

The Russian Federation's policy towards it's diaspora

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The analysis explores the "Russkiy Mir" (Russian World) doctrine, emphasizing its role in fostering a unified cultural, spiritual, and historical identity among those linked to Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox Church. It traces the doctrine's origins from Kievan Rus' to its contemporary revival by the Russian state and the Orthodox Church, highlighting its strategic promotion to consolidate Russian-speaking communities globally. The text examines the instrumentalization of "Russkiy Mir" in justifying Russian actions, particularly during the Russo-Ukrainian War, and discusses the global backlash, including the Volos Declaration, which denounces the doctrine as heretical and authoritarian. The analysis concludes by assessing the impact of "Russkiy Mir" on Russian foreign policy and its influence on the Russian diaspora in the context of ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

Introductory thoughts

In an era where geopolitical dynamics are increasingly shaped by cultural and historical narratives, the concept of "Russkiy Mir" ("Russian World") stands as a powerful and controversial doctrine. Rooted in a shared cultural, spiritual, and historical identity among those who identify with Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox Church, "Russkiy Mir" has emerged as a key element of Russia's foreign policy, particularly in the post-Soviet space. Understanding this concept is essential for grasping the motivations behind Russia's actions on the global stage, including its military interventions and cultural diplomacy. As the world grapples with the consequences of Russia's assertion of its identity and influence, the significance of "Russkiy Mir" extends far beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.

This paper delves into the multifaceted nature of "Russkiy Mir," beginning with an exploration of its origins and the political doctrine it represents. The first section outlines the concept's historical roots, tracing its evolution from the medieval state of Kievan Rus' to its modern-day interpretation as a tool of Russian influence. The subsequent section examines how the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church have promoted and applied "Russkiy Mir" in contemporary times, focusing on key figures and institutions that have played a role in its revival and propagation.

Further analysis highlights the crucial role of the Russian Orthodox Church in promoting "Russkiy Mir," particularly during the Russo-Ukrainian War, where the doctrine has been used to justify military actions and assert Russia's cultural dominance over what it views as its rightful sphere of influence. The paper also considers the growing backlash against "Russkiy Mir," including the Volos Declaration and other condemnations from Eastern Orthodox scholars and clerics, who view the doctrine as a dangerous blend of religious fundamentalism and political ambition.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the implications of "Russkiy Mir," the paper's final section addresses the reactions against the doctrine, particularly in the context of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War. The analysis includes a discussion on how the doctrine has influenced the Russian diaspora and shaped Russia's foreign policy toward its "near abroad."

By exploring these dimensions, the paper aims to shed light on the complexities of "Russkiy Mir" and its impact on global geopolitics, offering insights into the challenges and

consequences that arise from Russia's pursuit of a unified cultural and spiritual identity on the world stage.

The concept of Russkiy Mir

The concept of the 'Russian mir' plays a pivotal role in shaping Russia's foreign policy, particularly in its justification for the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This ideological framework not only drives Russia's actions but also serves as a tool to manipulate and mobilize Russian-speaking communities within Ukraine and beyond. By positioning itself as the protector of the Russian diaspora, Russia uses the 'Russian mir' to legitimize its territorial ambitions and destabilize neighboring states. This manipulation of cultural and linguistic ties underscores the complexities of national identity and sovereignty in the post-Soviet space, revealing the geopolitical consequences of Russia's ideological narratives.

Moreover, the 'Russian mir' significantly influences the international community's perception of the conflict. Russia's framing of its actions as a defense of Russian speakers and cultural unity has garnered sympathy in some regions, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, while also attracting widespread condemnation from the broader international community. This dual impact highlights how Russia's ideological constructs polarize global opinion and complicate diplomatic efforts. This is why it is crucial to review the role of the concept of "Russkiy mir" in shaping both regional and international perceptions of the Russian-Ukrainian conflicts in 2014 and 2022 from the Russian perspective. Understanding this influence offers deeper insights into how Russia leverages cultural and ideological narratives to legitimize its actions and sway public opinion, both domestically and internationally.

"Russkiy Mir" (Русский мир), or "Russian World," signifies a shared cultural, spiritual, and historical space among those who identify with Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox Church. It represents a political doctrine delineating Russia's sphere of military, political, and cultural influence. This idea, sometimes referred to as Pax Russica, parallels Pax Romana and serves as a counterbalance to the 19th-century Pax Britannica and the post-World War II Pax Americana.

The origins of "Russkiy Mir" trace back to the medieval state of Kievan Rus', existing from the late 9th to the mid-13th century. Kievan Rus' is regarded as the cultural and spiritual cradle of the Eastern Slavs, playing a crucial role in developing a unified Slavic identity through the

adoption of Christianity in 988 AD under Prince Vladimir the Great. The embrace of Orthodox Christianity cemented cultural and religious unity among the people of Kievan Rus'. Despite fragmentation due to internal strife and external invasions, including the Mongol invasion, the idea of a unified "Russian world" endured. The rise of the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the 14th century, evolving into the Tsardom of Russia, revitalized and expanded the notion of a Russian cultural and spiritual sphere.

In modern times, "Russkiy Mir" is actively promoted by the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church to foster solidarity among Russian-speaking communities worldwide. Key figures in the post-Soviet revival of this concept include Pyotr Shchedrovitsky, Yefim Ostrovsky, Valery Tishkov, Vitaly Skrinnik, Tatyana Poloskova, and Natalya Narochinskaya. In 2000, Shchedrovitsky articulated the main ideas of "Russkiy Mir" in his article "Russian World and Transnational Russian Characteristics," emphasizing the importance of the Russian language. Andis Kudors of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars notes that Shchedrovitsky's ideas align with 18th-century philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder's linguistic relativity, suggesting that speaking Russian leads to thinking and acting Russian.

In 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Arkaim site of the Sintashta culture, meeting with chief archaeologist Gennady Zdanovich. This visit, extensively covered by Russian media, portrayed Arkaim as the "homeland of many contemporary people in Asia and, partly, Europe." Nationalists hailed Arkaim as the "city of Russian glory" and the "most ancient Slavic-Aryan town." Zdanovich reportedly presented Arkaim to Putin as a potential "national idea of Russia," framing it as a new civilizational concept termed the "Russian idea." Consequently, the Russian administration adopted the idea of "Russkiy Mir," and in 2007, Putin established the government-sponsored Russkiy Mir Foundation. This foundation promotes the spread of Russian language, culture, and education, funding projects to strengthen ties between Russia and Russian-speaking populations abroad. Some view the promotion of "Russkiy Mir" as a revanchist effort to restore Russia's influence to its Soviet and Imperial borders, while others see it as a means of projecting Russian soft power.

It is crucial to recognize that the concept of "Russkiy Mir" is closely linked with the Russian Orthodox Church, which considers itself the spiritual guardian of Eastern Slavic cultural heritage. The Church plays a significant role in promoting the idea of a unified Russian world,

emphasizing shared religious traditions dating back to Kievan Rus'. On November 3, 2009, at the Third Russian World Assembly, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow defined the "Russian world" as a common civilizational space founded on Eastern Orthodoxy, Russian culture, language, and historical memory.

Russian Orthodoxy also played a crucial role during the Russo-Ukrainian War, seen as an implementation of the "Russkiy Mir" idea. The concept has underpinned a crusade against Western liberal culture, leading to what The Economist describes as a "new Russian cult of war." Putin's regime has intertwined the "Russkiy Mir" concept with obscurantism, Orthodox dogma, anti-Western sentiment, nationalism, conspiracy theories, and security-state Stalinism. In his first public speech after February 24, 2022, Putin praised the Russian army, referencing religious and historical figures to justify the war. Patriarch Kirill has also endorsed the war, framing it as a fight against the West's alleged decadent culture. On December 25, 2022, Putin declared Russia's goal to unite the Russian people within a single state. In June 2023, he stated that those who died in the invasion "gave their lives for Novorossiya and the unity of the Russian world."

In response to the invasion, the Declaration on the 'Russian World' Teaching, known as the Volos Declaration, was published on March 13, 2022. It condemned the ideology as a form of religious fundamentalism with a totalitarian character. Signed by up to 500 Eastern Orthodox scholars, it denounced the "Russkiy Mir" concept for replacing the Kingdom of God with an earthly kingdom, deifying the state, and promoting a Manichaean demonization of the West. On the 2022 Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1,600 theologians and clerics condemned "Russkiy Mir" as heretical. The Church of Alexandria and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, among others, have condemned the ideology, linking it to phyletism, an ideology condemned as heresy in 1872.

Overall, "Russkiy Mir" seeks to cultivate a sense of belonging and identity among people who identify with Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox faith. It aims to create a global Russian community bound by shared history, language, and spiritual heritage

The Birth of the Russian Diaspora

Russian settlement in the former Soviet republics and other lands outside modern Russia began in the sixteenth century, driven by migrations from Tsarist Russia. The conquests and

expansionist activities during Ivan the Terrible's reign had strategic benefits, but the primary motive was economic exploitation; the vast eastern and western territories offered abundant furs and resources. This movement of peoples increased until the end of the Tsarist era.

Before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, millions of Russian peasants were settled in Kazakhstan by Tsarist Russia to ensure the Russification of its southern regions. Russian migration extended to the Baltics and Central Asia. For example, the Old Believers (Eastern Orthodox Christians who resisted liturgical reforms) migrated to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Then the Tsarist Russia's resettlement policy continued intensifying, establishing Russian communities in the Baltic States, Central Asia, and Siberia. By the late eighteenth century, Russians occupied much of the land around modern Kazakhstan, the Altai Mountains, and the Ural River basin.

In the twentieth century, Russian expansion in Central Asia accelerated with the sociopolitical changes brought on by the Russian Revolution. Approximately 250,000 peasants were sent to neighboring communist states under the policy of "collectivization." These Russian settlers played a significant role in industrializing remote regions post-1930s.

During World War II, the Russification process gained momentum as factories on Russia's frontline were relocated to Central Asia, necessitating the settlement of skilled Russian workers. Another major migration occurred post-WWII through the Virgin Lands Campaign initiated by Nikita Khrushchev, encouraging Russian and other Russian-speaking communities to settle in Kazakhstan.

Russian migration westward into Ukraine and Belarus was driven by various historical factors. Belarus, once part of Kievan Rus' and later the Russian Empire, became a founding member of the Soviet Union. Russian migration into Ukraine surged in the seventeenth century, further increasing with the industrialization of Ukraine's eastern regions in the nineteenth century. Stalin's rapid industrialization policies invited Russians and Belarusians to settle in Ukraine.

The history of Russia-Moldova relations dates back to the Russo-Turkish Wars. Post-Crimean War and World War I, Moldova was handed to Romania. However, the Soviet Union established the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924, later joining the Soviet Union in 1944. Significant numbers of Russians and Ukrainians moved to Trans-Dniester's industrial zones during Soviet rule¹.

The Cold War concluded with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990, ending nearly fifty years of rivalry between two starkly contrasting ideological blocs. During this period, numerous conflict zones remained frozen, and the aspirations of various ethnic groups were suppressed. The imperialism initiated by the Russian Empire within its own territory ultimately came to an end. Following the Soviet Union's collapse, many former Soviet republics proclaimed their independence, embarking on a journey of reconstruction. However, this process was fraught with political, economic, social, and demographic challenges. One of the foremost issues was the Russian diaspora: Russian-speaking communities in the newly independent states.

In 1991, the borders between these former Soviet republics were internationally recognized through the Minsk and Almaty Agreements, leaving sixty million people, including twenty-five million Russians, outside their homeland. Ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking communities in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), the southern Caucasus (Georgia and Azerbaijan), the Baltics (Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia), Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova became minority groups after the Soviet Union's dissolution.

As these newly sovereign states forged their national identities, their Russian and Russian-speaking populations faced discrimination and marginalization. The plight of these minority communities began to influence the domestic politics of the Russian Federation. Moreover, Russian and Russian-speaking minorities in Russia's "near abroad" played a crucial role in enhancing Russia's regional power, shaping Russian politics, and aiding in the reformation of its national identity. The Russian diaspora became intricately linked to Russia's foreign policy towards countries with significant Russian minorities.

Russian Diaspora as a Tool of Foreign Policy

Beginning with the Near Abroad Policy in 1993, Russia began leveraging its diaspora for foreign policy ends, using the Russian population to influence neighboring countries' policies favorably for Moscow.

After the Soviet Union's collapse, the Russian population in former Soviet republics had begun to decline, though the rate remained stable in some areas. Economic reasons primarily drove this post-1989 decrease, along with discriminatory policies towards Russians, national identity development in former Soviet states, and Russia's economic incentives under President Vladimir Putin. Russia's attention to its diaspora, numbering around 25 million, intensified after

power shifted from Atlanticists to Eurasianists during Yeltsin's era, leading to clear-cut policies regarding the near abroad.

Thus the post-Soviet Union collapse left Russia seeking to assert its power on the global stage. Nationalistic sentiment and integration movements aimed to construct a new national identity. Russia's domestic centralization fostered a new foreign policy focusing on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Right-wing Russian political groups viewed this policy as a means to reestablish a unitary state and believed the Russian diaspora was crucial for implementing their imperialistic ambitions. Thus nowadays there are two main phrases to describe the Russian policy towards the country's diaspora: near abroad and patriots abroad.

Firstly the Eurasianist school's influence on Russian foreign policy saw the Russian diaspora as a means to exert influence over newly independent states and contribute to Russia's national identity. The shift in Russian foreign policy post-1992 was notable, as Russia defined its foreign priorities with a new doctrine emphasizing its great power status and influence over the near abroad. This policy, formulated by Andrei Kozyrev, legitimized Russian military intervention in the region to protect its interests. The near abroad doctrine addressed terminating regional conflicts, protecting the human rights of Russian-speaking minorities, and asserting Russia's vital interests in former Soviet territories. This policy offered dual nationality to ethnic Russians in the CIS and Baltic countries, though it was rejected.

Under President Putin, reintegrating post-Soviet regions became a priority to bolster Russia's claim as a global power. The "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" highlighted the importance of the Russian diaspora, expressing dissatisfaction with post-Soviet borders and emphasizing protecting Russian citizens and compatriots abroad. The State Program of Voluntary Resettlement aimed to resettle Russian compatriots in sparsely populated areas of Russia. The Putin administration made significant strides in involving the diaspora in foreign policy, with the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept underscoring Russia's commitment to protecting the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots abroad.

In recent years, Russia has increasingly employed soft power policies to leverage the Russian diaspora. Institutions like the Russkiy Mir Foundation promote Russian language and culture, aiming to reconnect the Russian population abroad with their homeland. State-supported NGOs and cultural centers, such as "Russian House," strengthen ties with Russian compatriots,

protecting their cultural identity and ethnic belonging. Despite embracing soft power, Russia has not shied away from hard power, as seen in its interventions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Crimea. These actions suggest Russia's readiness to use force to protect its interests and influence regional politics.

Russia faced an identity crisis post-Soviet Union collapse but has since reinforced its national identity by presenting itself as the historical homeland for ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking communities. Utilizing the Russian diaspora, Russia has influenced the domestic and foreign policies of newly independent states, intervening under the pretext of supporting ethnic Russians. Military interventions, such as the Russo-Georgian War and the annexation of Crimea, indicate Russia's willingness to act aggressively to protect its diaspora, raising concerns about potential revisionist actions. Nevertheless, Russia's current foreign policy increasingly emphasizes soft power in supporting the Russian diaspora, aiming to achieve national interests through cultural and social influence.

The state of Russian minorities in the light of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war

Having grasped the structure and perspective of the "Russian World," and the emergence of Russian minorities and their role in Russian foreign policy, it is crucial to examine their current situation in the context of the ongoing war.

Two and a half years after the onset of the war and the initial dramatic exodus from Russia, a comprehensive assessment of the condition of Russian relocants reveals several key dimensions: subjective feelings, political preferences, self-identification, economic situation, employment, and their positioning in host countries.

Regarding self-identification and self-perception, many Russians continue to view themselves as part of a broader Russian community. This community may be defined as Russian relocants, a segment of the entire Russian society, members of a "future Russia," or as part of families that remain in Russia or have already left. Over 80% of these relocants perceive their departure as a forced and temporary measure, with more than 70% maintaining regular contact with colleagues and relatives in Russia, relying predominantly on Russian or Russian-speaking media for information.

In Europe only half of the Russian relocants express a desire to return to their homeland. Of these, 11% are determined to return regardless of the circumstances, while 37% would consider returning if the situation changes—such changes might include the end of the war, the removal of mobilization threats, or the dismantling of Putin's regime. Interestingly, up to 75% of relocants in the EU express a desire to obtain citizenship in their new country of residence, suggesting a reevaluation of their intention to return to Russia in the medium term. This trend underscores that most returns to Russia in 2023-2024 are likely from post-Soviet countries rather than the EU.

On the economic front, significant changes have occurred over recent years. Initially, nearly half of the Russian relocants were employed by companies or organizations based in Russia. However, by mid-2023, this proportion had decreased to 13%, likely now below 10%. This shift is due to actions by Russian authorities and corporate leadership limiting the possibility of remote work from abroad and receiving remuneration from Russia, coupled with new opportunities emerging in host countries. Affluent relocants have significantly contributed financially to their new countries of residence. For instance, Russians purchased over 27,000 properties in Turkey alone during 2022-2023 and have been active in the UAE, Israel, Indonesia, and Serbia. Currency inflows into destination countries are not solely from Russia; relocants are also establishing international businesses, including high-tech companies, and finding employment or starting local businesses in their new countries of residence.

The influx of Russians in 2022 dramatically altered the economic dynamics of many destination countries. In Armenia, where up to 110,000 Russians moved in 2022, GDP growth rates soared to 12.6% in 2022 and 8.7% in 2023. Similarly, Georgia experienced growth rates of 10.4% and 7.0%, and Kyrgyzstan saw rates of 7.0% and 6.2%. These figures are striking, especially considering the World Bank's mid-2021 GDP growth forecasts for these countries were 4.3%, 5.0%, and 3.3%, respectively. The arrival of Russians also led to a significant appreciation of these countries' currencies against the US dollar—between 11% and 23%—and spurred a boom in housing construction and the services sector, with local populations expressing demands rarely seen before. Seizing these new trends, authorities in several post-Soviet countries, such as Armenia, have been creating favorable conditions for relocants, hoping to retain them and encourage them to open local businesses. Nevertheless, feedback from many

Russians in these former Soviet republics indicates that most do not view these countries as their final destinations.

In contrast, most EU member states have shown less enthusiasm about Russian emigration. In Europe, a debate emerged about banning Russians from purchasing real estate, with Russian citizens owning approximately 1 million properties in the EU, UK, and Switzerland as of early 2022. Numerous restrictions have been imposed on opening bank accounts, processing payments from Russia, and maintaining cryptocurrency accounts. Consequently, applications for long-term visas, residence permits, and political asylum from Russians have been increasing much faster than approvals. In 2021, 82,900 residence permits were issued to Russian citizens in the EU; in 2022, this number exceeded 91,000, and in 2023, it could increase by 20-30%. However, even at these rates, it may take several more years for all interested parties to achieve their goal of residing in the EU.

A study conducted on behalf of CASE stands out from other contemporary surveys of Russian relocants by offering pioneering insights into the diasporas in "old" Europe (Germany and France), "new" Europe (e.g., Poland), and Cyprus, a long-standing destination for Russians outside the former USSR. It also provides a comparative analysis of the attitudes and conditions of those who left Russia before 2013, between 2014 and 2021, and in 2022 and later, both overall and within each country.

Generally, the sentiments and status of Russians who left after 2014 show significant similarities across the European countries sampled. Contrary to expectations, the differences between Poland and Germany, for instance, were not as pronounced. In these countries, relocants primarily identify as "ethnic Russians" or "Russians," a response twice as common as identifying as "residents of the host country." Despite this, 93% of respondents hold temporary or permanent residence permits or even dual citizenship. They are loyal to the local values and laws, integrate into society, and strive to earn a living in their host countries. Only 9% of respondents claim their main income comes from Russia, with about 10% giving indefinite answers or refusing to comment. However, there are notable differences, particularly between France and Cyprus.

These differences, while not fundamental, provide valuable insights. Some are easily explained: relocants driven by the desire to preserve their gender identity are 2.5 times more likely to

move to secular France than conservative, Orthodox Cyprus. Additionally, France exhibits the highest material inequality among relocants, with a record number of Russians earning below €3,000 and above €10,000 per month. This suggests that both those who rely on social welfare and those without financial problems choose France. Conversely, in Cyprus, the proportion of those earning between €3,000 and €7,000 per month is 1.5 times higher than the average across all surveyed countries. Some differences, however, are less obvious and require detailed investigation.

Notably, those who relocated to France are less likely than those in other countries to cite political reasons, such as disagreement with Putin's aggression against Ukraine, for leaving Russia. This proportion is more than a third lower than in Cyprus, with nearly three times as many respondents citing "personal reasons" for their move. The Russian diaspora in France appears more tolerant of the current situation in Russia. Those who primarily identify as ethnic Russians or Russian citizens are at least a third more numerous here than in other EU countries. Nearly a fifth of the relocants in France believe both Russia and Ukraine are to blame for the conflict. Additionally, France has the highest proportion of relocants who fully or partially support Putin's policies (18% compared to 5% in Cyprus) and the lowest proportion condemning them (51% compared to 77% in Cyprus). Unsurprisingly, the difference in support for Ukraine versus Russia is relatively small in France (32% compared to 43% in Poland, 48% in Germany, and 56% in Cyprus). Consequently, only 24% of Russian relocants in France are unwilling to return to Russia, compared to an average of 36% across the other three countries surveyed.

The study highlights the scale of Russian relocation, noting that hundreds of thousands of Russians live in many European countries without being citizens. However, in all these countries, the share of relocants does not exceed 1% of the total population. Cyprus is an exception, where Russians are much more noticeable in terms of both numbers and economic influence. Cypriot authorities are adapting legislation to make life more comfortable for Russian relocants. The taxes they pay significantly contribute to the country's budget, and their involvement in the economic and technological development is considerable. Thus, the current situation of the Russian diaspora in Cyprus deserves special attention.

Conclusional thoughts

The paper delves into a critical and often misunderstood issue in Western analyses: the failure to comprehend how deeply the concept of the 'Russian mir'—or 'Russian world'—informs Russia's actions, particularly in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War that escalated in 2022. The 'Russian mir' is not merely a cultural or linguistic notion; it is a geopolitical and ideological framework that Russia uses to justify its interventions and assert its influence over regions with significant Russian-speaking populations. This concept has been a central pillar of Russia's strategy in the post-Soviet space, especially in its ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

The 'Russian mir' embodies the idea that Russia has a historic and moral obligation to protect and promote the interests of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers, regardless of their location. This belief has driven Russia's actions, from the annexation of Crimea in 2014 to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The war has brought the concept of the 'Russian mir' into sharper focus, as it has been used to legitimize Russia's military intervention and its broader aims of territorial expansion and regional dominance.

Currently, this approach more closely resembles the creation of a Russian buffer zone and sphere of influence, effectively 'legitimizing' aggressive military actions against Ukraine: in the 2022 escalation, Russia intensified its rhetoric around the 'Russian mir' to justify its invasion, framing it as a necessary action to defend Russian speakers in Ukraine from alleged persecution and to restore historical unity. This narrative has been central to Russia's propaganda, portraying the war as a struggle to protect the Russian diaspora from Western encroachment and Ukrainian nationalism. The concept of the 'Russian mir' has been weaponized to mobilize support within Russia and among Russian-speaking communities abroad, reinforcing the idea that they are part of a broader Russian civilization that transcends national borders.

The current war has exacerbated the plight of Russian minorities in Ukraine, who find themselves in an increasingly precarious position. Many have been caught in the crossfire, forced to navigate the complex and dangerous realities of being associated with a state that is waging war against their country of residence. This situation has created a new diaspora, characterized not only by physical displacement but also by a fractured identity. Russian speakers in Ukraine are increasingly torn between their cultural ties to Russia and their political and social integration into Ukrainian society.

The core issue, therefore, is the instrumentalization of the Russian diaspora as a tool of Russian foreign policy, driven by the concept of the 'Russian mir.' This has profound implications for the ongoing conflict, as it deepens the divide within Ukraine and complicates efforts to achieve peace. By framing an introduction around this issue, the paper can explore the contemporary challenges faced by the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, particularly in the context of the 2022 war. It can critically assess how the 'Russian mir' continues to shape Russia's military and political strategies, while also impacting the lives and identities of millions of people caught in the midst of this geopolitical struggle.



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