

American National Identity and Portrayal of the Russian Empire in *The New York Times* in the Late Nineteenth Century

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Americká národní identita a prezentace ruského impéria v *The New York Times* během pozdního 19. století

Abstract: This article seeks to identify how U.S. media in the late nineteenth century sought to portray the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century. The primary focus is on the “newspaper of record” *The New York Times*, which reflected to a certain degree the attitudes of the American people, but more so reflected the stance of the “powers that be” in the United States – the government and the business class. The main goal of this article is not to make conjecture about what nineteenth century Americans believed, or to state that there was an agenda against the Russian Empire. Rather, the goal of this article is to demonstrate that American attitudes reflected in U.S. media towards the Russian Empire were shaped by the media, and that the portrayal of the Russian Empire was not entirely positive or negative, although followed a negative trend over time for various reasons. The reasons for negative portrayal of the Russian Empire in *The New York Times* were arguably connected to various tsars in power and their personalities and a shift in world alliances bringing the United States closer to Great Britain. The portrayal of the Russian Empire in U.S. media as well as the reasons for its eventual negative stance, led Russia to be a suitable “other” in American national identity formation as the twentieth century unfolded.

Keywords: national identity; *The New York Times*; The United States; Russia Empire; newspaper media

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Today the United States propagates certain connotations towards the Russian Federation in ways that are not entirely similar to the Cold War polarity that the United States was “good”, and the Soviet Union was “bad”. Nonetheless, current media in the United States characterizes Russians as untrustworthy and that any relationship between a U.S. politician and a Russian one is some form of “Russian collusion”. The Russian Federation is still an enigma to many Americans who know little to nothing about Russian history, culture, or politics. Yet, there is still a looming fear that the Russian Federation is an “other” although not entirely “the other” as the Soviet Union had been. The Soviet Union was very blatantly the United States’ opposite throughout the twentieth century and U.S. media typically does not portray the Russian Federation of the Putin years in a favorable light. This brings to question what the relationship was like between the United States and the Russian Empire prior to the formation of the Soviet Union.

Identity is not stagnant, and the United States after it was newly formed at the end of the eighteenth century had a blank slate on which to create the story of itself. This story

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transformed over the course of the nineteenth century. The mid-nineteenth century marked a turning point in American history and identity. Politics in the antebellum period culminated in a civil war and following which, the social fabric of the country was changed, a wave of “new immigrants” came to the U.S., and the United States fought a major war with a world power, granting it territories in the Far East, turning America into an empire. Naturally, the identity of the United States transformed, and along with it its foreign relations and depictions of foreign nations transformed as well. Media in the U.S., as in all places, played a significant role in shaping these perceptions. *The New York Times* in particular had a specific way of dealing with the Russian Empire from the start of its publication in 1851 until a new owner bought the company in 1896. The depiction of the Russian Empire in *The New York Times* from 1851 to 1896 reveals one component of America’s national story through the lens of one newspaper media corporation.

Extensive research exists analyzing the relationship between the United States and the Russian Empire, notably the works conducted by Norman Saul where he analyzed in depth intricate perceptions that ordinary U.S. citizens had of Russians, articles and literature devoted to Russia, and the relationships between various U.S. and Russian diplomats and politicians [Saul 1996]. His work is authoritative and in depth, and this article seeks to supplement Saul’s work and provide further analysis of the relationship between the U.S. and the Russian Empire from the perspective of *The New York Times* in the mid-nineteenth century and reveal how this newspaper contributed to America’s national narrative.

This article seeks to demonstrate how media in the nineteenth century United States portrayed the Russian Empire, reflected U.S. national attitudes, and influenced readers through analysis of newspaper articles published in *The New York Times* between 1851 and 1896. *The New York Times* served to appeal to a specific type of American reader and published content they deemed serious and objective. This was noteworthy because *The New York Times* identified a gap in the newspaper market between word-heavy and convoluted eighteenth to early-nineteenth century newspapers and the newer more sensationalized, less serious newspapers emerging around the 1830s. *The New York Times* realized that there was a segment of people who wanted easy to read, yet serious and objective news [Davis 1921: 11–12].

The New York Times was established in 1851 and had the same initial owners until 1896; it was non-partisan though the owners were personally politically conservative. To what extent the personal views of the owners of *The New York Times* were reflected in the published newspaper articles is unknown, and it is also unknown to what extent *The New York Times* could influence society at large with its content. It is known that *individuals* worked for *The New York Times* who had their own varying views regarding Russia, and it is also known that these individuals were American, or had been living in America, thus their views reflect the views of at least some Americans. It is known that media, and newspapers in particular, had a far-reaching impact on shaping the national story of countries. By focusing on only one allegedly objective and authoritarian newspaper, one can understand more clearly and concisely how the attitude of the U.S. towards the Russian Empire transformed during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It does not reflect every view that any American had, but it provides one piece of the national narrative of the United States in the late-nineteenth century.

National identity, and nationalism in particular, is a type of ideology that emerged in the nineteenth century. According to Ernest Gellner, author of *Nations and Nationalism*,

industrial society relies on perpetual growth, progress, improvement, and discovery. Nineteenth century industrial America encompassed all of these ideals, while its frontier continued to close creating the need for new frontiers in order to continue national growth and discovery. Gellner defines a nation as an “idealist definition of the state” and an act of self-identification, which exists in many kinds of groups, both larger and smaller than nations. The establishment of high-cultures, i.e. standardized literacy- and education-based systems, lead to a shared culture and feeling of political legitimacy, and Gellner posits that it is nationalism that creates nations more so than the other way around. Nationalism becomes a form of countries worshiping themselves and creating a nation [Gellner 2006: 22–23, 54–55].

Education and printing catalyzed and reinforced nations and nationalism and media played a major formative role in nationalism in the nineteenth century [Watson 1992: 177, 193]. Since the Middle Ages, the invention of the printing press and access to affordable written works in vernacular languages combined with an increased rate in literacy contributed to the emergence of nationalism. Fukuyama states that “the advance of newspapers, consumed by emerging educated middle-class readers, had an even more dramatic effect in building national consciousness in the nineteenth century”. He claims that domestic print media is what connected isolated people to others and created a sense of a broader national awareness. Although there is not an official language of the United States, all administrative documents, education, and media in the late-nineteenth century were conducted in English. Usage of a particular language is a political act and tool of assimilation [Fukuyama 2014: 187–188, 194].

Michael Schudson and Silvio Waisbord discuss the news media and its effect on politics. They argue that the news is a “quasi-official institution of government” because it is part of regular operations of the government and has the ability to influence governmental policy and the news is not a free-floating cultural formation. In turn, politics has the ability to influence the news media as well. The news media of the twenty-first century differs from the news media of the nineteenth century. Twenty-first century news for consumers consists of sources from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the internet whereas the primary source of the news in the nineteenth century was newspapers. Newspapers acted as solidifiers of ideas and few alternative ideas could be distributed at a massive enough scale to challenge the “mainstream media”. Schudson and Waisbord argue that the news media defends the status quo and may be influenced by commercial interests of the owners of said media [Schudson & Waisbord 2005: 350–352].

Newspaper media particularly in the nineteenth century had the ability to easily disseminate information and the “national agenda” making it a crucial tool in national identity formation [Li 2009: 85]. *The New York Times* circulated not only nationally in the United States, but also internationally around the globe.

National identity formation, modification, and solidification in nineteenth century America contributed to and was impacted by the nativist movement. According to historian Colman J. Barry, nativism is “intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign connections” and he connected American nativism to the following three features: anti-Catholicism, fear of foreign radicals, and the promotion of Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-American superiority. A shift in immigrants coming to the United States from places such as China and eastern and southern Europe instead of the traditional

places such as western and northern Europe catalyzed the U.S. nativist movement [Barry 1958: 138–43]. Nativists described themselves as progressives and argued that they were part of the nation-building process of the United States. They promoted assimilation of immigrants to an Anglo-American identity, partially as an act of self-preservation of Anglo-American culture [Katerberg 1995: 469, 506, 513]. Along with eastern and southern Europeans and Asians, Jewish immigrants and Jewish Americans alike became targets of both nativist and populist resentments, with the latter populist movement having gained momentum in the late 1800s as well. The Populist Party of the late-1800s consisted of the working class, “agrarian radicals”, and others who wanted to challenge the corporate stronghold that existed at the time as a result of powerful industrialists and their backing by the pro-business Republican Party that dominated the political sphere throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

While nativists were opposed to any non-western, non-protestant immigrant, populists specifically targeted American Jews for their supposed connection to capitalism, with one belief that lucrative jobs going to Jews meant less jobs available for Christian Americans [Higman 1957: 560–66]. Eastern European Jews received the worst treatment as they were condemned by non-Jewish Russian Americans, populists, nativists, and even German Jewish Americans [Higman 1957: 568–572; Saul 1996: 12]. The Russian Empire contributed to American national identity formation in the sense that as more immigrants came to the United States from southern and eastern Europe, Americans reacted by clinging to some form of an Anglo-Saxon identity.

Initially and by definition, to be “American” did not necessarily mean a particular language or ethnicity but instead a set of ideologies, though nativists in the nineteenth century sought to define it by language, religion, and ethnicity. In line with industrial society’s promotion of progress and growth, the ideologies of American exceptionalism and manifest destiny seemed to be inherently a part of the national landscape of American political ideology and national identity. It also appeared inherent that the United States should continue to expand and continue to progress. Fukuyama posits that American national identity is based on democracy, equality, and individualism [Fukuyama 2014: 197]. Baradat in agreement with Fukuyama defines American identity as not ethnic in nature but instead based on political factors such as democracy, tolerance, equality, and liberty and that the U.S. nation is formulated by the U.S. state [Baradat 2009: 47]. One characteristic of nineteenth century national identity in the United States was anti-Europeaness, somewhat ironically, considering that nationalism was a European ideology.

Nancy Ruttenburg highlighted the anti-Europeaness and the correlations in nation-building in both Russia and America and cited Walt Whitman who compared the “vast expanses of wilderness” in each country. Ruttenburg argued that American and Russian notions of exceptionalism arose in response to nineteenth century European exceptionalism and both sought to create their own national identity [Ruttenburg 1992: 48–73].

Regarding Russian-American relations specifically, Norman Saul wrote, among many other works devoted to the subject, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763–1867* and *Concord and Conflict: The United States and Russia, 1867–1914*. *Distant Friends* outlines the various business interactions and the slight beginnings of diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States during the Revolutionary Period of

the United States, the Napoleonic Wars/War of 1812, and antebellum America. The two countries were on friendly terms, but they existed in vastly different parts of the world and did not have as much interaction as they would in subsequent decades due to technological advances making communication and travel more easily administrable and accessible. Saul's sequel to *Distant Friends* is *Concord and Conflict* and the title is apt. Between an increase in diplomatic relations, including visits of the Russian military and Russian royals to the United States, coupled with a surge in American business ventures in the Russian Empire, a concordant relationship emerged between the two countries. Along with this agreeable friendship emerged areas of conflict, particularly ideological differences that resulted in tensions between the two governments. Increased interaction at first lived up to one prophecy that the two powers would have mutually linked destinies, developing concurrently in agriculture and general "progress", however the United States would eventually outpace the Russian Empire, and Americans would begin to criticize the "backwardness" of Russian peasants while simultaneously critiquing the Russian government's "despotism".

Ivan Kurilla compares the U.S.' abolishment of slavery and Russia's abolishment of serfdom. He argues that as a result of the two lingering institutions of slavery and serfdom, the United States and Russia had cause for comparison in the early to mid-nineteenth century and he documented how certain newspapers such as *The North American Review*, *The New York Tribune*, the *New York Herald*, *Douglass' Monthly*, *The Christian Reporter*, the *Cincinnati Daily Press*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *Marshal County Republican* covered Russia during the early 1860s when each country freed all their peoples. Kurilla noted that the American South wrote more favorably about Russia, characterizing the country as conservative, whereas other papers stated that the serfs received much better treatment than American slaves. He further points out that in terms of progress, the United States lagged behind the Russian Empire in the early 1860s on account of Russia having emancipated its serfs in 1861 whereas the United States continued slavery until at least 1863 [*Kurilla 2016: 66-71*].

Charles E. Ziegler argues that the United States and Russia have always had conflicting interests. This is not entirely true as the United States and the Russian Empire had seemingly concurring destinies and similar foes in the mid-nineteenth century. He cites the "government triad" of the Russian Empire as Orthodoxy, nationalism, and autocracy [*Ziegler 2014: 672*]. Of course, nineteenth century America did not belong to any of these categories outright, however, *The New York Times* outlined similarities in each country based loosely on these ideals. The autocratic Alexander II enacted reforms that Americans described as progressive, such as the abolishment of serfdom and penal reforms emphasizing exile and banishing capital punishment, demonstrating that autocracy was not an issue for Americans as long as the ruler was just and progressive. Americans admired Russia for its Christianity and considered Russian Orthodoxy as an inclusive religion. Both the United States and the Russian Empire were bonded in their Christian ideals, and Americans viewed Russia as exemplifying this ideal of Christianity, even more so than the United States had. Nationalism in both the United States and Russia would, however, lead the two countries in different national directions. Furthermore, Ziegler is correct in his argument that Putin's interpretation that Russia had been denied access to being a global power is simply incorrect [*Ziegler 2014: 672-673*]. Americans in the 1850s to 1870s wanted Russia

to be a global power and promoted them as such against the British Empire, Ottoman Empire, and France.

In 1852, *The New York Times* praised Russia for its Christianity and its progressive reforms, such as reformation of the Russian penal system that abolished the death penalty and enacted the new criminal punishment of exiling subjects to Siberia [*The New York Times* 1852] (although in subsequent decades primarily in the 1880s and 1890s *The New York Times* criticized Siberian exile after explorer George Kennon published various works that outlined the conditions of Siberian exiles in an unfavorable light, something that did not bode well with Americans who fashioned themselves as philanthropic people). *The New York Times* promoted Russian expansion in the name of “Christianity, civilization, and commerce” and wrote that the destinies of Russia and the United States were linked with the telling statement, “May the flight of the Russian and American eagles be continued until Christianity, civilization and conservatism encircles the earth!” [*The New York Times* 1853].

The New York Times subsequently criticized other newspapers that suggested anything other than friendship between Russia and the United States. Repeatedly throughout the 1850s and beyond *The New York Times* called Russia a despotism, even while praising it and categorizing it as a friend. The difference in government was not a hindrance to their perceived shared destinies, and in fact, *The New York Times* described Russia as being in the front ranks of civilization on account of its national progress and recent achievements in various fields such as science, military, and art [*The New York Times* 1853].

Although “despotic” and “autocratic”, the aristocracy and royals were looked upon in a positive light compared to the ones in other European countries. *The New York Times* stated that Russian leaders had, “energy of will, honesty of purpose, and force of genius, they have, for the most part, presented a striking exception to the proverbial stupidity, cowardice, and meanness of legitimate royalty”. To be sure, there was some fear from *The New York Times* that Russia might rise up and surpass the United States due to being a “Muscovite Vulture” with “more than half the world between the tips of its outstretched wings” [*The New York Times* 1852]. Either way, Russia appeared to be a more friendly and desired option for commercial and territorial intents in the Pacific, otherwise described as the “Mediterranean of the Future” [*The New York Times* 1861]. The United States and Russia competed in military and agriculture, though their competition presented itself as concurring realities instead of two countries in deep financial competition with each other, at least in the 1850s and 1860s [*The New York Times* 1867].

Indeed, a Frenchman published an article in *The New York Times* that questioned why this newspaper aligned itself with “shamefully despotic” Russia, and not with “liberal Western Europe”, especially regarding progress which the author stated Europe had been experiencing for centuries whereas Russia was only experiencing it now. The Frenchman attributed *The New York Times*’ fondness of Russia to charismatic Russian diplomats as opposed to French and English ones who apparently were not as charismatic [*The New York Times* 1863].

The New York Times reported about lectures given by historian Alexander del Mar about similarities between the United States and Russia. He stated that Russia and America could together contribute to the civilizing process around the world by spreading Christian values and praised Russia for already having done so in China [*The New York Times* 1873].

Again, *The New York Times* praised Russia for joining “civilized Europe” through abolishment of serfdom, founding schools, and enacting some form of representational government in the provinces. The newspaper compared Russia to Turkey, stating Russia had progressive people whereas they considered the Turks backwards [*The New York Times* 1870].

The newspaper lauded the Russian Empire while Alexander II was in power and emphasized the progressive reforms he enacted such as publication of books, lower prices on foreign passports, no cap on university student attendees, and new railway construction. On the other hand his father, Nicholas I, was, according to *The New York Times*, despotic, oppressive, hateful, and fearful of enacting reforms because the Russian people were a “changeable people” who “pass quickly from one mood to another” [*The New York Times* 1878].

The New York Times discussed the pan-Slavism movement in Russia on multiple occasions. On one such occasion, the newspaper stated that Russia consisted of “patriotic Slavs full of the enthusiasm of their rising nationality”. “Russia for the Russians”, according to *The New York Times*, already harmed Poles, Lithuanians, Roman Catholics, and Jews. Russian nationalism, pan-Slavism, and the name “Holy Russia” often appeared together [*The New York Times* 1882]. To be sure, the *Times* went on to state that “Holy Russia” in fact was a theocracy and that Russian radicals who attempted to destroy the church were doing so in an attempt to destroy the state [*The New York Times* 1889].

Tsar Alexander III in a bold restrictive move actually banned *The New York Times* from circulation in Russia in 1889 for reasons unbeknown to the newspaper, while continuing to allow circulation of its competitors such as *The New York Herald* [*The New York Times* 1889].

By the early 1890s, *The New York Times* presented the Russian Empire less favorably, mostly on account of policies enacted by Alexander III. During the reign of Alexander II from 1853 to 1881, *The New York Times* portrayed Russia the most favorably.

The New York Times had criticized Alexander III’s treatment of Russian Jews, though primarily because due to their persecution in Russia many had been immigrating to America. Americans did not want any more Jews in their country and felt it had taxed their nation’s resources and its already established Jewish community, since they were primarily the ones obligated to help take care of new Jewish immigrants. The main issue was that Russian Jews did not, according to *The New York Times*, assimilate well into America society and did not adhere to the principles of American identity such as hard work and not taking handouts [*The New York Times* 1891]. By the early 1890s, American “work ethic” and reluctance to accept any and all immigrants became part of the national story of the U.S. in *The New York Times* [*The New York Times* 1891].

Initially those living outside of Russia were oblivious to the treatment of the Jews there. Alexander III enacted stricter policies towards them as part of a series of other reactionary policies. His father Alexander II had been assassinated by nihilists, a growing movement in Russia that sought to overthrow the imperial government and had attempted to assassinate Alexander II multiple times before finally succeeding in March 1881. After decades of progressive reforms under Alexander II, Alexander III put the country into a period of reactionary politics. This was an attempt to bring social order to a country where certain peasants had started to cause social unrest. Additionally, a famine spanning from 1891 to 1893 engulfed Russia while the pan-Slavism movement simultaneously grew stronger,

leading to anti-Semitic actions emerging and strengthening in parts of Russia with significant Jewish populations. *The New York Times* described Russia as having a backward way of transmitting intelligence and that due to this, Russian peasants did not receive information about the crop failure until it was too late, and subsequently Russians placed blame on Jews and their moneylending practices [*The New York Times* 1891].

Upon receiving the reports of Jewish persecution in Russia, which was stricter enforcement of already existing anti-Semitic laws regulating Jewish movement and business practices, *The New York Times* stated that barbarianism existed throughout the Russian Empire. The newspaper attributed this to pan-Slavism, Russian patriotism, and the desire of Russians to return to pre-industrial society. On account of pan-Slavism, Russians adhering to this philosophy rejected anything foreign and reinforced their adherence to Russian and Slavic culture. *The New York Times* defined pan-Slavism as “the detestation of everything foreign and the fanatical love of everything old Russian” and stated that instead of focusing on Jews, the Russian government ought to have placed its attention on nihilism and socialism, two components of the “anti-civilization” movement. Russian pan-Slavism placed Russia more in line with the “Orient”, according to *The New York Times*, and the closer Russia was to the Orient, the less ground for comparison between it and the U.S. existed [*The New York Times* 1891].

Regarding governmental affairs between the U.S. and Russia, *The New York Times* reported about the Russian-American Extradition Treaty of 1893. There was hesitation over enactment of the Extradition Treaty with Russia on account of fear that Russia would demand political dissidents to return to Russia claiming that they were criminals [*The New York Times* 1893]. American critics also feared that Russia would send to the U.S. hordes of “undesirable” immigrants, again demonstrating the U.S.’ transition towards a particular view of American identity [*The New York Times* 1893]. Nonetheless, there has never been an extradition treaty between the United States and Russia since then signifying the relative goodwill between each country.

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To make a definitive conclusion about U.S. national identity based on a select and relatively small number of *The New York Times* newspaper articles is not the goal of this article. Instead, the goal is to give a glimpse into one perspective of a newspaper that structured itself as a non-partisan objective newspaper. *The New York Times* purposely fashioned itself as not representing what it considered the lower classes of society, while it also distanced itself from early nineteenth century newspapers that were bulky, hard to read, and meant to appeal to the upper crust of society. *The New York Times* described itself as a newspaper for serious-minded people and emphasized politics in many of its articles and publications. When it emerged in 1851, its goal was to fill a void in daily newspapers that did not have serious, yet readable content. It criticized newspapers such as the *Sun* or *Tribune* as delivering sensationalized news stories.

How objective *The New York Times* was in reality is up for debate. The initial owner of *The New York Times*, Henry J. Raymond, was a politician and member of the Whig party, a conservative antebellum political party. By the 1890s, *The New York Times* came under ownership of Adolph S. Ochs, who stated that *The New York Times* was objective

and non-partisan “unless, if possible, to intensify its devotion of sound money and tariff reform, opposition to wastefulness and speculation in administering public affairs, and in its advocacy of the lowest tax consistent with good government, and no more government than is absolutely necessary to protect society, maintain individual and vested rights, and to assure the free exercise of a good conscience” [Davis 1921: xxiii]. Ochs was in fact a Republican and this is apparent in his statement about minimal government, but he acknowledged points that most Americans in the late nineteenth century agreed upon, that there ought to be some financial reform particularly in the cases of tariffs and tax. Ochs fought against anti-Semitism, himself being a German Jew, though *The New York Times* published articles criticizing Russian Jews in the United States who had immigrated from Russia.

Focusing on one newspaper source gives less of a broad perspective of how Americans perceived the Russian Empire. Instead, this approach gives an example of how one source told the story of Russia, which gives a clearer picture of how one such source’s perception of Russia changed over the course of the late-nineteenth century. The change in how *The New York Times* dealt with the Russian Empire gives an interpretation as to the perception of the Russian Empire in a self-described non-partisan, objective, and serious manner. In turn, this demonstrates how one reputable newspaper source influenced the national story of the United States and what adjectives *The New York Times* deemed favorable about the Russian Empire, illuminating the values of American readers of *The New York Times* who had influence in business, government, and otherwise. To the exact extent *The New York Times* directly influenced the national character of the United States is not able to be measured. What can be discerned is that *The New York Times* contributed to the United States’ national story and influenced its readers.

An increase in Russian minority immigrants settling in the United States created a negative perception of the Russian Empire due to the fact that the stories these immigrants revealed about Russia were likely less than positive, considering the Russian government allegedly discriminated against some of its minorities, particularly the Jews, the Poles, and the German speaking Mennonites. Some of these minorities worked in the media or in politics, subsequently shaping opinions and influencing policies regarding Russia.

The story of Russian-American relations in the mid to late-nineteenth century is a story of individual actors influencing both the national story of the United States and the general perception of the Russian Empire among U.S. citizens. Regarding America’s national story, Russia was not promoted or depicted as the United States’ other in *The New York Times* between 1851 and 1896. *The New York Times* hardly criticized the Russian Empire at all until at least the 1880s, primarily following Tsar Alexander III’s reactionary policies, strengthening Russian nationalism, large numbers of Russian minorities immigrating to the U.S., and a rising nativist movement in America. The fact that Russia had a government that was essentially the opposite of the government of the United States had little to no bearing in *The New York Times* until the 1880s, and *The New York Times*’ comparison of similarities in size, progress, and Christianity demonstrated a commonality between each country while showcasing characteristics that the U.S., at least in the middle of the nineteenth century, valued about its own country. Each country ultimately took a diverging path on account of shaping their national story, “Russia for the Russians” versus the United States developing its Anglo-Saxon connection. Additionally, eventually the United States

abandoned its identity as an anti-imperial republic to become an empire following the Spanish-American War and the Russian peasantry rose up to create a new governmental system and country entirely.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Russia was the United States' concurrent progressive counterpart and the press described them as having similar destinies. *The New York Times* told one story of the United States national narrative and argued that the U.S. and Russia were comparable in terms of progress and potential power. Analysis of various *The New York Times* articles published between 1851 and 1896 pertaining to the Russian Empire, demonstrates one component of the national story of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and emphasizes that the United States did not always promote Russia as its national "other".

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