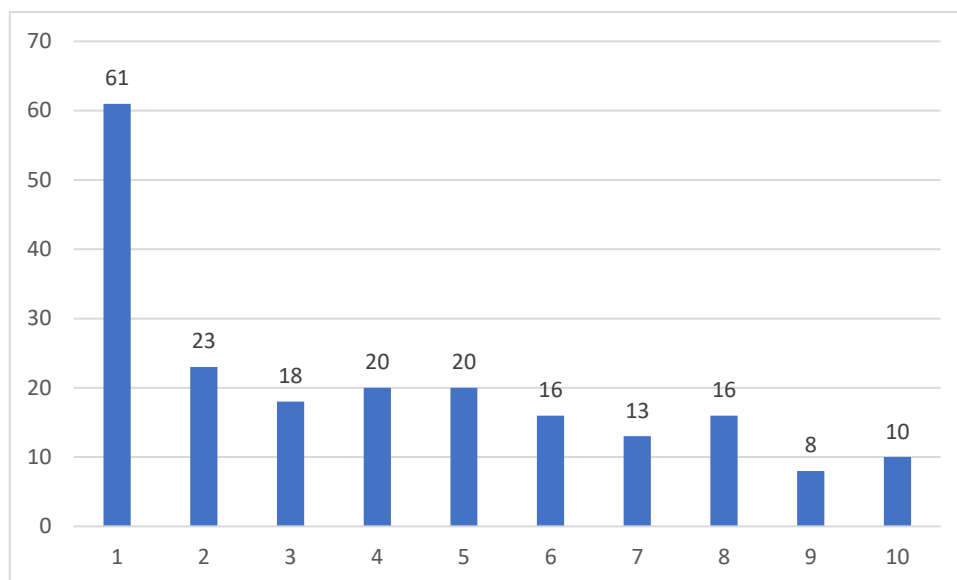


Fig. 6. “Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale”.

1 - The media like to demonize Russia.

10 - Speaking about Russia, the media are usually objective and truthful.

This section is followed by a question about the kind of news related to Russia is being discussed most actively lately (see Fig. 7). Predictably, 75% of the Swedes participating in the poll highlighted the case of the Russian opposition leader A. Navalny, which began in late summer 2020. In the chapter 3.9. it was noted that this event became another external shock already in the process of writing the thesis and compiling the survey, so it was not possible to get around this topic. So, the paragraph about the poisoning and the subsequent arrest of A. Navalny was written after receiving the results of the survey, when it became clear that the inhabitants of Sweden are very closely following the situation around him. The second place, by a wide margin, is taken by the news about the Russian vaccine against coronavirus – however, respondent №79 assumes that Russia "lies about death tolls due to covid". In general, we note that positive or neutral-positive news (Nord Stream-2 or the promotion of a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh) very rarely flickers in the news and on the TV screen; or perhaps the people of Sweden are not very interested in it. Basically, news from Russia and about Russia is united by destructive topics (interference in elections and the internal affairs of another country) and cannot have an approving feedback.

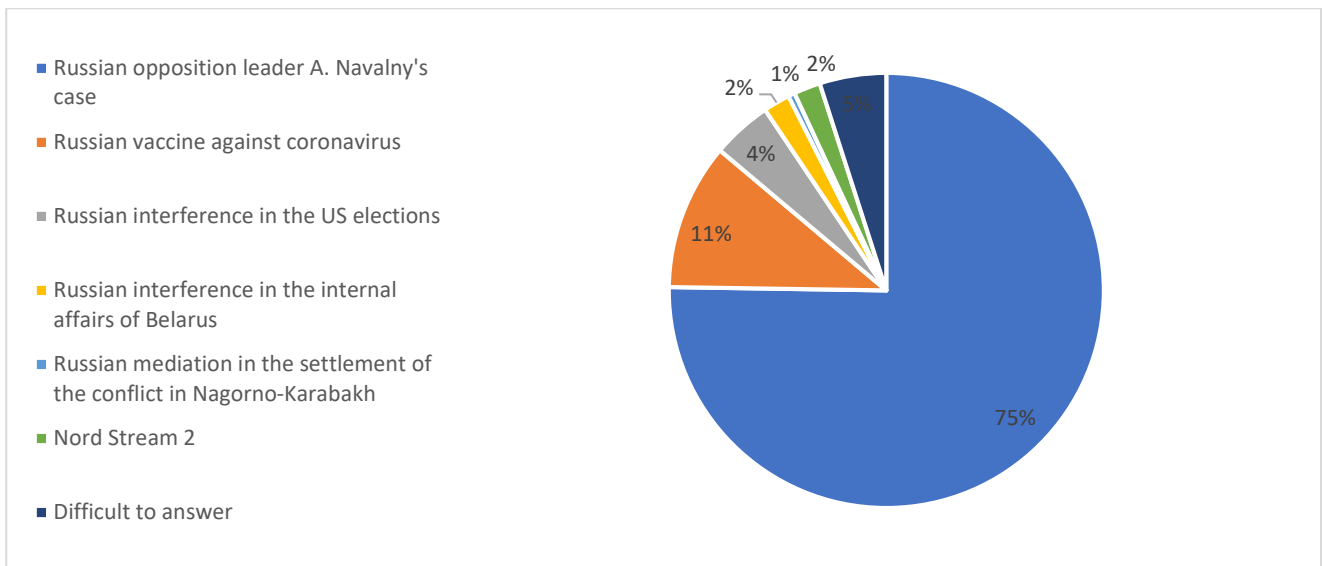


Fig. 7. “Which of the following recent news about Russia was most actively discussed in the media, society, or political space?”

The subsequent questions are related to the associative lines: the respondents were asked to choose the categories which they can associate with Russia and the Russians for any of their own reasons. In addition to the options already mentioned, the respondent could share their more specific thoughts in free form. This section has a great importance: the results of the analysis will allow, firstly, to draw a conclusion about the degree to which Russia and its inhabitants are connected, and secondly, to model the image of these two categories.

Upon closer examination of the answers about Russia, it was noticed that the most popular categories are those that characterize it as a state (Fig. 8). These options include, for example, "Russia and World Politics" and "Russia and its Military Sphere"; this means that it is known primarily as an important actor of international relations, and the number of “external shocks” associated with Russia's actions outside its borders, in particular with armed conflicts, only confirms this fact. It is also interesting that 70% of respondents associate Russia with its current president, V. Putin; Such "personification" of the country has already been discussed in the historical part of the thesis; this is an inevitable consequence of interaction with the super-presidential republic, which many researchers consider Russia (Barany, 2008). Often, when discussing the agenda, parliamentarians of the Riksdag also used the words "Putin" and "Russia" synonymously. This merger was reflected in the respondents' feedback – f. e. respondent № 63 noticed that ordinary Swedes also equate these two terms.

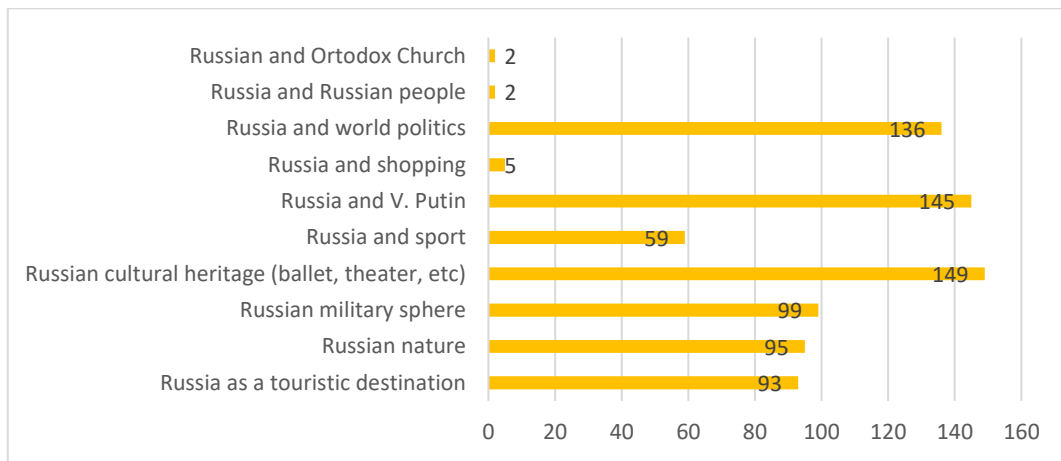


Fig. 8. “With what categories do you associate Russia?”.

Nevertheless, the most popular association with Russia is its cultural heritage: by a small margin, this option is the leader among all those proposed. Indeed, elements of high culture, such as ballet or theater, are a recognizable "brand" of Russia abroad. It is believed that the elite Russian culture is opposed to popular culture and is part of the Russian soft power (apparently quite successful in Sweden).

Here, we note that only two respondents drew a parallel between Russia and its inhabitants. Within the framework of this study, this means that the country and its people are nevertheless separated from each other, at least at the primary associative stage of reflection.

Every second respondent left a comment in the open-ended question about specific associations about Russia (Fig. 9). Having created large categories for content analysis and combining some of the answers into less narrow blocks, we will single out a few of the most frequent mentions.

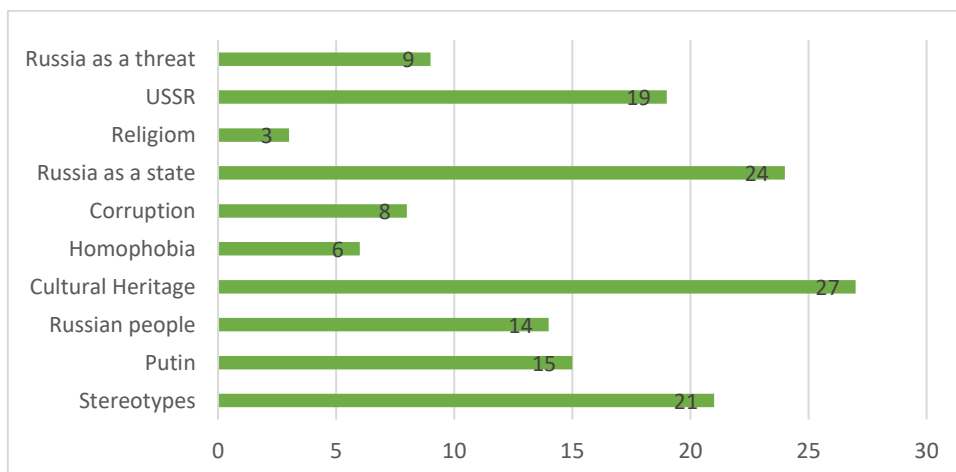


Fig. 9. “If you have any specific association(s) about Russia, please share them (f. e.: a bear, Putin, etc.)”.

So, the first place (30% of the number of those who answered this optional question) is still occupied by the cultural heritage of Russia: the respondents recall the famous names of writers, architectural monuments, the beauty of the language, and so on. By a small margin, the second place is taken by the category united by the common name "Russia as a state", however, more than half of the responses in this sector are negative, while, like other characteristics, it cannot be called positive, rather neutral ("suspicion of the West", "conservatism", "possession nuclear weapons ", etc.). For example, 33% of respondents identified corruption as an associative trait, and skepticism towards the current government of Russia was expressed by every second respondent in the category "Russia as a state". Among the notable sectors, one can also single out the "USSR", which included all references to Soviet power and its leaders, the Second World War, the Cold War and communism; as well as "Putin" - the current president of Russia was repeatedly noted by 15.7% of Swedes. Most of these answers are neutral, the respondent simply lists the categories he or she is familiar with. In contrast to the previous question, the respondents here more often associate Russia and its inhabitants (14 references). In addition to neutral-positive associations such as "beautiful women" or "good people", it is important to single out a certain category of sympathizers whose responses are based on opposing people to the state (14.7% of those who answered this question). This large group is best described by the answers of respondents №36 or №182: "Great people, terrible regime". This leads us to interesting conclusions. Thus, according to the Swedes, Russia is a large and great country with a rich culture and a difficult past; its current resources are concentrated in the hands of "super wealthy ex KGB/Police/Politicians took everything from the people when Soviet Union fell." (respondent №144), and its inhabitants are generally kind, but conservative (respondent № 53), nationalistic (respondent № 118), partly homophobic (respondent № 60), "oppressed" (respondent № 144) and "robbed" (respondent № 12) by the state.

The following questions about Russians have a similar structure and logic. So, when drawing up the question "Which of the following statements do you agree with?" (fig. 10), the author chose the most frequent stereotyped opinions found on the Internet (for example, Creve, 2020). According to the results of the analysis, 62.6% of respondents agreed that Russians are distinguished by hospitality (the famous "Russian spirit"), the second and third most

popular answers attribute to the residents of Russia a love of alcohol (58.7%) and a friendly attitude towards foreigners (45.5%), even taking into account the absolute lack of knowledge of foreign languages (23.3%). It is interesting that friendliness towards foreigners as a national trait of Russians contradicts the well-established stereotype that they are cold and even suspicious, especially towards “western” guests (respondent №51). Also, every third respondent believes that Russians are nostalgic for the times of the USSR, the same characteristic was previously attributed to the political elites and Russia as a whole. The division of everyone into “friends” and “foes”, characteristic of the Cold War period, on the contrary, is practically not attributed to Russians (10.7%).

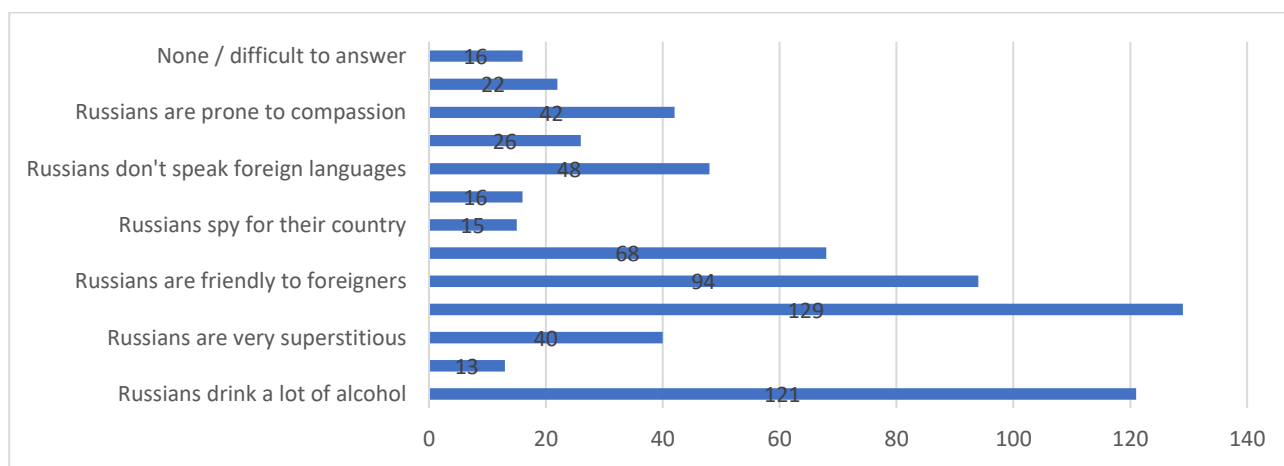


Fig. 10. “If you have any specific association(s) about Russians, please share them (f. e.: unfriendly, good at cooking, etc.)”.

It is important to note that among the respondents who mentioned such qualities as hospitality and friendliness (138 people), 81% have above the minimum experience of communicating with Russians. This is an indicator that the choice of such a number of characteristics by the respondents was not accidental, this image was created by personal experience, and not transmitted by other agents of information dissemination. Moreover, only 30.4% of them have never visited Russia. For this study, the connection between personal experience and opinion is important, even though it is generally obvious: this indicates that the residents of Russia made a positive impression on the respondents, were able to break a certain common stereotype of the "evil Russian".

The same conclusion is confirmed by the results of an open question about associations with residents of Russia (Fig. 10). 81 people left their comments in addition to the previous question, for a more accurate analysis, we identified three main variations of answers: positive characteristics, negative characteristics and values.

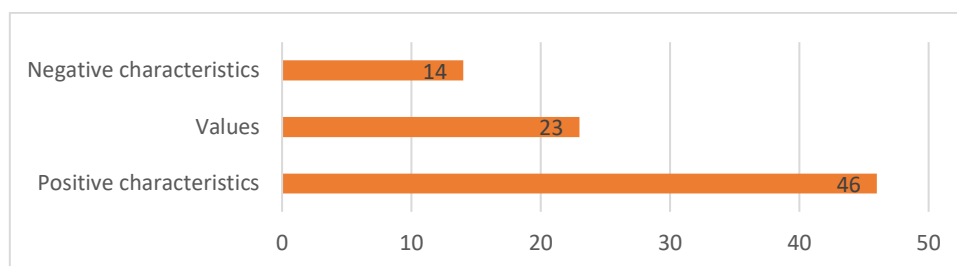


Fig. 11. “If you have any specific association(s) about Russians, please share them (f. e.: unfriendly, good at cooking, etc.)”.

Thus, 56.7% highlighted such unconditionally positive traits of Russians as friendliness, hospitality, loyalty, education, a sense of humor, culinary abilities, etc., that is, a certain basic set of traits that will be highly appreciated in any culture. 28.4% of the answers fell into the enlarged category of “values”: respondents believe that conservatism, traditionalism, fatalism, a tendency to philosophize, sentimentality, and, less often, melancholy and “suffering as a lifestyle” are characteristic of the inhabitants of Russia (respondent №106). Also, there are characteristics with negative coloration; 17% of the respondents believe that Russians are inherent in such traits as homophobia, racism and xenophobia, poor knowledge of English, unsightly behavior abroad (respondent № 24) coldness and “thieves” (respondents № 147, № 165). From the attached graph it becomes clear that attribution of these negative traits is much inferior to other categories, and the inhabitants of Russia as a whole, in the opinion of the respondents, are simply “just like us - both bad and good” (respondent № 160). It is also noticeable that the respondents clearly distinguish between the state and the people: several times in the questionnaire the thought flashed that people are not politicians (respondent № 168), and it is important not to confuse one with the other (respondent № 15).

Summarizing this block of questions in which the Swedes were asked to express their attitude towards Russia and its inhabitants, we shall assume the following. In the eyes of the respondents, Russia appears before us as a country with a rich and difficult past, a great culture, a conservative system and a pronounced militaristic bias. It, being the legal successor of the USSR, still lives and thinks in the categories of the Cold War, the actions of its leaders in relation to neighboring states are difficult to predict, which naturally weakens the sense of security for the neighbors around it. This image is a direct consequence of

events over the past 40 years, referred to in this study as “external shocks”. As has been repeatedly noted, half of them (the wars in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea) are associated with military actions that have seriously shaken the foreign policy image of Russia as a democratic country, one of the initiators of building a secure world. Sweden, of course, is a country located in absolute proximity to Russia - St. Petersburg and Stockholm are divided only by the Baltic Sea with its Gulf of Finland. Based on this, as well as from the results of the survey for this section, it is easy to conclude that *rysskräck* is still alive in relation to Russia; it is indeed a kind of psychological anxiety among people that Russia has the potential and opportunity for aggression towards Sweden, and the unpredictability of its actions in the eyes of the respondent does not seem to guarantee that one day this will happen in practice. Nevertheless, it is completely impossible to talk about *rysskräck* in relation to the Russians: according to the current survey results, the inhabitants of Russia do not exude a threat, if, on the contrary, they are not the same recipient of it as the Swedes. The category “Russians” is understood by respondents as generally good-natured and hospitable people, the main difference from the Swedes or other residents of the generalized “West” is their craving for conservatism and life outside modern social trends. A small segment of conditionally negative comments about them also cannot be considered a manifestation of any fear, because it is unlikely that ignorance of English or a stereotypical addiction to alcohol can become a source of a phobia. Thus, at this stage, there is a serious narrowing of understanding of the *rysskräck* phenomenon: the inhabitants of Russia are no longer the cause of it.

5.2. Bilateral Russo-Swedish relations in perspective of Swedish respondents

In this section, we will analyze the results of the survey on the Russian-Swedish relations block. Several typical questions are presented here, due to the answers it will be possible to draw a conclusion on how accurate the theory was selected, and the “external shocks” were highlighted, respectively.

So, the majority of respondents (61.5%) assess modern Russian-Swedish relations as tense, conflict, one in four considers them neutral, and only 2.4% of respondents can call them friendly, partnership (see Fig. 12). At the same time, the respondents were asked to independently determine a certain “point of no return” from which they keep a record of the

level of relations that they had identified earlier. Comparison of “before” and “after” turned out to be contrasting: the number of “conflicting” responses decreased by almost half (from 125 to 79 responses), while the “friendly” sector grew sixfold (from 5 to 29 responses). Undoubtedly, the Russian-Swedish relations “before” still have some kind of conflict ground, but it is much less than the stacked categories defined as “neutral” and “partnership” (79 responses of “conflict” versus 104 of “neutral” and “partnership” combined). Moreover, let us also add that in the eyes of the respondents, Russia and Sweden tended to, if not partnership, then at least to neutral coexistence, but nowadays this trend has acquired the opposite character.

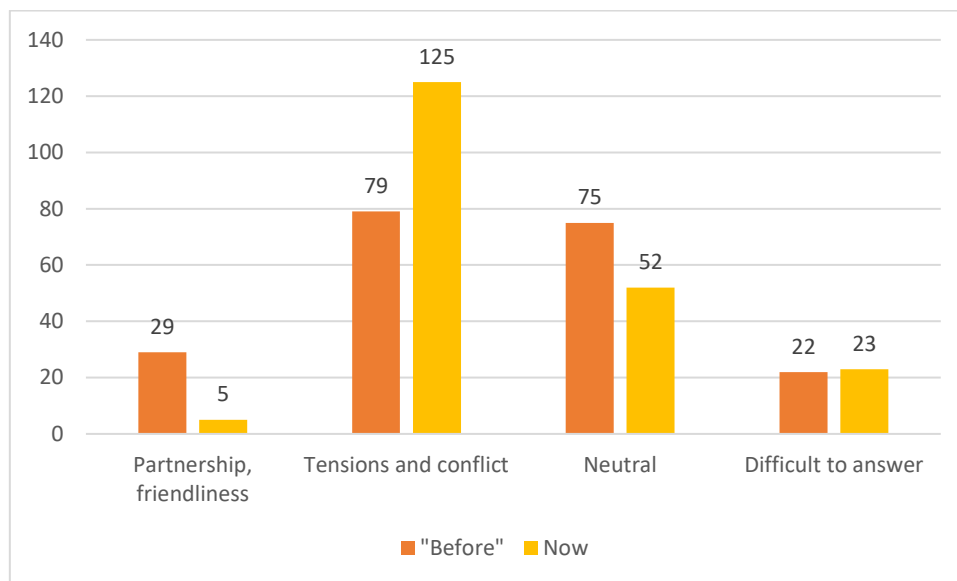


Fig. 12. “How do you assess the level of relations between Russia and Sweden today and “before?”.

Thus, a logical question arises - what event did the respondents define for themselves as a “point of no return” in Russian-Swedish relations. Obviously, for this thesis, this event is that very “critical juncture” that, among other “external shocks”, determined the further path dependence of the two countries.

This question was open, and out of the total number of respondents, 156 people left their answer to it. All the data obtained can be divided into enlarged categories (see Fig. 13), the leaders among which are two options - "the collapse of the USSR" and "annexation of the Crimea". Hence it follows that the respondents consider these two events to be the very *critical junctures* that were discussed in the historical part of the work. For a more accurate analysis, we will link this category with the previous answers in this block.

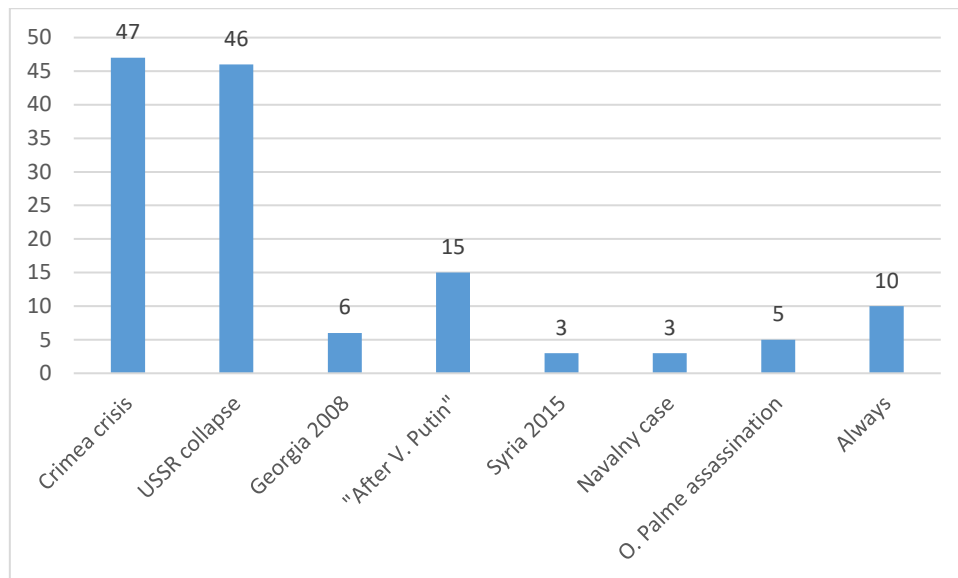


Fig. 13. "Please, specify "the point of before" which you set up for the previous question".

The first category, in addition to direct answers about 1991 and the collapse of the USSR, also included answers about the Cold War and the Soviet period in general. The average age of a respondent in this category is 44, which means that they were direct witnesses to the events of the late 20th century, and this, in turn, increases the relevance of their answer. According to respondents who noted the collapse of the USSR as a turning point between Russia and Sweden (see Fig. 14), relations "after" became less tense, albeit not friendly; their current level is rather neutral than conflict. Thus, the events of 1991 are an example of a *positive external shock*, a critical juncture, that, in the eyes of the respondents, turned their attitude towards Russia for the better. As mentioned earlier in Paragraph 3.3., Sweden actively supported the development of democratic institutions in new Russia, its aspiration for the transition from the communist model. This still cannot be called a strong partnership, but a neutral foundation for them was laid in the early 1990s.

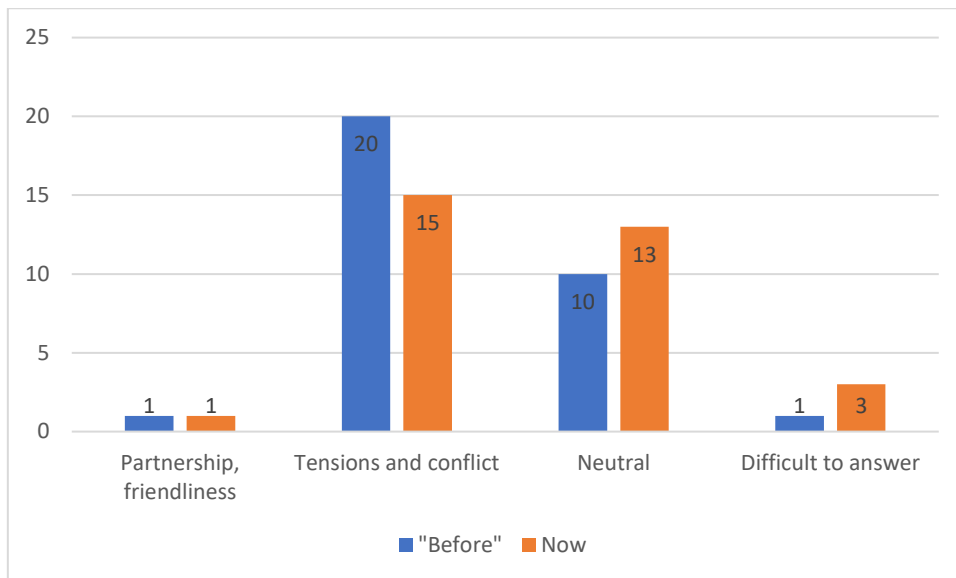


Fig. 14. USSR as a critical juncture: analysis of those respondents who picked up this option.

The second category includes all references to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine. The average age of the respondent was 47, which also means that they may have witnessed both the events of 2014 and the previous described “shocks”. So, when analyzing the respondents’ answers of this category (see Fig. 15), it was found that the tension in relations after the Crimean events increased one and a half times, and neutrality decreased three times. It is also interesting that none of the respondents called modern Russian-Swedish relations “partnership”. Thus, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 became a *negative critical juncture*, the same shock that still determines Russian-Swedish relations, preventing them from developing in a more friendly and mutually beneficial direction.

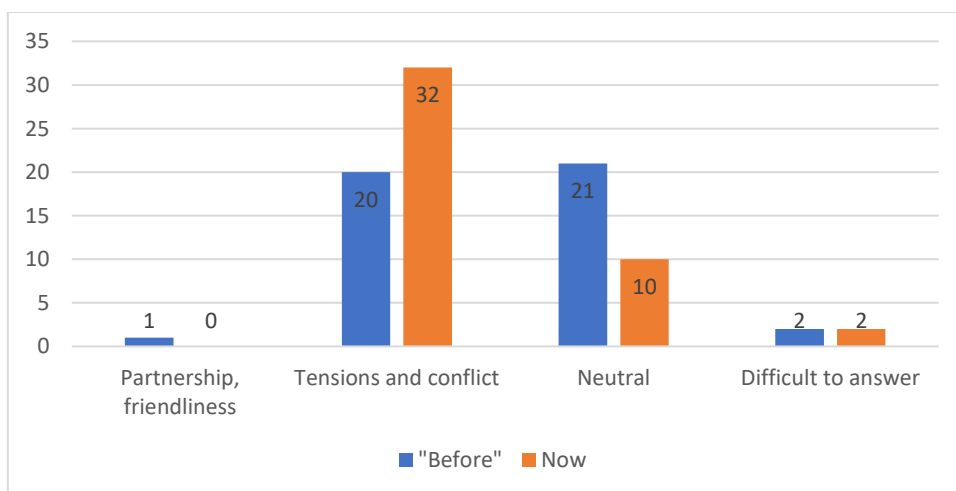


Fig. 15. Crimea as a critical juncture: analysis of those respondents who picked up this option.

Among other notable reasons for the breakdown in Russian-Swedish relations, based on the opinion of the respondents, one can mention the category “after V. Putin”, which combined the answers related to the current Russia’s president, as well as the not most obvious category - “murder of U. Palme”. The latter is interesting, although it was not considered in the historical part of this study (since the USSR was not involved in the assassination of the Swedish prime minister), it was noted by the respondents as important. The respondents assumed that the 1980s. were the most fruitful in the relationship of the two countries; that they have always been quite tense, except for this period (respondent № 23). Let us remind that the Swedish Prime Minister U. Palme was killed in 1986 in Stockholm. Shortly before the murder, he planned to come to Moscow on an official visit to discuss the problem of the appearance of Soviet submarines in the Swedish water borders (*BBC ON THIS DAY | 28 | 1986: Swedish Prime Minister Assassinated, 1986*).

Summarizing all the ideas, we note two events that, during the analysis of history and the results of the survey, confirmed their involvement in external shocks and critical junctures - *the collapse of the USSR (positive external shock) and the annexation of Crimea (negative external shock)*.

Now we move on to the analysis of the remaining questions of this block. They are also closed-ended with options for the answer "rather agree", "rather disagree" and "difficult to answer". We note in advance that the answer option "difficult to answer" was quite often chosen by the respondents, moreover, some of them, sharing their impressions after completing the survey in the comments, noted that the questions of this block caused them difficulties, mostly due to the lack of sufficient information in this topic. This is the reason of some uncertainty in the results.

So, slightly less than half (44 %) of respondents believe that the Russian authorities do not see Sweden as a potential partner and ally (see Fig. 16).

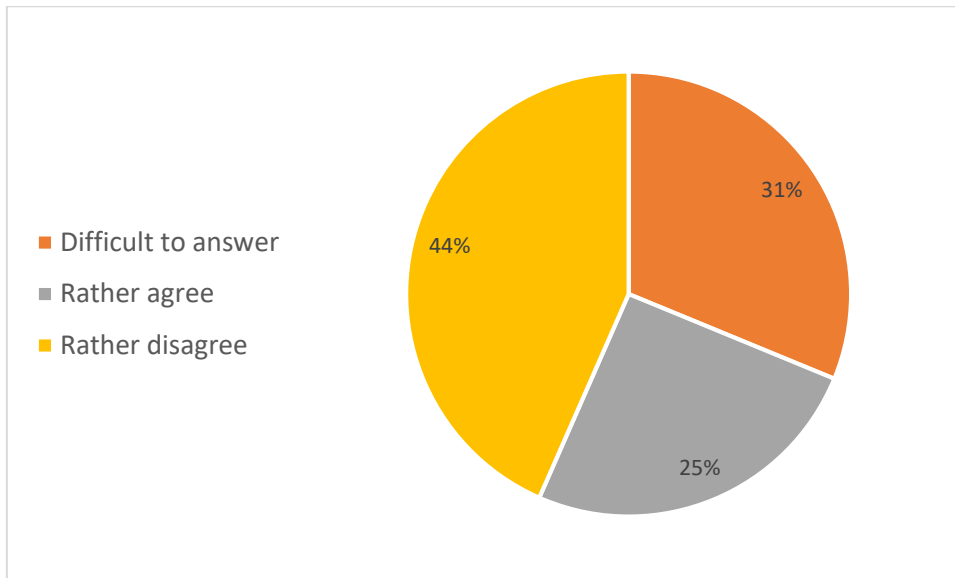


Fig. 16. Russia's political establishment considers Sweden to be a potential partner and ally.

The respondents are equally skeptical about the fact that Russia may be interested in the prosperity of Sweden - this is the opinion of every third respondent (see Fig. 17). At the same time, the largest sector of this question is “difficult to answer” (41 %), which, of course, happened due to the fact that it is hard for respondents to analyze the situation on behalf of a foreign country.

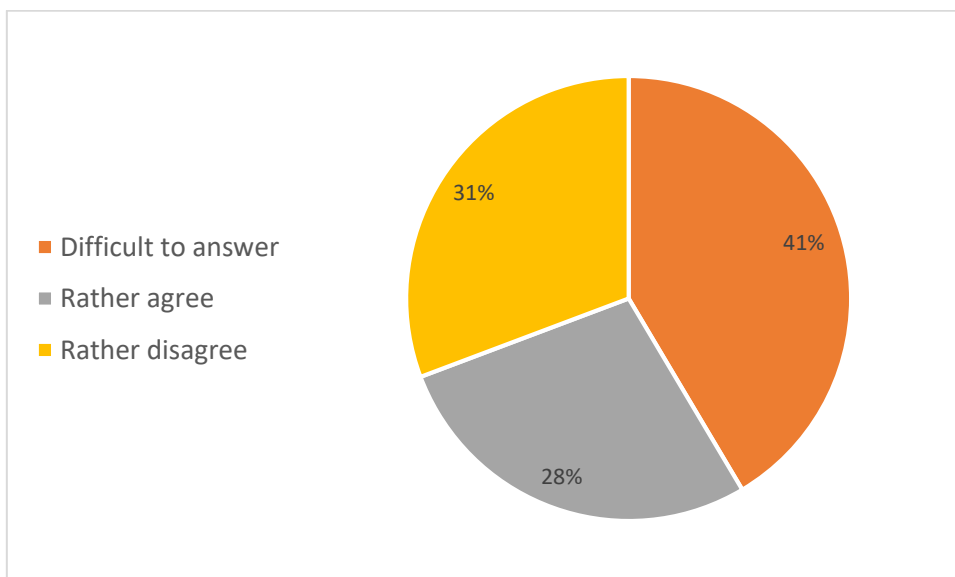


Fig. 17. Russia is interested in the prosperity of Sweden.

The Swedes are more confident in their assessment of Russia's tourist ambitions: for example, 53.9% of respondents believe that it is interested in the influx of tourists from Sweden (see Fig. 18).

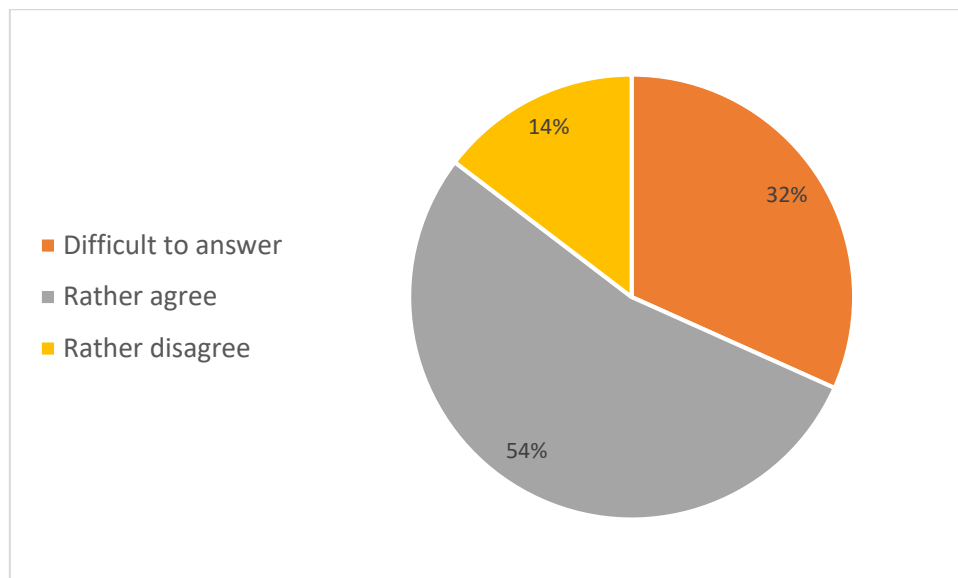


Fig. 18. Russia is interested in the influx of Swedish tourists.

While questions on "what Russia thinks" were met with some caution and uncertainty, questions about Sweden and the Swedes got a more contrasted outline. Thus, 54.4% of respondents agree that Sweden is trying to distance itself from Russia (see Fig. 19), And 68.9% believe that the country's entry into NATO will certainly provoke Russia (see Fig. 20).

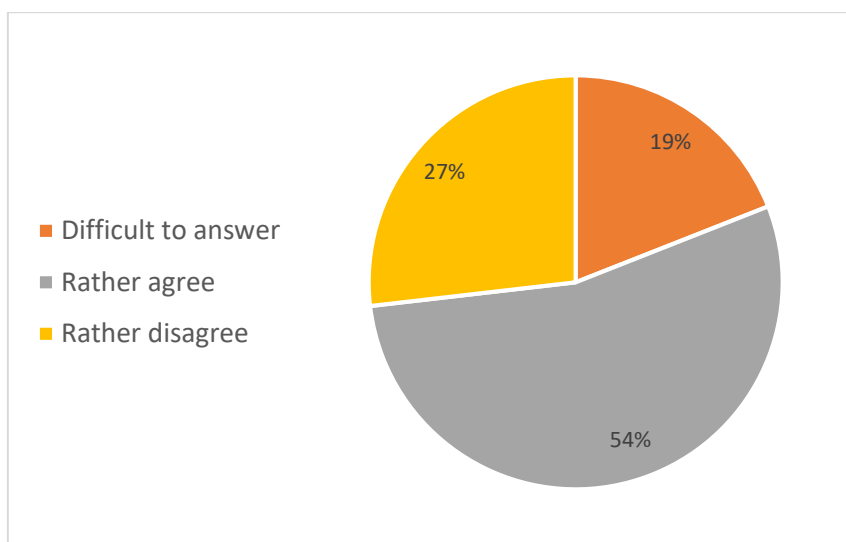


Fig. 19. Sweden seeks to isolate itself from Russia.

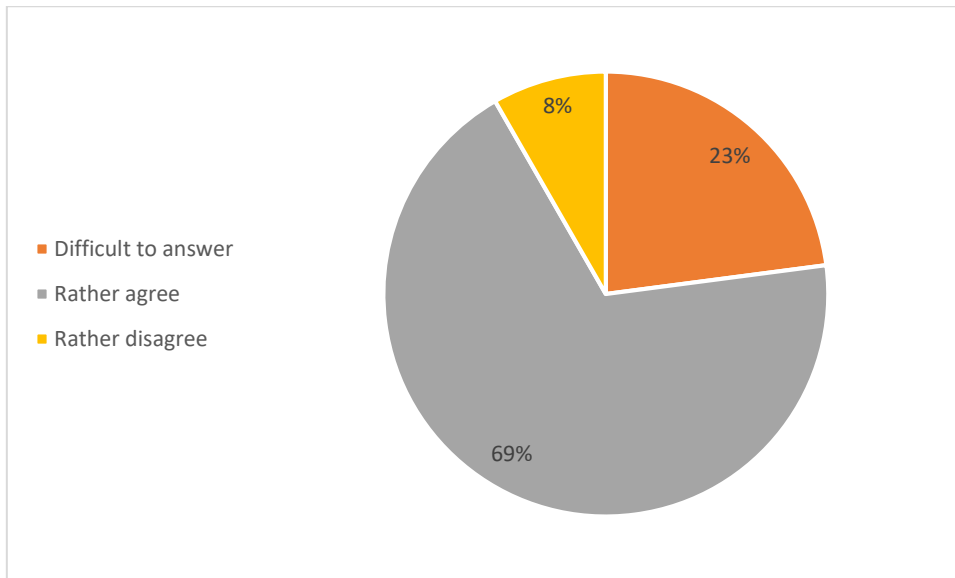


Fig. 20. Sweden's entry into NATO could provoke Russia.

In this regard, the next question arises - what is behind the words about provocation and how the respondents interpret it. 85% expressed confidence that the inhabitants of Sweden see Russia as a potential military threat (see Fig. 21). As in the case with the question from the previous block (see fig. 4), this part of the analysis is one of the most important and revealing. At first, the respondents answered "for themselves," noting that for the most part they are personally worried about the geographic proximity of Russia to their country. Now they are responsible for other Swedes according to their observation and experience. In their opinion, only 6.8% view Russia as a friendly state that does not pose a military threat. This suggests that the level of *rysskräck* in Sweden is still quite high, although several years have passed since 2014, the last "critical juncture" event.

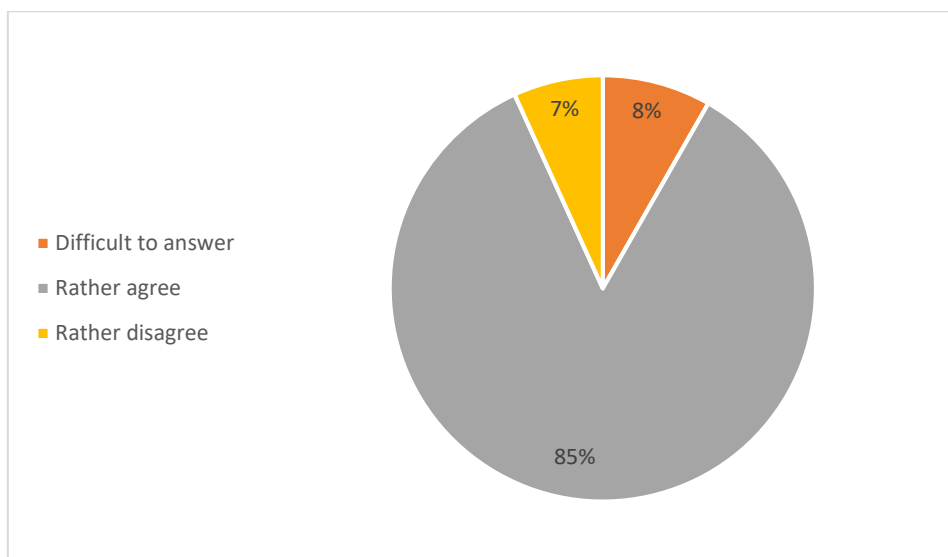


Fig. 21. People in Sweden see Russia as a potential military and political threat.

In the next question, the respondents were given the opportunity to reflect their views on the residents of Russia separately from the state (see fig. 22). In particular, the author was interested in the problem of the behavior of Russians if military aggression towards Sweden happens. Despite the fact that Russia is viewed as a potential aggressor, its inhabitants, according to the survey, are not a source of threat. Thus, almost half of the respondents (47.1%) are sure that the Russians will not support such a possible act of military aggression towards Sweden. At the same time, there is still a large percentage of the doubting group that answered “difficult to answer” (38.3%). This may be due to both the lack of awareness of how much Russians are in solidarity with the actions of their country in the international arena, and the fact that the respondents do not consider the support of the Russians to be sufficiently predictable.

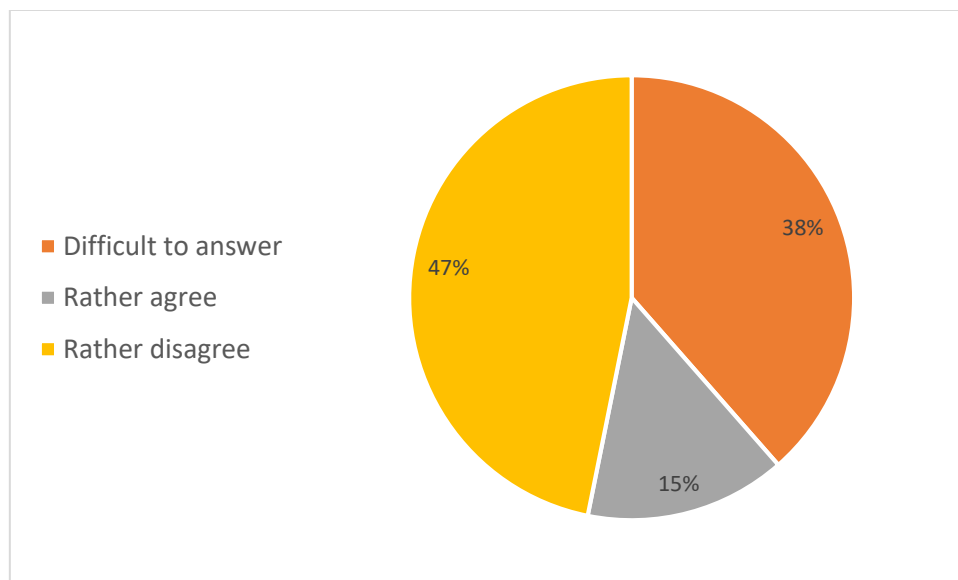


Fig. 22. If Russia attacks Sweden, then a significant part of the Russians will support this step.

The last question of this part concerned potential cooperation between Russia and Sweden in different spheres of life (see Fig. 23). The leading categories with more than 70% (151 respondents) voted, were the cultural, economic, scientific and educational spheres, that is, issues that are minimally related to politics and mostly related to contacts at the person-to-person level.

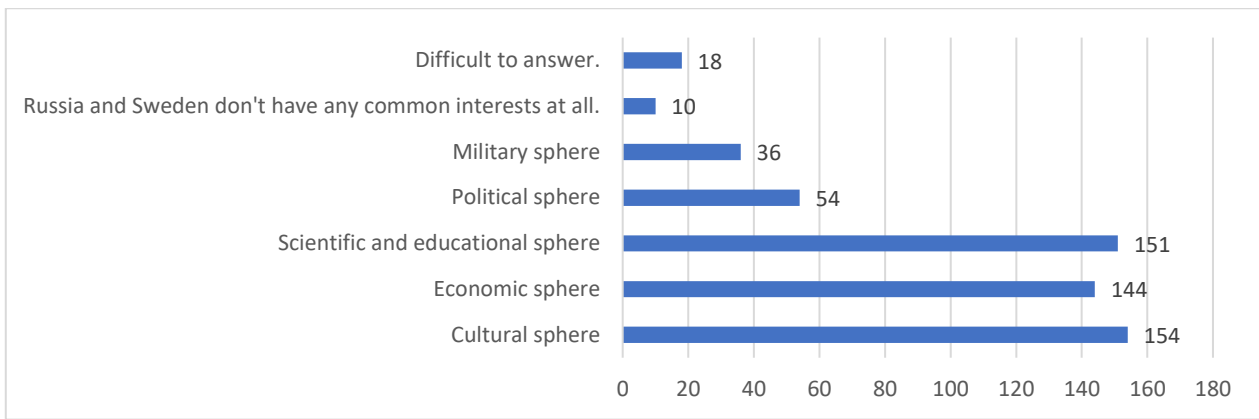


Fig. 23. I believe that Russia and Sweden have common interests in...

Thus, after analyzing the set of questions about modern bilateral relations, we can conclude that, according to the respondents, their development was globally influenced by two events - the collapse of the USSR as a positive external shock and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a negative external shock. Nevertheless, for all the years described, there was no period when the relationship would have been friendly and partnership for sure. Rather, by the turn of the century, such positive changes had just begun to form a basis after the harsh XX century, therefore, after a series of events, and especially after the 2014 conflict, this trend turned its vector backwards. So, even today the level of Russian fear is at a fairly high level, but the very nature of the phenomenon has changed. *Rysskräck* in its former understanding is outdated, for the most part it no longer exists, but it is difficult to deny that some sort of fear still exists in Sweden. After analyzing the results of the survey, it becomes clear that *rysskräck* is not a constant fear in public discourse; rather, it is a kind of political anxiety that appears in society only when Russia appears in the news again or becomes the subject of the agenda during political discussion. At the same time, for all the complexity and versatility of the issue, we note that there is no equal sign between Russia and the Russians, at least in the eyes of the respondent, and destructive bilateral relations between states do not (or almost do not) affect the image of the Russian in the eyes of the Swede.

5.3. Fear Level in modern Sweden: understanding *rysskräck* nature

The final part of the survey was devoted to the topic of Russian fear itself - this time the respondents independently assessed the scale of this problem in Sweden from the standpoint of an observer. The position of this block is not accidental: first of all, for the study, it was important for us to find out some unconscious involvement of the respondent

in *rysskräck*, and only after that to clarify their personal observations of the society around them.

Thus, 85% of the respondents were familiar with the term "*rysskräck*", and 13% have never heard of it, but understand its meaning based on the word itself (see Fig. 24).

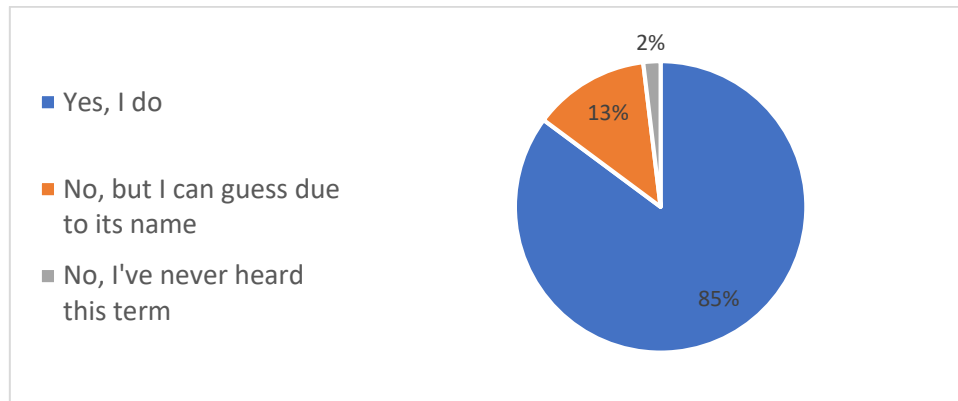


Fig. 24. Do you know what "rysskräck" is?

The average age of respondents who answered that they had not heard of *rysskräck* before was 30, which is generally less than the average age of the respondent in this survey. Among them, 81% have never been to Russia - against the average percentage of the total number of respondents - 42% (see Fig. 25). It was not possible to single out other distinctive characteristics of this group of respondents.

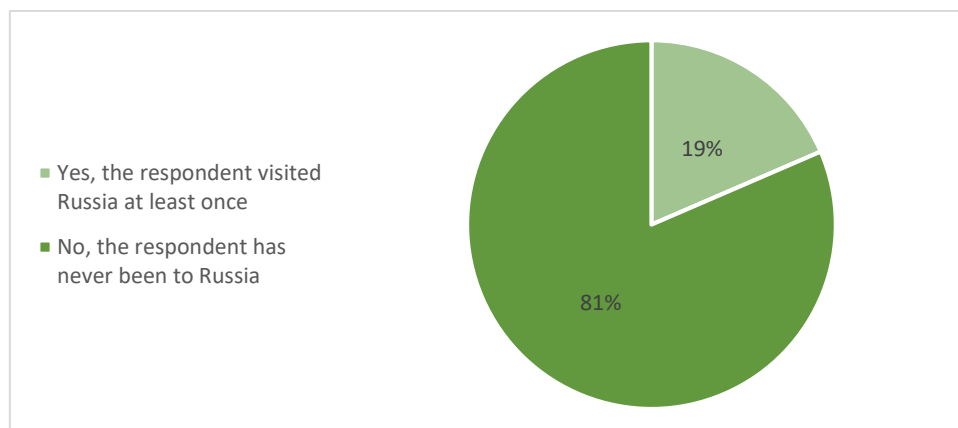


Fig. 25. Percentage of visiting Russia among the respondents who admitted they are not familiar with *rysskräck*.

After the respondents got acquainted with the meaning of the word "*rysskräck*", they were asked to answer the question on where they most often meet (if they do) the manifestation of Russian fear in Sweden. The absolute majority (71%) chose the media as such a source,

although three more notable categories should be noted - “political debate”, “older generation” and “humorous content” (see Fig. 26).

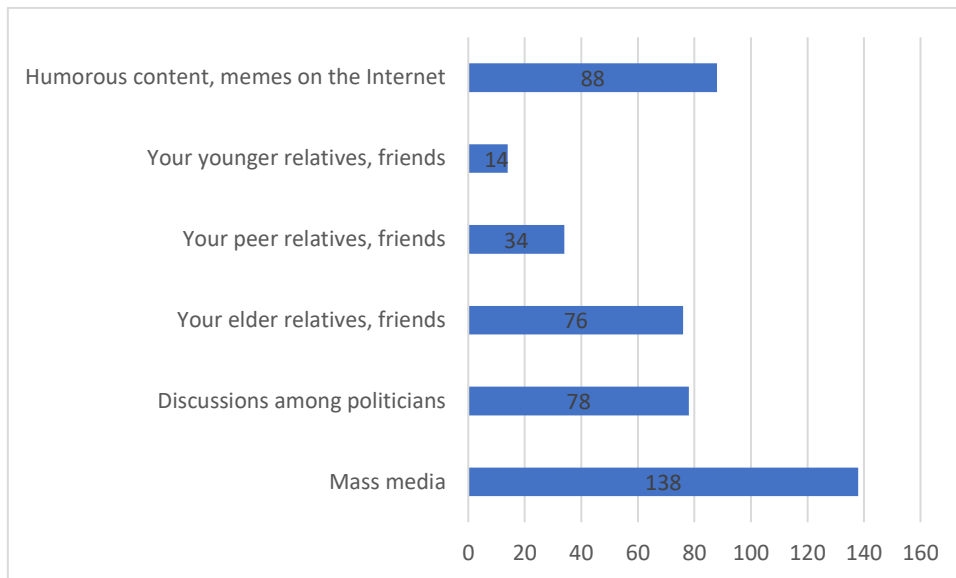


Fig. 26. If yes, where do you most often observe this phenomenon?

If everything is clear with the first two - we talked about using political fear to manipulate voters in the theoretical part of the work, and the older generation really found the times when the USSR instilled danger in border countries, then the latter is worth talking in more detail. Indeed, in the vastness of Internet networks you can find a large number of so-called "memes" - pictures with humorous content - the purpose of which is to ridicule the panic about the Russo-fear (see Fig. 27).



Fig. 27. An example of Internet-meme on rysskräck. Translation: “*Are the Russians coming? Putin is planning to take Sweden? Russian hackers unlocked your PC? Chill! Come to us! We will help you! Mental hospital! Open 24/7! Welcome!*”
Source: facebook.com

The abundance of such content on the Internet was indicated by 45.5% of respondents, and from this we can conclude that the degree of danger is not so critically high, since this topic is actively joked on social networks. In this regard, the question arises – are those people who consider Russia a real threat to Sweden, a reason for ridicule on the part of society? So, 61.1% of respondents answered this question negatively, noting that there are really a lot of such people; their panic is sometimes humorously laughed on the Internet, but in general it is not taken as a joke (see Fig. 28).

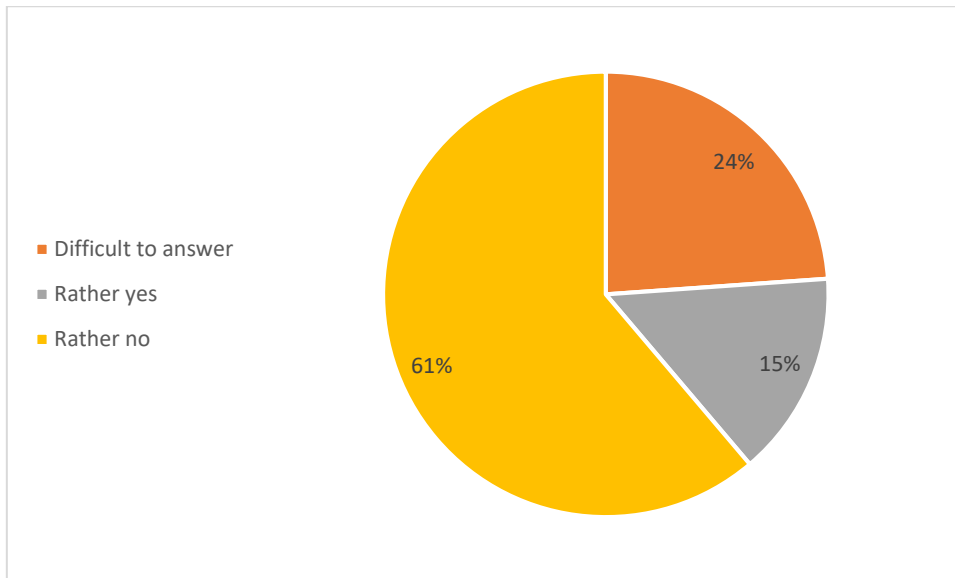


Fig. 28. "Rysskräck-ish" people are being laughed at in today's Sweden".

Moreover, 72% of Swedes, after analyzing their observations, believe that the frequency of *rysskräck* occurrence among ordinary people in Sweden, politicians or in the media ranges from "from time to time" to "very often" (see fig. 29).

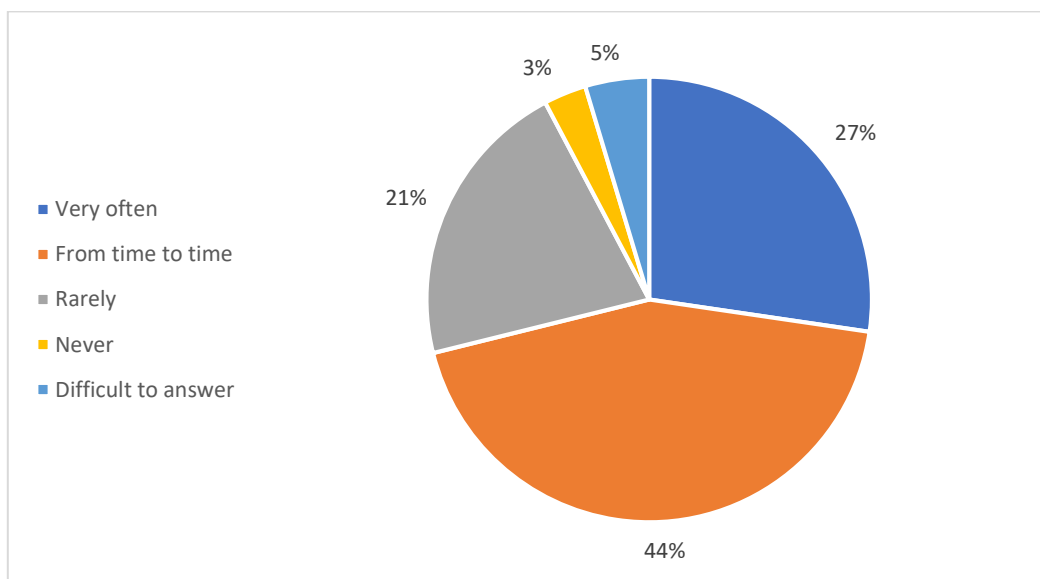


Fig. 29. How often media, politicians or people around you are being afraid of Russia or Russians?

The last, most memorable manifestation of Russo-fear, which was recorded by respondents, was the enlarged category "Submarines / Defence", which included all discussions about

the country's security after incidents with submarines and other alleged violations by Russia of the territorial borders of Sweden (see fig. 30).

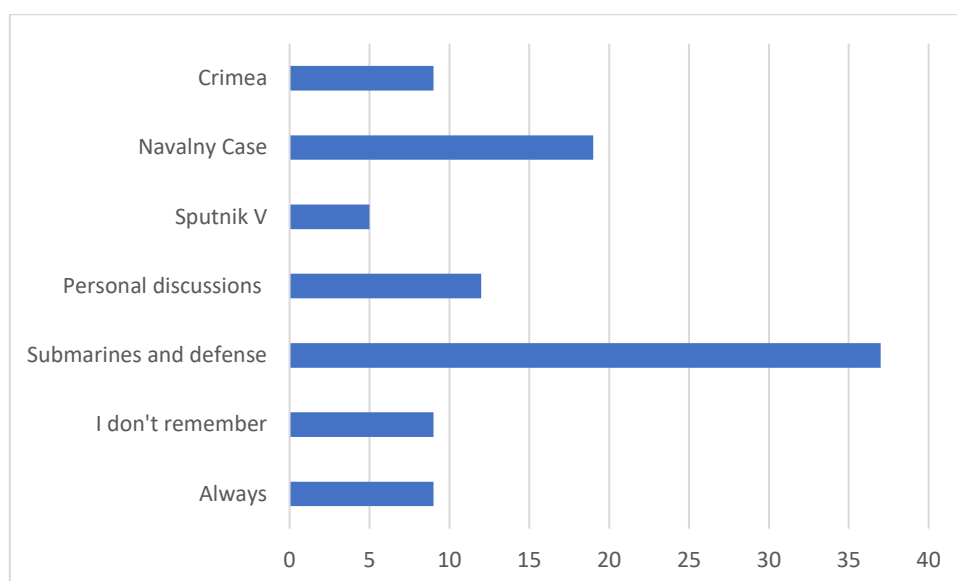


Fig. 30. What was the last "rysskräck-ish" topic you can memorize, if any?

Respondent № 184 noted that despite the fact that such news appeared in the media several years ago, they are still being discussed in the public space. Another notable category, which, as already mentioned, has become part of the list of "external shocks" is the case of A. Navalny, his poisoning and arrest in 2020–2021. Respondents have different attitudes towards him (for example, respondent № 160 mentions that in Sweden he is widely considered a victim) but this topic has long and densely been in the information field, which can be considered a manifestation of *rysskräck*. And although A. Navalny is very mediocly connected with Sweden, the results of the poll show that its residents see this situation as a threat to themselves and their country.

Three typical questions follow, where respondents were asked to rate their closeness to statements on a ten-point scale (for a more detailed description of the analysis of such questions, see paragraph 5.1.). Thus, every second Swede does not consider *rysskräck* a relic of the past (see Fig. 31).

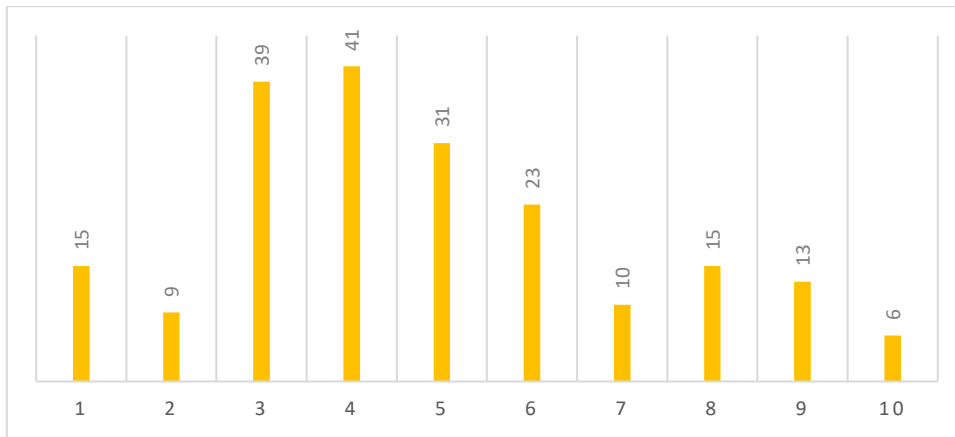


Fig. 31. "I think "rysskräck" is an outdated phenomenon".
 1 – No, Swedish people are scared of Russia and Russians.
 2 - Yes, people in Sweden are not scared of Russia or Russians at all.

Although some respondents (for example, № 59) noted in a separate section dedicated to comments that everything is just the opposite, and *rysskräck* has long ceased to be a modern phenomenon. 48% believe that the manifestation of Russo-fear is not a sign of a “hypochondriacal” person (see fig. 32); the same number believe that this phenomenon has nothing to do with the geographical proximity of Russia to Sweden, and there is no fatalism in its nature (see Fig. 30). Every third respondent finds it difficult to predict the future of Russian-Swedish relations and the place of *rysskräck* in it, and only 17% are sure that there will be no place for fear and mistrust in them in the future (see fig. 33).

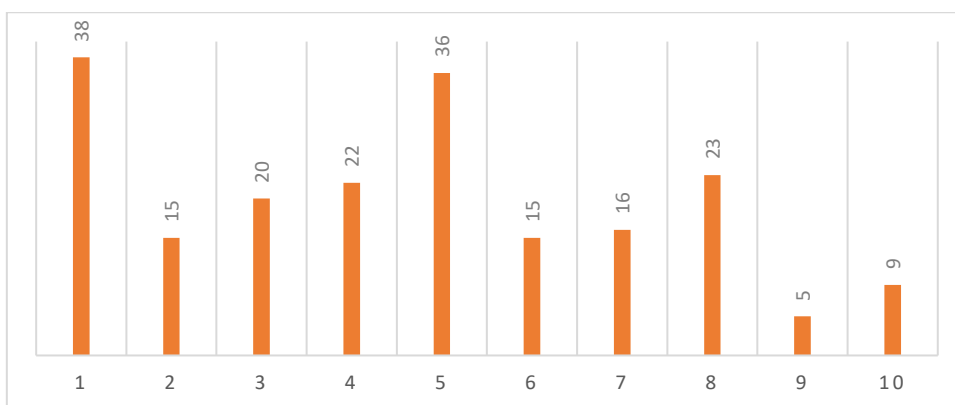


Fig. 32. "I think, that "rysskräck" is typical for hypochondriacal for nothing, all-time panicking people".
 1 – Yes, true.
 10 – No, false.

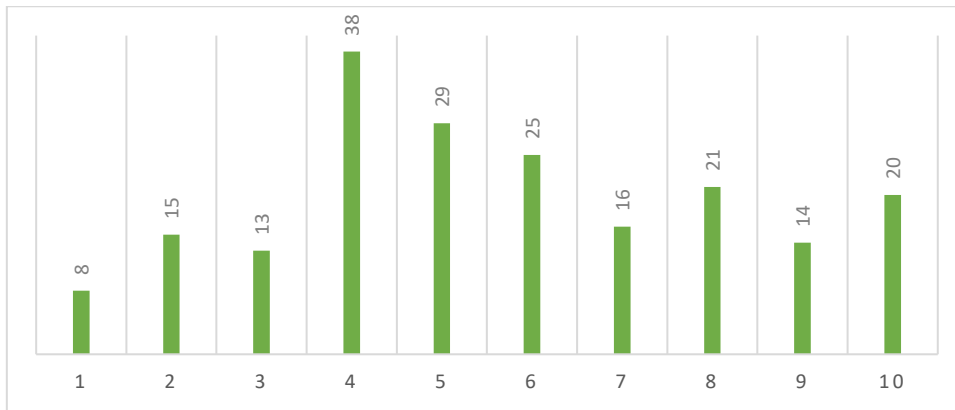


Fig. 33. "Rysskräck" is connected to the existence of Russia itself, its geographical position to Sweden; thus, Swedish people are doomed to be afraid of it".

1 - Yes, "rysskräck" is an everlasting phenomenon for Sweden.

10 - No, geographic proximity does not scare anyone.

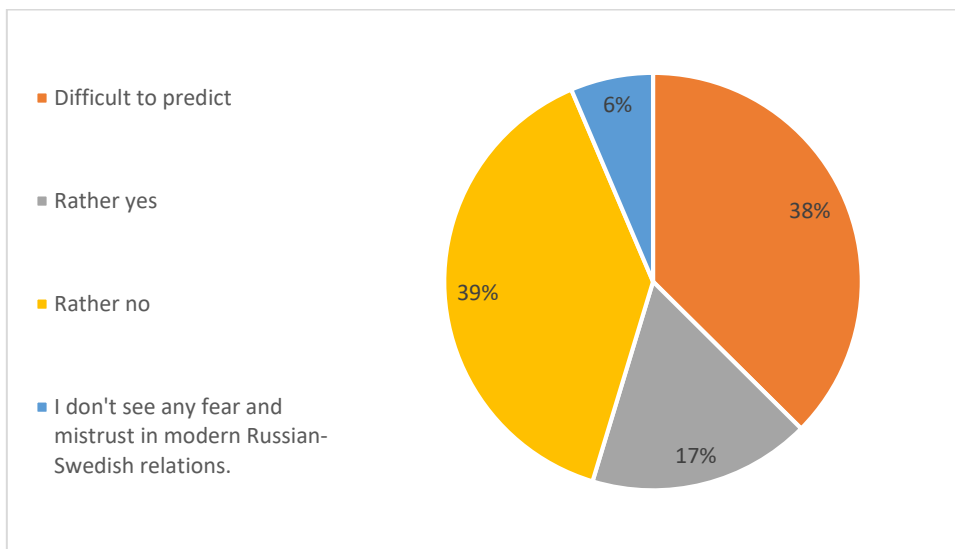


Fig. 32. "I believe that there will be no place for fear and mistrust in the future Russian-Swedish relations".

Thus, as the main conclusion of this small block, we note the following: taking the position of an observer, the respondents as a whole pointed that the high level of Russo-fear in Sweden, while noting that this phenomenon has a certain "seasonal" character (that is, it is closely related to what is happening on the international arena), as well as the fact that the modern *rysskräck* has undergone historical changes, and now exists in Sweden in a new form.

6. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The history of Russian-Swedish relations has gone through many tragic periods, they have been fixed in the memory of residents for many years. One of the consequences of this interaction is the *rysskräck* phenomenon, a primordially Swedish term that in the classical sense means fear of Russia or the Russians. According to various sources, the roots of this Russo-fear were laid back in the 16th – 17th centuries, that is, just at the height of the Russian-Swedish wars. Like any conflict, war carries with it a huge list of negative consequences, including fear, anxiety for one's life and the life of the country in the face of the enemy. However, times have changed, and the last Russian-Swedish war ended at the beginning of the 19th century. Nevertheless, talks about the continuing existence of Russian fear in Sweden continue to this day. For this study, it was important to show in what state this phenomenon survived until the 21st century and what *rysskräck* is now in general. To achieve this goal, “external shocks” were singled out in Russian-Swedish history - some rare events directly or indirectly related to Russia, that predetermine further relations between the two countries.

When selecting them, the author used Europeanism as a criterion, pushing on which, both in a positive and negative sense, can cause a reaction and broad discussion in political circles, the media, and in public forums. Obviously, not every shock can radically change the attitude of the Swedes towards Russia and the Russians; also, not every event will cause an increase in the level of political fear in the form of *rysskräck*. Therefore, among all external shocks, the author focused on those rare but notable international events (“critical junctures”), the outcome of which will be an increase in the level of Russian fear in Sweden (and which will predetermine the “path dependence”).

All in all, the modern idea of Russia and Russians among the Swedes was formed under the impression of a long list of events that have taken place in the world over the past few decades. In the context of this thesis, taking into account the chronological framework, the criterion of democratic values and a hybrid approach to theory, this list acquired the following content:

- The election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee as a positive external shock;
- The collapse of the USSR and the formation of the Russian Federation as an independent state as a positive external shock that has passed into the category of "critical point";

- The first Chechen war as a negative external shock;
- VV Putin's election for the first and second presidential terms as a positive external shock;
- War in Georgia in 2008 as a negative external shock;
- The Crimean crisis as a negative external shock that has become a “tipping point” category;
- Russia's military operation in Syria as a negative external shock;
- The protest movement in Russia after the poisoning of A. Navalny as a negative external shock.

It is evident from this list that there are many more negative external shocks (events that have a destructive effect on the image of Russia and the Russians and on Russian-Swedish relations in general), and almost all of them occurred in the 21st century. Among them, two events stand out - the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. They were defined not just as an “external shock”, but as a “critical junctures”: shocks can accumulate and not lead to dramatic consequences on a global scale, in while the critical juncture radically changes the further path of development of the two countries. 1991 was a turning point in a positive way, when democratic changes began to take place in Russia. Despite the fact that there were concerns in Sweden about the longevity of the democratic turn in Russia, relations were gradually improving, as evidenced by trade turnover, the number of business contacts and visits by heads of state. It is also noticeable from the list that by the beginning of the 21st century, events that are defined as positive external shocks are coming to an end - this is primarily due to the increase in the scale of the Russian presence in other countries and violations of the main democratic principles. On this background, those events that could potentially be perceived positively have faded - for example, the 2014 Sochi Olympics or the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. The Crimean crisis finally divided the new history into “before” and “after” in the eyes of the people of Sweden, echoes of those events appear in public discourse to this day. So, we come to the question of what is the modern *rysskräck* in Sweden.

The conclusions were made on the basis of both the history study and Internet survey conducted in January-March 2021 among residents of Sweden - active users of social networks. The purpose of the survey was to find out what image of Russia and Russians has developed in modern Sweden and to what extent *rysskräck* is a part of it. Summarizing the entire study, we draw the following conclusion:

Rysskräck is fear of Russia, where the concept of "Russia" includes its authorities, government, foreign policy, and completely excludes the people, its inhabitants.

Moreover, rysskräck has several features that make it possible to describe this phenomenon more accurately.

1. *About the essence of fear:* in this case, it means not fear or panic in the usual sense of the word, but rather some form of anxiety. In addition to Sweden's internal problems, Russia is being part of this anxiety: its actions on the international arena may be described as unpredictable since Russia is committed to its national interests, not international law. Plus to that, this "fear" is relevant not only to Sweden or Swedes, but globally – to the Baltic region ("Swedish heartland"), the Northern Europe or Europe as a whole.

2. *About duration:* it is important to note that fear (or anxiety) is not a permanent phenomenon, especially on the background of the fact that in addition to the notorious "Russians that are coming", the modern world offers Sweden a number of other challenges, including the rise of China, the issue of climate change, the migration crisis or the coronavirus pandemic. So, it would be more correct to speak not about *rysskräck* as a continuous process, but about the *rysskräck* waves that fall on the periods when Russia appears in the news headlines.

3. *About the sources:* it is also interesting to observe how Russians, from a category that is inextricably linked with the state, turned into a category that exists parallel to it. Noting that while analyzing the survey, one could often observe the idea proposed by the respondents on how much the Russians suffered throughout the history, and, in general, these Russians are "just like us". This indicates a very important shift in public mind, when the state and the people living on the territory of this state are no longer viewed as a single organism with the same set of desires, opinions and characteristics (as was the case with the Russian Cossacks, symbolizing the threat from the east, for example, back at the beginning of the 20th century).

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Online survey guidelines and questionnaire sample

Russian-Swedish relations: from Perestroika till its current state

Dear recipient,

My name is Maria Pimenova, I am a Master's student at Petrozavodsk State University (Russia) and Tampere University (Finland).

I'm working on my Master's thesis on Russo-Swedish relationships, in particular, the image of Russia and the Russians in modern Swedish society.

My goal, simply said, is to analyze perception(s) of Russia and the Russians by the inhabitants of Sweden, whether these perceptions differ from the image offered by the mass media and political discourse.

Thus, if you are reading this - I need your help to reach a better understanding of Russian-Swedish relations.

I guarantee the complete anonymity of your answers and personal data, the survey results will be used exclusively for scientific purposes in the aggregate form.

If you're interested in results of this research, feel free to contact me, and I will share it with you as soon as they are ready!

E-mail: masha-pimen@mail.ru

Thank you in advance for helping me!

Part I: Demographics.

First of all, I need to specify your personal information.

1. Your citizenship: *

Отметьте только один овал.

Sweden

Другое: _____

2. Please, specify your current place of living: *

If you don't live in Sweden now or at all, please, specify it in the section "other"

Отметьте только один овал.

Götaland

Svealand

Norrland

Другое: _____

3. Your age: *

4. Your level of education: *

Отметьте только один овал.

- No schooling completed
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree
- Другое: _____

5. Please, specify your occupation: *

Отметьте только один овал.

- A student
- An employee
- Currently out of work
- Retired
- Self-employed
- Другое: _____

6. Which of the represented political parties do you favour the most? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Centerpartiet
- Kristdemokraterna
- Liberalerna
- Miljöpartiet de gröna
- Moderata samlingspartiet
- Socialdemokraterna
- Sverigedemokraterna
- Vänsterpartiet
- Other
- None / Not interested in politics

7. Do you know any Russian people in personal capacity? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, I have a good Russian friend(s).
- Yes, but not too close.
- I had little experience with the Russians.
- No, I don't know any.
- Другое: _____

8. Have you ever been to Russia? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, I regularly visit Russia
- Yes, I've been to Russia several times
- Yes, I've been to Russia once
- No, never
- No, but I'm planning to visit Russia when the opportunity arises
- Другое: _____

9. What was the purpose of your visit to Russia?

If you said "NO" to the previous question, please, skip this one.

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Tourism
- To visit friends, relatives
- Transit to another country
- Business
- Study
- Другое: _____

Part II: Awareness Level

This part is aimed to find out the level of knowledge about Russia among respondents.

10. How familiar are you with the history of Russia? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- I am well versed in the history of Russia.
- I am well informed about certain periods of Russian history.
- My knowledge of Russian history is superficial and fragmentary.
- I know about the history of Russia only in the context of its relations with my country (for example, the Russian-Swedish wars)
- I am not interested in the history of Russia.
- Difficult to answer
- Другое: _____

11. How closely do you follow the news about Russia? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- I constantly follow the news about Russia.
- I read about Russia only what comes across in the news feed.
- I am rarely interested in news about Russia.
- I don't read news about Russia.
- Difficult to answer
- Другое: _____

12. Who was the first president of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Leonid Brezhnev
- Yuri Andropov
- Mikhail Gorbachev
- Boris Yeltsin
- Vladimir Putin
- Difficult to answer

13. Which of the following is the coat of arms of Russia? *

Отметьте только один овал.



1



2



3



4

Difficult to answer

14. Which of the following facts are relevant to Russia?

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Most of the population is Muslim
- Second largest country measured by area in the world (after the USA)
- One official state language.
- Socialist state
- Mikhail Mishustin is a Russian Prime Minister
- Freedom of the media is a basic principle of the Constitution.
- Russia has a visa-free regime with the EU countries.

**Part III:
Attitude
Level**

This part is devoted to assessment of attitudes towards Russia and Russians among respondents.

!!! UPD. In the next sections, the words "Sweden", "Russia" and "Russians" will be used many times. In order to avoid misunderstanding, let's outline the difference: Russia and Sweden are states and their governments, their political establishment. Russians are a simple people, residents of Russia. Please, keep it in mind for your future answers!

15. What sources of information do you use to form your opinion about Russia and Russians? *

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Opinion of friends or relatives who often visit Russia or have personal experience with Russians.
- Russian media in English or Swedish (for example, Russia Today)
- Russian media in Russian
- Personal experience (I've been to Russia, I have Russian friends or relatives, etc.)
- Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, VK, etc.)
- I'm not really interested in Russia.

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Russia puts all its efforts to build peaceful and safe world

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Russia is one of the main reasons of unstable and insecure world

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Russia is committed to international law

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Russia is committed to its national interests

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Russia's political leaders consider all other countries to be equal partners

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Russia's political leaders still think in terms of the cold war

⋮

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Russia respects the territorial integrity of other states

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

If desired, Russia can seize any border state

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Russia is a friendly, reliable and safe partner of my country

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

It seems to me that Russia threatens the security of me and my country as a whole

Based on the opinion you formed, try to put Russia on the following scale: *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The media like to demonize Russia Speaking about Russia, the media are usually objective and truthful

22. Which of the following recent news about Russia was most actively discussed in the media, society, or political space? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Russian opposition leader A. Navalny's case
- Russian vaccine against coronavirus
- Russian interference in the US elections
- Russian interference in the internal affairs of Belarus
- Russian mediation in the settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh
- Nord Stream 2
- Difficult to answer
- Другое: _____

23. With what categories do you associate Russia? *

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Russia as a touristic destination
- Russian nature
- Russian military sphere
- Russian cultural heritage (ballet, theater, etc)
- Russia and sport
- Russia and V. Putin
- Russia and shopping
- Russia and world politics
- Другое: _____

24. If you have any specific association(s) about Russia, please share them (f. e.: a bear, Putin, etc.)

25. Which of the following statements do you agree with? *

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Russians drink a lot of alcohol
- Russians are immune to cold
- Russians are very superstitious
- Russians are hospitable ("Russian spirit")
- Russians are friendly to foreigners
- Russians are nostalgic for the times of the USSR
- Russians spy for their country
- If this Russian is not a military man, then one of his friends or family is a military man
- Russians don't speak foreign languages
- Politics is part of the life of the Russian people.
- Russians are prone to compassion
- Russians divide people into friends and foes
- None / difficult to answer

26. If you have any specific association(s) about Russians, please share them (f. e.: unfriendly, good at cooking, etc.)

27. Which famous people of Russia, both past and present, can you name?

Part IV: Bilateral Relations Level

This part is aimed at finding out how the respondents assess modern Russian-Swedish relations.
NB!

28. How do you assess the level of relations between Russia and Sweden today? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Partnership, friendliness
- Tensions and conflict
- Neutral
- Difficult to answer

29. In comparison, how do you assess the level of relations between Russia and Sweden "before"? *

(please, set the point "before" yourself, f.e., before Crimea crisis)

Отметьте только один овал.

- Partnership, friendliness
- Tensions and conflict
- Neutral
- Difficult to answer

30. Please, specify "the point of before" which you set up for the previous question:

(f.e. Crimea crisis, the collapse of the USSR, etc.)

31. Russia's political establishment considers Sweden to be a potential partner and ally. *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

32. Russia is interested in the prosperity of Sweden *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

33. Russia is interested in the influx of Swedish tourists *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

34. Sweden seeks to isolate itself from Russia *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

35. People in Sweden see Russia as a potential military and political threat *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

36. If Russia attacks Sweden, then a significant part of the Russians will support this step. *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

37. Sweden's entry into NATO could provoke Russia. *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather agree
- Rather disagree
- Difficult to answer

38. I believe that Russia and Sweden have common interests in... *

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Cultural sphere
- Economic sphere
- Scientific and educational sphere
- Political sphere
- Military sphere
- Russia and Sweden don't have any common interests at all.
- Difficult to answer.

Part V: Fear Level

This part is aimed to find out the awareness about rysskräck phenomenon among respondents.

39. Do you know what "rysskräck" is? *

Отметьте только один овал.

- Yes, I do
- No, but I can guess due to its name
- No, I've never heard this term

Rysskräck means fear of Russia or Russians. This term has a long history, mostly connected with wars or (possible) military aggression from the Russian side.

40. If yes, where do you most often observe this phenomenon?

Отметьте все подходящие варианты.

- Mass media
- Discussions among politicians
- Your elder relatives, friends
- Your peer relatives, friends
- Your younger relatives, friends
- Humorous content, memes on the Internet

Другое: _____

41. If "yes", how often media, politicians or people around you are being afraid of Russia or Russians?

Отметьте только один овал.

- Very often
- From time to time
- Rarely
- Never
- Difficult to answer

42. What was the last "rysskräck-ish" topic you can memorize, if any?

Some discussions in mass media, posts in social media, opinion of your friends or relatives or your personal thoughts.

I think "rysskräck" is an outdated phenomenon.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No, Swedish people are scared of Russia and Russian Yes, people in Sweden are not scared of Russia or Russians at all.

I think, that "rysskräck" is typical for hypochondriacal for nothing, all-time panicking people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
True False

45. "Rysskräck-ish" people are being laughed at in today's Sweden.

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather yes
- Rather no
- Difficult to answer

"Rysskräck" is connected to the existence of Russia itself, its geographical position to Sweden; thus, Swedish people are doomed to be afraid of it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Yes, "rysskräck" is an everlasting phenomenon for Sweden.

No, geographic proximity does not scare anyone

47. I believe that there will be no place for fear and mistrust in the future Russian-Swedish relations.

Отметьте только один овал.

- Rather yes (there will be no place for fear and mistrust)
- Rather no (fear and mistrust will take place in future Russian-Swedish relations)
- I don't see any fear and mistrust in modern Russian-Swedish relations.
- Difficult to predict.

Thanks a lot for your help!

If you're interested in results of this research, feel free to contact me, and I will share it with you!
E-mail: masha-pimen@mail.ru

48. If you have any comments or notes, please post them here.

Appendix 2. The list of inline platforms for the survey

Before sharing the contact table, it is important to note some issues:

1. This is a shorten list of online platforms: it includes only those groups that let the post with questionnaire stay in the newsfeed. The list of groups that deleted the post is excluded.
2. Also, it is impossible to track the number of respondents who followed the link from a particular group.
3. This list does not include personal contacts (the people who helped to share the questionnaire among their friends or relatives) in order to stick to anonymity principle.

Name of the platform	Number of subscribers (May, 2021)	URL
Наш MeetUp	~3400	https://www.facebook.com/groups/nashmeetup/
Rysktalande i Sverige	~19000	https://www.facebook.com/groups/498166657006491/
Ryska Språket. Högskolan Dalarna	423	https://www.facebook.com/groups/149813911787163/
Ryssland i massmedia	~1200	https://www.facebook.com/groups/322424368115895/
Mjölby Köp och Sälj	~7500	https://www.facebook.com/groups/380658615318104/
Politik, Nyheter, Debatter och Diskussioner	84	https://www.facebook.com/groups/512121905494004/
Politisk debattgrupp	~3900	https://www.facebook.com/groups/debattgrupp/
Mänskliga rättigheter Sverige	145	https://www.facebook.com/groups/2092662724115099/
International Students in Lund 2021/2022	~5200	https://www.facebook.com/groups/320986491706137
Svenskt Världspolitiskt Forum / Swedish Global Political Forum	~1700	https://www.facebook.com/groups/782645211839340/

Trevliga vännergruppen	332	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1560916264181634/
TRIVS MED NYA VÄNNER PÅ FB	~3800	https://www.facebook.com/groups/172759306248873/
Sweden Community	~19000	https://steamcommunity.com/groups/swedencommunity
Discord Sverige	~650	discord.gg/JJSEvCg

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