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“Russian World:” Russia’s Cultural Diplomacy Programs in Europe

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2018

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at UT, and especially Agnes Sekowski, for always supporting their students and keeping them on track. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeremi Suri and Dr. Robert Hutchings for providing me sound guidance over the course of my research edits and always being available for help when needed. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family, who have supported me through every struggle. Thank you for being there.

Abstract

“Russian World:” Russia’s Cultural Diplomacy Programs in Europe

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

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In recent years, Russia has been increasingly active in international affairs, reasserting itself as a major player in world politics. In the realm of soft power initiatives, Russian foreign policy has also seen a renewal of efforts. Russia’s foreign policy concepts in 2013 and 2016 defined a comprehensive soft power strategy, including the expansion of public diplomacy programs abroad. In particular, Russia has invested significant resources into the development of their cultural initiatives. This research explores the activities of the primary Russian actor in cultural diplomacy abroad, the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation, focusing on comparative case studies of countries in Western and Eastern Europe – Germany and Ukraine. The paper seeks to answer the questions: what are the goals of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation in these regions and countries? Do their activities and goals differ in the West and the East? What relevance do these activities have in the wider scope of Russian foreign policy? This research finds primarily that cultural diplomacy programming does vary between Russia’s programs in Western and Eastern Europe – in the West, Russian programs are a hybridization of traditional Soviet cultural diplomacy and modern Western practices, while in Eastern and post-Soviet spaces, Russian methods show much more

continuity with the Soviet era of cultural diplomacy. The role of active measures plays a continuing role in Russian cultural policies in both the West and the East.

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Introduction

In today's world, public opinion has the power to shape and direct policy. This contemporary fact has led many countries, the United States included, to pursue diplomatic policies designed to enhance the image of their country abroad, with the assumption that a positive international image will increase a country's power of influence. How can a nation, then, best represent ideas of the self to an international audience? According to a 2005 survey conducted by the Department of State, the best mechanism for state representation abroad is cultural diplomacy, "...for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented."¹

American approaches to a comprehensive policy of cultural diplomacy began in the 1930s, in response to Nazi cultural propaganda in Latin America. One American official described Nazi initiatives in the Americas as "well-organized and well-subsidized, and designed to counteract and weaken U.S. cultural relationships with the Latin American countries and discredit U.S. motives and purposes in the area."² In response, the United States launched one of its first major cultural initiatives – the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations – with the objective of increasing mutual knowledge and understanding between the United States and Latin America, and to strengthen the relationships between these countries. The features of this convention would lay the foundation for America's future cultural diplomatic policies: the convention determined that exchanges of people would be initiated to strengthen relations and promote intellectual cooperation, and that such exchange would be reciprocal and free of the direct influence

¹ *U.S. Department of State Family of Sites*. "U.S. Department of State Report of the Advisory Committee for Cultural Diplomacy." September 2005. Web.

² Milton Cummings. "Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey." *The Center for Arts and Culture*, 2009.

and control of any governmental organization, NGO, or other political group, beyond the facilitation of the exchange. Despite this last point, the goal for the United States was clearly still to both foster close connections *and* to improve the country's image abroad.³

In a speech on the promotion of closer and mutually respectful ties between the U.S. and Latin America, Roosevelt cited these qualities of “a respectful good neighbor:” “mutual understanding, and, through such understanding, a sympathetic appreciation of the other's point of view.” As Arndt notes in this passage on FDR, Roosevelt “never [pretended] that understanding implied agreement.”⁴ Rather, FDR's early conceptualization of cultural diplomacy emphasized empathy obtained through multidirectional educational and informational exchange. This idea of mutual understanding and mutually beneficial exchange would later become the basis of one of America's most successful cultural exchange initiatives, the Fulbright program. The Fulbright Act in 1946 launched the U.S. into a vigorous new phase of cultural diplomacy programming, providing greater opportunity for citizen exchange than ever seen before in America's previous history, a program which still continues today. In the American conceptualization of cultural diplomacy, cultural programming can be successful and beneficial even between countries where national interests do not necessarily coincide; rather, it furthers the general interest by assisting understanding and “softening enmity.”⁵ Cultural diplomacy, like public diplomacy more generally, is a tool for reaching audiences beyond the elite – it is interactive, and it provides opportunity for interaction with foreign publics beyond just those working at the highest levels of government.

³ Milton Cummings. “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey.” *The Center for Arts and Culture*, 2009.

⁴ Arndt, Richard T. *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*. Potomac Books, 2006.

⁵ Ibid.

Initially, programs exported in the name of cultural diplomacy focused on art exhibits, but rapidly expanded to include educational, scientific, library, and museum exchanges. Upon American entry into World War II, the sense of urgency for cultural programming increased, resulting in a vigorous period of growth. According to Milton, the U.S. Division of Cultural Relations saw expanded activity, as well as new cultural developments initiated by the Office of the Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs and the creation of an entirely new department – the Office of War Information.⁶ In contrast to previous cultural programs, the Office of War Information focused on explaining American goals and motivations to the world – the OWI offered a more unidirectional flow of information in comparison with the two-way flow of information and ideas represented by most other American cultural programs at the time.

During the Cold War, cultural diplomacy became increasingly institutionalized in the American foreign policy bureaucracy. In the U.S. zone of occupation of Western Germany after World War II, the American foreign policy apparatus under Truman undertook an expansive cultural and educational initiative in an effort to reorient the German public towards a more democratic future, aligned with American values; scientific and cultural student and professional exchanges were especially prevalent.⁷ For a long time, the U.S. Information Agency was given responsibility for creating comprehensive cultural initiatives abroad; today, the U.S. Department of State is mostly responsible for these activities. Cultural programming also eventually merged with other efforts to reach widespread foreign audiences, and eventually became categorized as a tool of American public diplomacy. At the height of American struggles for ideological superiority over the

⁶ Milton Cummings. “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey.” *The Center for Arts and Culture*, 2009.

⁷ Ibid.

Soviet Union, cultural initiatives took place side-by-side with other information initiatives attempting to sway, persuade, and attract foreign audiences to the American Way – the dissemination of propaganda, the development of international media infrastructure, and cultural relations all took place as a part of the larger American public diplomacy effort. Great emphasis during the Cold War was placed on explanations of the American viewpoint and American objectives to foreign publics, thus shaping the trajectory of cultural diplomacy and ultimately directing its merger with other information dissemination efforts falling under the umbrella of public diplomacy.

According to Arndt, American conceptions of “true” cultural diplomacy focus on reciprocity over unidirectionalism. This means that cultural programming, while meant to persuade a foreign audience, actually acts as a two-way flow of information – on both sides, the individuals involved are exposed to new information about a foreign culture, and they are (ideally) left to decide on their own how to interpret such information. In the 1980s, one State Department official summed up the goals of “pure” American cultural diplomacy policy as being “to form a climate of mutual understanding; to support free exchange of ideas and information for the cultural advancement of Americans and the world’s people; and to foster a peaceful, secure and cooperative world-order, through exchanges.”⁸

Unfortunately, this has made cultural diplomacy less and less popular, not just in the U.S. but more generally throughout the world. As Arndt mentions, cultural diplomacy works best when free of immediate policy considerations; such considerations generally strip cultural programs of their reciprocal direction, in favor of delivering a unidirectional message. Cultural programs can also be hard to sell to policymakers – they are very much

⁸ Arndt, Richard T. *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*. Potomac Books, 2006.

oriented for the long-term; they are difficult, if not impossible, to fully control, as a number of varying actors are involved in cultural exchange at all levels of society; and they strive for more universal goals, such as a general mutual understanding across peoples.

While perhaps cultural initiatives have been declining relatively in popularity among American policymakers, in Russia one might say that the opposite is true. In recent years, the Russian Federation has increased focus on soft power initiatives, which after the collapse of the Soviet Union had been all-but-non-existent. Since domestic, political, and economic stabilization in the years following Soviet collapse, Putin has returned to more lofty ambitions regarding Russia's position on the international stage – particularly, the restoring of superpower status once enjoyed by the Soviet Union. Putin has demonstrated these international ambitions increasingly in recent years, through the invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, the Russian presence in Syria in opposition to the American presence, and the increasingly aggressive disinformation campaigns and cyber-warfare attacks abroad, both in the West and in Eastern Europe. With this increased focus on Russia's international presence, so too has the Russian foreign policy elite shown a renewed interest in soft power initiatives and cultural programming abroad. While soft power still remains a much lower priority than hard power projection in Russian foreign policy, recent iterations of Russia's foreign policy concepts have shown greatly increased attention to the creation of a more robust and comprehensive soft power policy.

These new policies also include renewed focus on Russia's cultural relations abroad. In 2007, Putin founded the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation – a foundation dedicated to global Russian cultural projection. According to the *Russkiy Mir* English-language website, the foundation's mission is:

to promote understanding and peace in the world by supporting, enhancing and encouraging the appreciation of Russian language, heritage and culture. *Russkiy Mir* promotes the teaching of the Russian language within Russia and abroad – both to new learners of the language and to those who already know and love Russian and wish to recapture or maintain their fluency. *Russkiy Mir* brings Russia’s rich history to life, and showcases vibrant examples of Russian art and culture around the world. *Russkiy Mir* reconnects the Russian community abroad with their homeland, forging new and stronger links through cultural and social programs, exchanges and assistance in relocation.⁹

Russkiy Mir operates as a cultural institution, providing Russian cultural connections in 48 countries all over the world. The foundation is considered a government-organized non-governmental organization, or GONGO. As a GONGO, *Russkiy Mir* is based in Russia but has numerous branches globally; the organization also produces government-influenced content and can channel money to other organizations abroad. In this respect, *Russkiy Mir* operates similarly to an NGO and receives substantial funding from private donors and partners, but is also partnered with (and was first established by) the Russian Foreign Ministry of Affairs. From an organizational standpoint, *Russkiy Mir* employees are not considered officials of the Russian government; rather, *Russkiy Mir* is referred to as a “project” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). While the foundation does not fall directly underneath the Ministry in the government hierarchy, it is connected through funding received from the MID. Day-to-day operations, staff, activities, and missions are also influenced to some extent by the in-country host organizations where the centers reside. Who influences and directs operations the most – the MID or the host organization

⁹ Russkiy Mir Foundation. “About Russkiy Mir Foundation.” *Russkiymir.ru*. Web.

– seems to depend on the country in which the centers are operating, and the level of priority given to the centers’ activities in these countries (this will become apparent later, in the analysis on *Russkiy Mir*’s activities in Germany and Ukraine).

An understanding of *Russkiy Mir*’s cultural initiatives abroad also includes an understanding of the history of Russian cultural diplomacy as well as Russia’s most recent foreign policy and soft power priorities. *Russkiy Mir*’s operations are also different depending on the region, based on differences in Russia’s regional priorities. This research will focus on the differences between the foundation’s cultural center initiatives in Western Europe versus in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet spaces; two case studies of Russian cultural centers in Germany and in Ukraine are presented to illustrate these differences. In Western Europe, some continuity exists between Soviet-era and modern-day cultural diplomacy programming, but these programs are largely a hybridization of Soviet policies and modern Western public diplomacy practices. In the East, *Russkiy Mir* centers show much more continuity with the Soviet era, in that cultural programming is much more singular, unidirectional, and dominated by clear political and historical narratives. Additionally, readers must understand the relationship between soft power, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy to truly understand the nature of Russian cultural diplomacy programs today.

SOFT POWER, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: DEFINING TERMS

Theorist Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” in the late 1980s – he defined it as the ability of a nation to attract and persuade; in opposition to hard power, like the wielding of military and economic might, soft power rather refers to efforts to maximize the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies to foreign audiences. Soft power is more complicated to deploy than hard power, in that it is more difficult to

control; as opposed to simply deploying greater forces and having better technology and weaponry, soft power involves the attractiveness of a culture and a nation – everything from their clothing, to their soft drinks, to their literature and their films.¹⁰ A country might have high appeal through no real effort of their own; concurrently, efforts to increase soft power are not necessarily guaranteed to succeed, because it is hard to determine what might make a country attractive to any given foreign audience.

Underneath the large umbrella of soft power resides the concept of “public diplomacy.” Initially coined in the 1960s to get around the negative connotations surrounding the term “propaganda,” public diplomacy now refers to a number of initiatives often similar to public relations which target foreign public audiences. According to the USC Public Diplomacy Center, public diplomacy is “the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy which is not only global in nature, but which involves a multitude of actors and networks.”¹¹ While there is no currently agreed-upon definition of the term, Saari offers within his own research this definition of public diplomacy found in a brochure from the 1960s:

[It] deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication

¹⁰ Nye Jr., Joseph. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs, 2009.

¹¹ The USC Center for Public Diplomacy. “What is Public Diplomacy?” *Uscpublicdiplomacy.org*. Web.

between those whose job is communication, as between diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.¹²

Some of the typical activities that readers might see within the U.S. Department of State's public diplomacy initiatives include student outreach programs; the arrangement of musicians, artists, and other creatives to visit foreign audiences and publics; the support of student, academic, and professional exchanges; and a very robust presence in the media – referring both to American sources and to connections with local media sources in foreign countries. Most recently, social media has become an important tool for those organizations looking to practice comprehensive and successful public diplomacy.

Readers can think of these terms in a sort of *matryoshka* model of definitions: if soft power is our largest doll, then public diplomacy is nestled within it; nestled within the shell of public diplomacy is our final conceptual term – cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is a crucial tool in most countries' public diplomacy efforts. Cultural diplomacy is, at its essence, pure cultural projection – the development of intellectual, academic, and professional contacts and exchange between countries; the development of student exchange programs and artistic/other creative exchanges; demonstrations of high culture projection through film screenings, the dissemination and discussion of literature, and the arrangement of such artists, musicians, filmmakers, and other creatives to visit a country and interact with the foreign public; as well as the projection of low culture – television and snack foods, jeans and telenovelas. In its relationship to the wider term of public diplomacy (PD), cultural diplomacy is more diffuse than most other PD methods, and lacks (or at least should lack) the more informational and narrative component of other PD tools.

¹² Saari, Sinikukka. "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy po russkii." *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 66 no. 1, 2014, pp. 50-66.

Cultural diplomacy is (or should be) about providing insight into another culture through exchange, without any pre-determined clear, official narrative.

The difference in the Russian soft power approach and the importance of narrative power in post-Soviet spaces starts on a basic level with the terminology being used. For the purposes of this research, “public diplomacy” is defined in Western terms – that is, it encompasses cultural diplomacy, international media initiatives geared toward foreign audiences, and all other forms of educational and cultural exchange meant to promote a positive image of a country to foreign publics. Readers should note, however, that while the Russian government also uses the term “public diplomacy” in reference to these activities in Western countries (the terms used in Russian are usually “*obshchestvennaya diplomatiya*” or “*publichnaya diplomatiya*”), a different term is used for those activities that a Western reader would typically label public diplomacy specifically in the post-Soviet space. In the case of public diplomacy initiatives in the post-Soviet world, Russian bureaucrats prefer to use the term “*gumanitarnoe sotrudnichestvo*,” or “humanitarian cooperation.”¹³ In this way, a distinction is already made in Russian foreign policy between soft power initiatives in Western versus post-Soviet spaces traditionally considered part of the Russian sphere of influence. According to Saari, “In this context humanitarian cooperation refers to compatriot and consular issues, culture, education and media policies in the post-Soviet states.” Thus, the term used for the post-Soviet space emphasizes a shared history, close connection, and above all – an emphasis on connecting Russian “compatriots” to their homeland. This distinction in terminology itself can tell readers much about the perceived difference – one term references the Western-preferred language

¹³ Saari, Sinikukka. “Russia’s Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy po russkii.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 66 no. 1, 2014, pp. 50-66.

regarding these activities, while the other sounds more paternal in nature. For the purposes of this research, only the term “public diplomacy” is used; readers should, however, note this difference in the Russian translations of the word.

I. Soviet Cultural Diplomacy

In the Soviet era, the Kremlin exercised a wide and concerted program of cultural diplomatic initiatives to pursue Soviet foreign policy objectives. Soviet foreign policy was primarily driven by ideology; because of the prominence of Soviet socialism in determining foreign policy priorities and objectives, the effort to project a clear and consistently positive image of Soviet society, culture, and ways of life centered largely in the country's strategy. Cultural initiatives were given particular weight during this period. Especially in the context of the Cold War, cultural diplomacy and its importance can be explained largely as an outgrowth of ideological warfare. The United States and the Soviet Union found themselves in constant international competition to prove the superiority of their ideological conceptions – that is, to prove that their political and economic systems, societies, and ways of life were superior to the other.¹⁴ In this way, cultural relations and cultural initiatives played a unique role in the “cold warfare” of the time.

Ideological incompatibilities between the United States and the Soviet Union drove the Cold War, and because of this, the effective spread of ideas became an essential component of Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet history of cultural initiatives can be divided into two major frameworks: Stalinist and post-Stalinist cultural diplomacy. Between the two periods, the major differences are level of control exerted over the programs, and a two-camp versus three-camp approach to foreign policy strategy. According to Barghoorn,¹⁵ Stalin approached foreign policy according to the two-camp approach. In the two-camp approach, the world was divided neatly into two: the domestic, which included

¹⁴ Gould-Davies, Nigel. “The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy.” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2, April 2003, pp. 193-214.

¹⁵ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

all of the Soviet Union; and the foreign, which included all territory outside of the Soviet Union. The three-camp approach, which was employed throughout the post-Stalin era of Soviet foreign policy strategy, demarcated three separate levels of policy – the domestic, which was Russia; the buffer states, which were all Soviet states other than Russia as well as those in Eastern Europe falling under the Soviet umbrella of regional influence; and the foreign, which included all territory outside of the Soviet Union.

SOVIET CULTURAL DIPLOMACY UNDER STALIN

Throughout the Stalin years, the two-camp approach to foreign policy ensured the Soviet Union a high level of insulation from foreign influence, as well as a high level of control. Stalin, fearful of foreign influence, implemented a foreign policy in which the outside world had to interact directly with the Kremlin in order to establish relations; contact could not be made first with Soviet republics and then later with Moscow. In this way, Stalin was able to protect the Soviet people from the “alien” ideas of foreign (especially Western) nations, which party loyalists asserted had been keeping alive the vestiges of capitalism in the consciousness of the foreign public.¹⁶ Thus, foreign relations with any of the Soviet republics required interaction with the central Soviet political structure, making the Kremlin the sole arbiter of foreign relationships and foreign contacts with all parts of the Soviet Union.

This level of control was also exercised in regards to Soviet cultural initiatives. Stalin restricted travel to and from the Soviet Union, especially in the early years; few were granted the privilege of visiting and experiencing the Soviet lifestyle for themselves. The lucky few who were able to visit were often important dignitaries, cultural figures, or

¹⁶Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

otherwise highly publicized delegations arriving specifically for the purpose of bearing witness to the Soviet way. Those who visited were personally subject to Soviet efforts to maintain close, centralized control over foreign relations; often, visitors were handled by *Intourist* (the official – and only – tourist agency of the Soviet Union) and VOKS (the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) for the entire duration of their trips. These agencies were given the explicit task of ensuring that foreign visitors only saw the best and the most impressive parts of Soviet life and society – tours to prominent cultural sites like the theatre and the ballet were arranged and specific guides assigned; visitors were given trips to the most successful and productive Soviet factories; and agency representatives arranged meetings or supplied artistic materials for travelers. Typically, VOKS was responsible for sponsoring and rendering special services for distinguished and highly important guests; *Intourist* was occasionally given sponsorship of these individuals, but also had sole jurisdiction over ordinary tourists who were able to secure visits. Depending on the visit, other Soviet organizations might also have been involved in the cultural exchange process – for instance, sometimes the Soviet Academy of Sciences or Ministry of Health would be involved in the process when intellectual exchanges were the primary focus.¹⁷

This early development of cultural exchange – the creation of multiple organizations and state agencies to carry out any and all conceivable cultural exchange in-country – developed throughout the Stalinist period and lasted long after, even once restrictions on travel had been lessened.¹⁸ Especially in the early period, but also well into the later post-Stalinist period, the Soviet government held a peculiar sensitivity to the

¹⁷ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

opinions and impressions of foreign visitors. In this way, Soviet cultural programs had a crucial role to play in protecting and advancing the Soviet image abroad.

In the projection of power abroad, the Soviets did very well in demonstrating the value of their high culture. By the '20s and '30s, many Western intellectuals had a highly favorable view of Soviet culture. According to Louis Fischer (as quoted by Barghoorn), by the 1930s "for thousands of intellectuals and intelligent people a trip to Russia had become a compulsory summer course with credit."¹⁹ Barghoorn also asserts that at this time "...in many cases adroit Soviet stage management succeeded in creating in the minds of Western and Oriental visitors an impression that Russian life and culture were distinguished by a higher level of progress and a greater degree of social welfare and social justice than would have been discovered by free and unmanipulated field study."²⁰

Contributing to this success were calculated displays of Soviet high culture. VOKS would arrange the travel of Soviet artists abroad to give performances across Europe. Soviet paintings were put on display abroad in major museums for all to see. Soviet delegations at international cultural conferences and events, like the Paris International Exhibition and the World's Fair, helped to generate positive publicity. During this period in the '20s and '30s, Soviet films also achieved accolades abroad at various international film festivals. By the end of the 1930s, the power of Soviet culture had become a crucial component of Soviet foreign policy.

Although student exchange would play a much more prominent role in the later Soviet period, these programs did exist in short form under Stalin. Soviet students would be sent abroad for 8-month intensive English language and cultural courses in the U.S., and

¹⁹ Fischer, Louis. *Men and Politics*. Greenwood Press, 1941. Print.

²⁰ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

often subsequently found employment in the Soviet diplomatic service.²¹ Between 1943 and 1946, according to Barghoorn, “scores of Soviet students” were allowed to take special intensive courses in the English language and American Studies at Columbia University. In these cases, the allowance of exchange was part of a concerted Soviet effort to import “foreign know-how.”²²

Scientific exchanges for higher level professionals were a much more frequent point of cultural/intellectual exchange. High-achieving Soviet scientists were often sent on trips abroad, as in the case of Russian physicist Pavlov’s visits to American universities in 1923 and 1929. Scientific congresses were frequently held in Moscow, with foreign scientists in attendance – for instance, the 1935 Physiological Congress, as well as the 1937 International Geological Conference, which both helped to establish cooperation between Soviet and foreign scientists.²³ In the 1930s, *Intourist* arranged travel to and around the Soviet Union for a number of high-level intellectual elite and professionals, artists, writers, musicians, and others: according to Barghoorn, these included Will Rogers, George Bernard Shaw, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Maurice Hindus, among many others. By this time, Soviet cultural organizations like VOKs had perfected the art of sending important guests on free tours of carefully selected parts of the Soviet Union, which helped to nurture illusions about Soviet society, government, and culture.²⁴

In the years leading up to and immediately following World War II, however, Stalin’s paranoia led him to take increasingly tight control of cultural exchange efforts and to restrict such exchange even further. Stalin’s fear of capitalist countries’ attempts to

²¹ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

ideologically penetrate and influence the Soviet Union translated into ever-increasing limits on foreign access to the country.²⁵ Student exchanges were virtually halted; foreigners seeking to visit the Soviet Union had a much harder, if not impossible, time arranging to get there. Instead, cultural efforts were almost entirely limited to the exportation of high culture, an approach best summarized by then-president of the Soviet Academy of Arts Alexander Gerasimov: "...although not everyone was able to come to the U.S.S.R., paintings by Soviet artists were available for everyone to see and that would help the people of Europe and Asia to study the building of socialism."²⁶ Efforts to prevent ideological infiltration were complimented with domestic policies designed to eliminate "alien" ideas from within – these years saw the renewal of Stalinist purges of the "anti-revolutionary" elements of society. Especially in relation to the U.S., which by World War II had revealed itself to be the Soviet Union's major ideological competitor, the Soviet leadership continuously minimized pre-existing cultural exchanges; full ideological control of the Soviet Union became Stalin's priority, and cultural relations were forced to the background of foreign policy.

SOVIET CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AFTER STALIN

Upon Stalin's death, the Soviet approach to cultural diplomacy changed dramatically. Stalin's successors in the Central Committee – primarily Khrushchev – agreed that change in Soviet foreign policy was necessary; once Khrushchev took power, he began to make those changes a reality.²⁷ Rapid changes in the postwar international

²⁵ Gould-Davies, Nigel. "The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy." *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2, April 2003, pp. 193-214.

²⁶ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

²⁷ Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

system, the need to make the Soviet Union more secure in relation to the potential for nuclear war, and above all newfound ideological optimism propelled the reorientation in foreign policy and in Soviet cultural relations. By 1953 or 1954, the Soviet Union had made a surprisingly rapid recovery from the economic and industrial devastation of World War II, at a pace that shocked most Western experts.²⁸ The Kremlin renewed the selective showcasing of certain aspects of Soviet life and society to foreign visitors, facilitating the visits of scientists, engineers and businessmen who returned to their home countries with reports of astounding Soviet progress despite the setbacks of the war. At this point, Khrushchev believed that the international environment had shifted in favor of socialism; this also meant that the Soviet Union could now pursue policies that might encourage the spread of socialism globally, and focus less on defending the country against the influence of alien ideology. In other words, the balance between cultural offense and defense shifted in the later period in favor of the former.

Khrushchev directed foreign policy and thus cultural diplomacy away from the former two-camp approach and into the three-camp approach. In the three-camp approach to foreign relations, Soviet power sought “the transformation of Eurasia into a great neutralized buffer zone (“peace zone”) of the Soviet Empire, a *cordon sanitaire* in reverse.”²⁹ In addition to marking the beginning of the divide between Soviet cultural diplomacy in Western Europe versus Eastern Europe, this policy shift also marks the earliest beginnings of Soviet public diplomacy programs, which were closely linked with their cultural programming. In the post-Stalin years, the Kremlin designed and implemented a public relations effort like nothing that had been seen before. These public

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Tucker, Robert C. *New Leader*. 1957.

diplomacy efforts became part of the primary means of demonstrating Soviet cultural superiority and of promoting cultural exchange.

After Stalin's death and in pursuit of the Soviet Union's new foreign policy objectives, the Kremlin renewed student exchange programs between their country and Western countries, which had been previously suspended. In the period immediately following World War II, the Soviet Union experienced economic growth which allowed for a more or less rapid recovery from the war, and in turn, Soviet authorities felt comfortable displaying selected aspects of Soviet society and culture to an increasing number of foreign visitors to the country. After 1953, foreign tourism to the Soviet Union was seen both as an import of money and foreign interest, but also as a way to export Soviet ideas and sympathetic political sensitivities. Despite this relaxation towards visitors, travel of Soviet citizens abroad was still controlled relatively closely – the fear that those who traveled abroad would be poisoned by dangerous foreign ideas remained relatively strong even in the minds of post-Stalinist leaders.

Soviet cultural policy in the West developed with three major aims: the promotion of “peace” (which, to the Kremlin, mostly meant the acceptance of Soviet ideas), the promotion of a favorable international image of Soviet socialist society,³⁰ and the expansion of communist influence abroad, a point emphasized in Khrushchev's 1961 speech on supporting “wars of national liberation.”³¹ As a result of this intensified strategy to promote a favorable image abroad and to spread socialist influence, Soviet public relations efforts in the West also intensified. While Soviet broadcasting and print media

³⁰ Barghoorn, Frederick C. “Soviet Cultural Diplomacy Since Stalin.” *The Russian Review*, Vol. 17 No. 1, Jan. 1958, pp. 41-55.

³¹ *The CIA.gov Family of Sites*. “Analysis of the Khrushchev Speech of January 6th, 1961.” *CIA.gov*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961. Web.

certainly focused primarily on maintaining illusions of superiority domestically, Soviet media began to broadcast programs internationally as well (probably as a countermeasure against Voice of America in Europe). The foundation of these broadcasts, meant to highlight the achievements of Soviet society, were often the demonstration of Soviet cultural success. The Soviets continued to put enormous effort into the World's Fair and other cultural exhibitions, especially in relation to the United States; for instance, the Soviet Union and the U.S. agreed in 1959 to hold cultural exchanges in each other's countries in order to promote cultural understanding (this same agreement later led to the great Kitchen Debate between Nixon and Khrushchev in July of 1959).

After the death of Stalin, *Intourist* and other state agencies developed massive, full-scale tourist operations. These provided the primary means by which ordinary Westerners (and especially ordinary Americans) were able to see the Soviet Union and experience Soviet society for themselves. In 1958, the Soviet government even set up an International Youth Travel Bureau in Moscow to facilitate youth travel to the Soviet Union.³² These efforts served as some of the primary means of improving the Soviet image abroad, as opposed to Soviet cultural efforts within foreign countries.

The Soviet public relations effort also included another component – a massive campaign referred to now as “the peace offensive,” involving the use of Soviet overt media as well as agents of influence.³³ Peace offensive efforts reached peak activity in the late ‘60s and ‘70s, and were meant to serve both strategic and tactical objectives. Strategically, the peace offensive was meant to portray the United States as the aggressor in American-Soviet relations (and in international politics more generally), and the Soviet Union as the

³² Barghoorn, Frederick C. *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton University Press, 1960.

³³ Barlow, Jeffrey G. “Moscow and the Peace Offensive.” *Heritage.org*, 14 May 1982. Web.

peace-seeking “realist” actor in global affairs. Soviet international newspapers and radio stations would document instances of “American aggression,” while promoting the view that Soviet actors and government officials were constantly playing the voice of reason in political debates. Between 1960 and 1962, for instance, Soviet sources frequently returned to the theme of American reluctance to come to a deal with the U.S.S.R. on various disarmament proposals; at one point, a commentator at Soviet-based *New Times* stated that the United States was making unreasonable demands and had “made no constructive steps toward the Soviet position.”³⁴ By the end of 1961, the “capitalist world” was accused of “nuclear-armed imperialism” and an effort to unleash “a frenzied arms race and extensive war preparation.”³⁵ Soviet sources, meanwhile, would downplay the Soviet Union’s own stockpiling of conventional and nuclear weapons, while continuing to emphasize Soviet efforts to compromise and reach agreement “in the name of peace.”³⁶ These efforts would usually peak at crucial moments – when decisions were being made regarding NATO in Europe, or when disarmament policy was being discussed. These public relations and disinformation efforts would be combined with other efforts, including cultural diplomacy, in an attempt to shape the international image of the Soviet Union as peacemaker and voice of reason.

Although not as much detailed information exists on post-Stalinist cultural programs in the East, the literature seems to suggest that after Stalin’s death, the field of Soviet cultural relations developed into several unique trajectories. Firstly, Soviet

³⁴ Godson, Roy, and Richard H. Shultz. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Pergamon Brassey’s, 1984.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

leadership placed a new emphasis in consolidating control over Eastern Europe.³⁷ Outside of this, several new trajectories developed in relation to the Middle East and Asia. With China in particular, the Soviets were rather successful in establishing a program of mutually beneficial cultural influence.

As for cultural programs in Eastern Europe, most programs were targeted at maintaining control and a strong Kremlin influence over communist and Soviet-friendly regimes. These programs emphasized a shared history, shared culture, and thus a shared future. Soviet cultural bureaus also occasionally arranged travel and youth programs, sponsoring youth, students, and young professionals from “friendly” Eastern European countries to travel to Russia for these events. Cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe emphasized more heavily the various “friendship societies” created by the Soviet bureaucracy for the express purpose of developing friendly and compatible cultural ties.

As cultural relations became a central part of the Soviet public diplomacy effort abroad, so too did the goals and objectives of these programs align generally with other public diplomacy efforts. Soviet public diplomacy initiatives fell under the overt category of *aktivnye meropriyatiya*, or “active measures.”³⁸ This term was a reflection of the Soviet perception that international politics were a constant struggle to maintain and improve a state’s position in relation to others; one might say that the Soviets held close to Clausewitz’ definition of politics as the continuation of war by other means. According to scholars Richard Shultz and Roy Godson, in fact, Soviet officials conceived of international politics as a constant war:

³⁷ Gould-Davies, Nigel. “The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy.” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27 Issue 2, April 2003, pp. 193-214.

³⁸ Saari, Sinikukka. “Russia’s Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy po russkii.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 66 no. 1, 2014, pp. 50-66.

The Soviet Union has constantly rejected the Western notion that world politics fluctuates between periods of war and peace. Soviet leaders do not regard war and politics as distinct conditions; rather, from their perspective, politics is a continual state of war carried on by a wide variety of means, sometimes including military operations. Thus, Moscow views international politics as a constant struggle.³⁹

In the canon of active measures, activities were first divided into two subcategories – overt and covert measures; these categories were further subdivided by various activities. In the overt category, activities included cultural programming, officially-sponsored state media and propaganda outputs, and diplomatic relations. On the covert side, the Soviets employed the use of “covert propaganda, oral and written disinformation, agents of influence, clandestine radios, and international front organizations.”⁴⁰ In many cases, the various activities that constituted Soviet active measures were deeply intertwined and interactive with one another. What mattered most were the broader goals of all active measures – to influence and manipulate foreign actors and audiences, usually in the service of overarching Soviet objectives and national interests.

In this way, all Soviet public diplomacy – and thus also cultural diplomacy – initiatives were meant as a way to influence developments in foreign countries. Cultural diplomacy under the lens of active measures played an essential role in both the West and the East – these programs were meant to showcase the very best that the Soviet Union had to offer, although cultural cooperation and foreign individual contacts were still closely scrutinized by the party. Soviet strategies in Eastern Europe simply sought to maintain restrictive control over countries that were already more or less forced into close

³⁹ Godson, Roy, and Richard H. Shultz. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Pergamon Brassey's, 1984.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

cooperation with the Soviet Union, as they were highly economically interdependent and often also politically interdependent. Cultural initiatives in these countries emphasized shared historical and social histories which promoted a narrative of natural closeness with the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the differences in these initiatives became much more pronounced, especially in relation to the Russian approach to post-Soviet states. As newly independent states found themselves free of Soviet restrictions and less dependent than previously on their strategic connections to Russia, relationships between the post-Soviet states and Russia were essentially reset. Although in the first decade or so after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia did not actively pursue or develop its cultural initiatives abroad, in recent years this has changed. Now, Putin has demonstrated a renewed interest in Russia's cultural diplomacy programs in both Western and Eastern Europe – programs that show plenty of continuity with the old Soviet programs, especially in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet spaces.

II. Russia's New Foreign Policy Concepts

Published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and approved by the president, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation is a foundational document of Russian foreign policy which outlines key strategies and broad directives for the country's international relations. While there is no specified timeframe or expiration date given to these foreign policy concepts, they essentially guide policy until the president requests a new one (typically because of bureaucratic shifts in policy or because of major geopolitical changes). In the recent past, new concepts were drafted in 2000, 2008, 2013, and 2016.

For the purposes of this research, the 2013 and 2016 concepts prove particularly significant because of a new and noticeable renewal of soft power initiatives emphasized in the documents. After the Soviet collapse in 1991, the soft power initiatives of the Soviet era – including the cultural programs – were essentially reset to ground zero. While Putin spent much of his first and second terms focusing on achieving domestic stability and bringing Russia back from the chaos of the '90s, since Medvedev's term and then Putin's return, Russian foreign policy strategy seems to have seen a renewed focus on active international involvement. Rather than being reactive, Putin's new policy goals in recent years are concerned more with reasserting Russia as a major player on the global stage. As such, this renewed attention to active international involvement has also included a renewal of soft power strategies, to include a return to investment in cultural diplomacy initiatives abroad.

THE 2013 FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Although largely dismissed in the West as a simple bureaucratic necessity,⁴¹ the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept marks a departure from previous post-Soviet foreign policy. As with the previous foreign policy concept from 2008, the 2013 document is structured according to five main sections: general provisions; the modern world and Russian foreign policy; Russia's priorities in resolving global problems; regional priorities; and formulation and implementation of Russian foreign policy. Large parts of the 2008 and 2013 documents are similar in both structure and wording. There are, however, some key differences and observable policy/priority shifts – these include regional priorities for Russian foreign policy, as well as the introduction of the term “soft power” into the new document, whereas previously the term had not been used.

Notable in the new document is a conceptual shift in which Russian foreign policy in 2013 and beyond would begin to emphasize soft power strategy. While soft power was not necessarily absent from Russian foreign policy strategy prior to 2013, there had not been a consistent and cohesive conceptual approach to Russia's soft power projection since the post-Soviet collapse. In the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept,⁴² soft power is introduced as an important tool of foreign policy in the modern international context. For the first time, public diplomacy is also mentioned as a conceptual framework informing Russian foreign policy; one section of the document states:

In public diplomacy, Russia will seek its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of informational influence on public opinion abroad,

⁴¹ Monaghan, Andrew. “The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity.” *Chatham House*, April 2013. Web.

⁴² Mid.ru. “Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 12 февраля 2013 г.) [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on the 12th of February 2013).” *Russian Foreign Ministry*, 18 Feb. 2013. Web.

strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment providing them with essential state support, as well as actively participate in international information cooperation, and take necessary measures to repel information threats to its sovereignty and security.⁴³

To this end, Russia's new emphasis on public diplomacy and soft power in the 2013 concept also includes extensive development of cultural initiatives abroad. In particular, the document mentions the expansion of the scope of its many global scientific and cultural centers. These centers – created through the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation with the assistance of *Rossotrudnichestvo* – are the nucleus of Russia's cultural initiatives. To this end, the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept also included plans to increase the budget of *Rossotrudnichestvo* sevenfold, from \$1.4 billion rubles annually to almost \$10 billion.⁴⁴

The 2013 concept also described the development of *Russkiy Mir*'s cultural centers to provide a wider range of services – educational programs and activities such as film screenings and literature clubs, as well as access to a broad range of Russian materials and sources – in order to foster closer engagement with the Russian diaspora and foreign youth. At the beginning of 2013, *Russkiy Mir* was operating 59 such centers;⁴⁵ as of 2018, there are currently 110 centers operating worldwide.⁴⁶ The work of these cultural centers seems to align best with the two final general provisions of the 2013 concept: “spreading and strengthening the position of the Russian language in the world, popularizing the cultural achievements of the peoples of Russia, consolidating the Russian diaspora abroad;” and

⁴³ Budnitskiy, Stanislav. “Russia to Embrace Soft Power.” *USC Center on Public Diplomacy*, 23 Jan. 2013. Web.

⁴⁴ Gabuev, Alexander. “Газ и имидж [Gas and Image].” *Kommersant*, 14 Jan. 2013. Web.

⁴⁵ Chernenko, Elena. “С позиции “мягкой силы” [From the Position of Soft Power].” *Kommersant*, 16 Jan. 2013. Web.

⁴⁶ Russkiy Mir Foundation. “Каталог Русских центров [Catalogue of Russian Centers].” *Russkiy Mir*. Web.

“promoting the development of constructive dialogue and partnership among civilizations in the interests of strengthening consensus and mutual enrichment of different cultures and religions.”⁴⁷

Within the 2013 concept, the Russian definition of soft power carries with it some notion of potential subversion. The passage in which soft power is first acknowledged states the following:

“Soft power” is an integral part of modern international policy: it is a complex tool for solving foreign policy problems with the support of the opportunities of civil society and information/communication, humanitarian, and other methods and technologies alternative to classic diplomacy. At the same time, the strengthening of global competition and the accumulation of crisis potential leads to risks of the occasional destructive and unlawful use of “soft power” and human rights concepts in order to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize the situation in those countries, [and] manipulate public opinion and consciousness, including doing so within the context of the finance of humanitarian projects and projects associated with the defense of human rights abroad.⁴⁸

To this end, one might understand the full arsenal of soft power initiatives to include both “classical” tools of persuasion and attraction, as well as more subversive and aggressive tools (for instance, in this category readers might potentially place information warfare and

⁴⁷ Mid.ru. “Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 12 февраля 2013 г.) [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on the 12th of February 2013)].” *Russian Foreign Ministry*, 18 Feb. 2013. Web.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

disinformation campaigns). In this definition, the emphasis seems to be on the dangerously manipulative aspect of soft power.

As noted by *Kommersant*,⁴⁹ who covered this conceptual shift closely and provided their own analysis, the new soft power initiative is “largely based on the Soviet experience.” While the term “soft power” might be a new addition from the Soviet era, many of the initiatives described in the document show clear continuity. For instance, the draft document described plans to hold an “International Festival of Youth and Students” in Russia in 2017, which *Kommersant* compared to two similar events held in the U.S.S.R. in 1957 and 1985. These cultural initiatives are meant to contribute to a more positive image of Russia abroad; some in the Russian media at the time also speculated that the new soft power initiative was meant to conceptualize Russia as an “island of stability” in an increasingly unpredictable and chaotic world.⁵⁰

Additionally, the document promotes the strategic objective to “firmly resist... attempts to rewrite history and use it to foment confrontation and revanchism in world politics, revise the results of the Second World War, [and] contribute to the depoliticization of historical discussions.” This particular point will prove important especially in discussions of Russia’s cultural activities in Ukraine (and potentially other CIS/Eastern European countries), as one of the unique goals of the cultural centers in this country appears to be the defense of the Russian historical narrative, especially in regards to revisionist ideas about the controversial nature of Russia’s relationship with these neighbors. In the regional priorities section, the strengthening and maintenance of

⁴⁹ Chernenko, Elena. “С позиции "мягкой силы" [From the Position of Soft Power].” *Kommersant*, 16 Jan. 2013. Web.

⁵⁰ Rbc.ru. “Новая концепция внешней политики РФ: "островок стабильности" в мире [The New Foreign Policy Concept of the RF: An “Island of Stability” in the World].” *RBC*, 14 Dec. 2012. Web.

relationships with CIS member states is, unsurprisingly, the first listed and most heavily emphasized.

THE 2016 FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The 2013 concept proved for Putin's leadership to be outdated within three years of its approval, presumably due to major unforeseen geopolitical changes (the annexation of Crimea, resultant backlash, and sanctions regimes; predictions for the upcoming U.S. elections, etc.) In December of 2016, Putin approved the current foreign policy concept.⁵¹ Although some clear breaks with the 2013 concept mark the redirection of regional priorities, soft power initiatives still show up prominently as an important foreign policy resource for Russia moving forward.

Readers can mark some major departures from the 2013 concept in the newest document. Mostly, these differences center on a strategic shift of regional priorities. In the 2013 document, Ukraine was described as a priority partner in the region; in the 2016 document, Ukraine is mentioned only once, and briefly, in the context of the "internal conflict in Ukraine," and all that is mentioned is that a resolution of the conflict is necessary. Additionally, despite clear objectives for Russia's European relationships in the 2013 document, in the new document there is not much discussion of these relations, improving them, enhancing them, or otherwise – mostly, European countries are mentioned solely in regards to economic partnerships.

In contrast, the document emphasizes the Russian pivot to Asia. The concept explicitly mentions the Kremlin's relationships and strategic goals in the Asia-Pacific

⁵¹ Kremlin.ru. "Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 30 ноября 2016 г.) [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on the 30th of November 2016).]" *Kremlin.ru*. Web.

region as a new priority direction for Russian foreign policy. The document gives priority to the development of cooperation with states, actors, and organizations in this region. The 2016 concept also describes Russian and Chinese leadership as sharing the same fundamental approaches to international processes and events.

Despite these major strategic regional shifts, the 2016 concept still emphasizes soft power and public diplomacy, and with these the development of certain key foreign policy instruments (the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation included). Under the second section, soft power is mentioned as an “integral part” of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives. Emphasis is placed on the use of information and communication technologies as soft power tools, among others. The document also expresses that “one of the areas of public policy development” will be “greater participation of Russia’s academics and experts in dialogue with foreign specialists on global politics and international security.”

With regards to these soft power factors, Russia’s strategy is made clear in the 2016 concept. The document outlines what Russia sees as a clear decline in Western countries’ abilities to dominate international politics and the global economy. The word “civilization” is used frequently throughout, and like the previous document, the 2016 concept describes the “civilizational” character of modern international competition in that many countries may use soft power tools to impose their values on others. Thus, the document emphasizes the growing role that Russia might have to play in international affairs and in presenting an alternate perspective and alternate set of values. The continued goal of soft power strategy is to increase active Russian involvement in global information spaces, to improve and enhance Russia’s image abroad, and to enhance Russia’s connection to the Russian-speaking diaspora abroad.

Because both concepts emphasize the continued development of Russia's soft power initiatives, it is no surprise or coincidence that the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation has seen extensive growth and an explosion in the development of cultural centers worldwide. In the basket of public diplomacy tools, the concepts mention the promotion of Russian culture and language as a key component, and primarily through the development of such cultural centers abroad. As stated on the *Russkiy Mir* website:⁵²

The phenomenon of the Russian world has come to the center of attention in both academic circles and the public arena. The stability achieved only recently in Russia itself has allowed for a refocusing of attention on the importance and value of the Russian world, and not only to those who consider themselves participants of this world but also to modern civilization at large. It has become clear that serious steps need to be [taken] to both preserve and promote Russian language and culture in today's world.

Both the 2013 and 2016 Foreign Policy Concepts for the Russian Federation paved the way for the growth of Russia's international cultural centers. The next section will detail the activities of *Russkiy Mir* and the foundation's cultural centers in Germany and Ukraine, and the ways in which the cultural diplomatic approach differs in these countries based on Russia's specific strategic objectives in Western and Eastern Europe and post-Soviet spaces.

⁵² Russkiy Mir Foundation. "About Russkiy Mir Foundation." *Russkiymir.ru*. Web.

III. Russia's Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives in Germany and Ukraine

As we have now discussed, cultural diplomacy as a cohesive foreign policy strategy developed in Russia during the Soviet era. While the practice was largely abandoned in the immediate post-Soviet years as Russia's leadership focused on stabilizing the country, cultural diplomacy has resurfaced in recent years as a part of Russia's larger public diplomacy efforts.⁵³ In particular, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sees cultural initiatives as a means of dealing with the country's negative image abroad, and to re-establish Russia's international presence.⁵⁴ Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) has demonstrated their view of cultural initiatives as an integral part of Russian foreign policy, through the development in the past decade of various foundations and organizations dedicated to cultural diplomacy abroad, as well as through the significantly increased budget of some of these organizations.⁵⁵

In this section, the research will focus specifically on the cultural initiatives of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation in two countries. This foundation in particular was chosen because of the relatively clear and transparent role that it plays abroad in promoting Russian cultural diplomacy; the organization is designed for public consumption. Additionally, the activities of *Russkiy Mir* are almost entirely cultural, as opposed to other government agencies and/or organizations (like *Rossotrudnichestvo*) where cultural activities play a small role in conjunction with other public diplomacy activities like the promotion of Russian media abroad.

⁵³ Klyueva, Anna and Katerina Tsetsura. "Strategic Aspects of Russia's Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities of the 21st Century." *www.researchgate.net*. Web.

⁵⁴ Astakhov, E. M. *Мировая Практика Культурной Дипломатии [World Practices of Cultural Diplomacy]*. St. Petersburg, Russia: SPBGUP, 2008.

⁵⁵ Finn, Peter. "Russia Pumps Tens of Millions into Burnishing Image Abroad." *The Washington Post*, 6 March 2008. Web.

The two countries chosen to serve as case studies of *Russkiy Mir* activities abroad are Germany and Ukraine. These were chosen firstly to serve as loose comparisons between Russian cultural policy in Western Europe versus Eastern Europe and post-Soviet spaces. These particular countries were chosen from their regions because *Russkiy Mir* seems to be the most active in these countries comparatively – there are currently five active Russian centers in Germany and eleven in Ukraine; for comparison, in most other countries in these regions, there are typically somewhere between one and three Russian centers. Because of this, these countries can both provide a wealth of information regarding the activities of the Russian centers, but they can also show some insight into Russia's regional strategic priorities.

Data for this research was compiled primarily from the individual websites of each cultural center; some data was also gathered from their in-country host organizations and the local media. Most of the data from the cultural center websites was pulled directly from their calendar of events. The time period tracked for cultural activities was from January 2016 through October 2017. Russian cultural center events were then sorted into two categories: recurring (like language classes and weekly literature clubs) and one-time (like guest speakers, artist exhibitions, and cultural festivals).

One note of caution should be offered to the reader. While these countries are meant to serve as basic regional comparisons, it should be noted that the activities of Russia's cultural centers might be and probably are different in other countries in these same regions, based on strategic priorities and tactical realities. For instance, cultural activities in Ukraine are probably unique in many respects to cultural activities in Poland, based on differences in these countries' relationships to Russia and on Russia's strategic foreign policy priorities in these countries. Further research will be necessary to determine if the

differences in policy in Germany and Ukraine can truly be considered a result of differing strategies in Russia's approach to cultural diplomacy in Western and Eastern Europe.

THE *RUSSKIY MIR* FOUNDATION IN GERMANY

Location

In Germany, many of the cultural centers are housed in pre-existing cultural organizations in their cities. Often, these organizations are either associated with members of the Russian-speaking diaspora in cities with large populations of these individuals, or they are associated with German-Russian cultural organizations that focus on connected ties between the two countries. In Dresden, the Russian cultural center is housed in the German-Russian Institute of Culture, or DRKI.⁵⁶ According to the DRKI website, the DRKI has been in operation for more than 20 years, devoted to promoting a positive German-Russian dialogue. The DRKI started as a reading club in 1993, and is a non-profit organization; the Russian cultural center, however, was not opened in the DRKI until 2009. Although it is unclear whether the institute previously received funding from Russian sources (and not entirely unlikely), the organization does seem to be independent from *Russkiy Mir*. Dresden in particular seems to be a city with many Russian expatriates living and working there, and so the demand for German-Russian cultural connections pre-dated *Russkiy Mir*'s involvement in this city.

In Mainz, the Russian cultural center is part of Phoenix eV Mainz, an educational center dedicated to language learning, cultural exchange, and integration for Eastern European immigrants and their descendants.⁵⁷ Phoenix eV Mainz describes itself as a

⁵⁶ *The DRKI Family of Sites*. The DRKI in Dresden, 2017. Web.

⁵⁷ *The Phoenix eV Mainz Family of Sites*. The Phoenix eV Mainz Cultural and Educational Center, 2017. Web. <http://www.phoenix-mainz.de/ru/index.php>

nonprofit organization working to promote the acceptance and acclimatization of Eastern European immigrants into German society; while Phoenix was founded in 2004, the Russian center was not opened until 2014.⁵⁸ In Hamburg, the Russian center is housed in Tchaikovsky Hall, an organization which also promotes Russian culture in Germany and emphasizes Russian-German cultural and historical ties.⁵⁹ In this case, Tchaikovsky Hall is also closely affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church in Hamburg, and there seems to be overlap and cooperation between the two organizations in their activities.

Looking at the locations of the Russian centers in Germany, only the one in Berlin seems to operate on its own as an independent entity.⁶⁰ In respect to the others, the location has been chosen specially to provide success by housing the center in a host-organization which would already be inclined to promote Russian culture and German-Russian cultural connections. These locations also provide the centers with built-in communities, as the host-organizations already cater to given communities and are known within their various spaces. In Germany, the locations of the Russian centers make them community-focused and informal; they provide specialized knowledge to those who are willing and interested, much in the way that Western cultural programs operated in the past.

Russian Language and Culture: Providing a Space for the Russian Diaspora

Perhaps the most dominant goal of *Russkiy Mir* activities in Germany is the consolidation of Russian compatriots in the country, providing them a space to connect with their heritage through language, culture, and connections with other Russian speakers who visit the center. As concerns the Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

⁵⁸ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "Русский центр начал работу в Майнце [Russian Center Began Work in Mainz]." *Russkiy Mir*, 30 May 2014. Web.

⁵⁹ *The Tchaikovsky Hall Family of Sites*. Tchaikovsky Hall in Hamburg, 2017. Web.

⁶⁰ The Center for Russian Culture in Berlin. *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/ruszentrum/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2018.

the term “Russian compatriot” is defined quite broadly as almost any individual with a personal or familial connection to the former Soviet Union; typically, most individuals who fall into this category are ethnic Russians and/or Russian-speaking. *Russkiy Mir* and its associated centers provide a common civilizational space for Russians both in-country and around the world, helping to reinforce identity constructions focused on Russia and “Russianness” even for those Russian speakers who live abroad and have integrated themselves into their new communities.⁶¹ According to Kallas’ work, in 2009 then-director of *Rossotrudnichestvo* Aleksandr Chepurin summed up succinctly the goals of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation in front of a compatriots’ congress:

Today the place and role of Russia’s foreign world could be summed up in the following statements: it is the most important part of the common civilizational space of Russia, that is united through Russian culture, Russian language, and similar mentality; it is an essential factor in the system of international relations, it is an intellectual, spiritual, cultural, demographical resource of Russia; it is one of the components of the development of Russia’s civil society, and the integration of the country and the regions into the system of modern worldwide economic ties.⁶²

Thus, *Russkiy Mir* and its centers play an essential role in the consolidation of the “Russian world” abroad – providing a communal space uniting the Russian diaspora and creating unique pockets of Russian civil society internationally. The foundation is meant to defend the “common civilizational space” of Russia, which in this respect refers to all communities

⁶¹ Kallas, Kristina. “Claiming the Diaspora: Russia’s Compatriot Policy and its Reception by Estonian-Russian Population.” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 15 No. 3, 2016, pp. 1-25.

⁶² Chepurin, Aleksandr. “Ориентир: конгресс соотечественников. Итоги и перспективы российской политики [Orienteer: Congress of Compatriots. Results and Perspectives of Russia’s Policies].” *Международная жизнь*, No. 6, 2009.

of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking peoples abroad. This goal is also clear in *Russkiy Mir*'s operations in Germany.

In all of the centers in Germany (and in all of the centers generally), *Russkiy Mir*'s cultural centers provide the basic and expected cultural services. Language classes are offered; how often and how many different skill levels are available varies from location to location. For instance, at the Phoenix eV Mainz location, classes are offered virtually every day of the week, and at many different levels. In Hamburg, while the center states that they offer Russian lessons, these details are not specified; rather, the center's online presence seems to focus more on other aspects of culture (like theatre and literature). The Dresden center boasts on its page that it is home to the third largest Russian language library in Germany, and also offers assistance to those preparing to test for their Russian language examination certificate.

Virtually all of the centers in Germany also include some variation of literature clubs and/or book nights, as well as courses in culture which vary from art, to theatre, to prominent figures in the sciences. In Dresden, for instance, Russian film screenings were frequent, as well as a program to visit "Russian traces" in the city. In Mainz, the center and its host-organization offered recurring dance classes, music and art classes, and theatre classes. They also had developed a program rather reminiscent of the Soviet era – a Saturday *detskiy sad* (kindergarten) to work on essential skills and development with children ages five and under. Following the Soviet theme, the center in Dresden had frequently recurring *subbotniki*, in which the community members organized for the purposes of gardening. In Hamburg, the center is located in Tchaikovsky Hall, a musical center; as such, this Russian center offered much more in the way of Russian and German music and live performances.

Rotating events at the centers in Germany mainly focused on maintaining Russian cultural traditions and marking holidays. In Nuremburg, the center hosted a special project in which students could take “creative master classes” in which they were introduced to professional artists who would teach them about art related to various topics and cultural themes (as an example, students learned about *Snegurochka* on Christmas).⁶³ In this way, important Russian traditions and holidays are still observed, even for those living abroad; Russian speakers in Germany are still able to observe *Maslenitsa* together, their children still learn to recite Pushkin, and they can learn about contemporary Russian art and literature through the center’s organized visits of prominent and up-and-coming authors, photographers, painters, and filmmakers.

Using these cultural tools – continuing Russian language education, celebrating high culture, marking holidays, and connecting Russian speakers to each other through the centers’ activities – *Russkiy Mir* has been able to create a consolidated community for the Russian diaspora in Germany. These communities are then able to advocate for political and economic views in the West that align more typically with Russian interests; for example, in “Russian Berlin,” Russian speakers mobilized in droves to protest the recent influx of refugees pouring into the country from war-torn regions in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁶⁴ While the Russian centers themselves are not advocating loud political views in Germany, they do serve significantly in preserving and promoting a traditional Russian identity for those native Russians who have moved abroad and who might otherwise be less connected to their homeland.

⁶³ *The Russian-German Cultural Center Family of Sites*. The Russian-German Cultural Center at Nuremberg, 2017. Web.

⁶⁴ Jolkver, Nikita. “How “Russian Berlin” Deals with Refugees.” *Dw.com*, 27 Jan. 2016. Web.

In this way, Russian cultural initiatives both borrow from the Soviet strand of cultural diplomacy while updating it and synthesizing it with Western models of cultural diplomacy. The “active measures” component of Soviet cultural diplomacy is evident in Russia’s attempts to indirectly influence Western developments through the consolidation of the Russian diaspora. Russian cultural initiatives geared towards the Russian diaspora also draw on Soviet nostalgia by marking Soviet traditions, like the *subbotniki* and the *detskiy sad*. At the same time, Russia has expanded who it considers as actors and implementers of these initiatives by mobilizing the Russian diaspora in various countries, whereas before these kinds of activities were mostly carried out solely by state actors or carefully selected intermediaries. Additionally, Russia’s modern “active measures” in its cultural diplomacy programs lack the ideological component of the Soviet past – rather, ideology has been replaced with national interests. This last point is true for all of *Russkiy Mir*’s initiatives.

Promoting Cross-Cultural Connections

In addition to promoting a Russian sense of community, the centers also serve as cultural ambassadors to foreign publics; that is, the centers emphasize shared cultural and historic connections between Russia and Germany. In addition to language classes specifically geared towards new Russian language learners, the centers also host rotating exhibits that showcase the intersection between Russian and German culture in history, literature, science, photography, art, and etc. In this way, the Russian centers in Germany have adopted a very Western model of cultural diplomacy – rather than simply focusing on the projection of Russian high culture to foreign audiences, the centers focus on promoting shared heritage and shared ties even in countries (and perhaps especially in countries) where such shared value seems potentially absent.

In Germany, most of the centers held rotating events that emphasized cultural connectivity. In Berlin, the center hosted an art salon entitled “Germans, Russians, and their Fathers in the War – Memories and Poetry;” they also hosted an event entitled “Home: Jewish Russian German: Creation of an Autobiographical Documentary,” with a screening and talkback with the film’s director.⁶⁵ In Dresden, the center hosted an event entitled “Young and Old Play Music,” featuring musical performances of both Russian and German composers.⁶⁶ The Dresden center also hosted a youth concert that was arranged in a similar fashion – the concert, entitled “Music Connects Dresden, Saint Petersburg, and Prague,” featured performances by up-and-coming musicians from each of these cities. Berlin also held a recurring event entitled “Multilingual Children – the Promotion of Russian as a Foreign Language,” a seminar which seemed mostly targeted at German children and other non-native and non-heritage speakers of Russian.

These programs align with *Russkiy Mir*’s stated mission of promoting “understanding and peace in the world by supporting, enhancing and encouraging the appreciation of Russian language, heritage, and culture.”⁶⁷ While this goal seems secondary to the purpose of maintaining and mobilizing the Russian diaspora, in Germany the programs also have a clearly interactive component targeted to foreign audiences. Readers might compare this aspect of *Russkiy Mir*’s activities with Western soft power projection organizations like the British Council and the Goethe Center of Germany, which also focus on the promotion of native languages and high culture to foreign audiences.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ The Center for Russian Culture in Berlin. *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/ruszentrum/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2018.

⁶⁶ *The DRKI Family of Sites*. The DRKI in Dresden, 2017. Web.

⁶⁷ Russkiy Mir Foundation. “About Russkiy Mir Foundation.” *Russkiymir.ru*. Web.

⁶⁸ Saari, Sinikukka. “Russia’s Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics: Public Diplomacy po russkii.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 66 no. 1, 2014, pp. 50-66.

The Involvement of the Church

In recent years, cooperation between Putin's administration and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has grown significantly.⁶⁹ This cooperation has gone beyond domestic boundaries and has crossed into the realm of foreign policy. In fact, the ROC even has its own foreign policy branch, which works to defend "traditional" Orthodox values in the international sphere. Today, the ROC enjoys close collaboration with the MID in formulating and implementing foreign policy relating to the advancement of Russian interests abroad. This close cooperation results from commonalities in the ROC's international goals and in Putin's vision of the advancement of Russian interests and Russian values in the international context; in both cases, Russian Orthodoxy plays a strong, foundational, and uniting role.

On its face, the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation is a quasi-governmental Russian organization; unlike *Rossotrudnichestvo*, it is not a formal branch of the MID. The foundation does, however, still enjoy a very intimate connection with the MID; it was founded by the MID, continues to be mostly funded by the MID, and as such the foundation's budget is dictated by government allocations and mandates. Considering *Russkiy Mir*'s close connection to the Russian government, and because of its status as a cultural organization, it is not surprising to find that the organization also observes close cooperation with the ROC in most of the countries abroad where it operates. From *Russkiy Mir*'s central website alone, it is clear that the organization has established a close connection with the ROC; in *Russkiy Mir*'s list of major tasks on the Russian language version of its *About* page, the final point lists "interaction with the Russian Orthodox

⁶⁹ Blitt, R. "Russia's 'Orthodox' Foreign Policy: The Growing Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Shaping Russia's Policies Abroad." *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 363, 2011, pp. 1-60.

Church” to carry out its mission of promoting the Russian language and culture.⁷⁰ Readers should note that the English version of *Russkiy Mir*’s *About* page includes no such statement regarding the Church.

One might note the apparent disconnect between *Russkiy Mir*’s core goal of promoting Russian language and culture and the promotion of spirituality and religion. To demonstrate more clearly the envisioned connection, Putin’s Foreign Policy Concept from 2000 states in succinct terms the linkage between language and spiritual renewal in Russia, as noted by Blitt:⁷¹

The spiritual renewal of society is impossible without the preservation of the role of the Russian language as a factor of the spiritual unity of the peoples of multinational Russia and as the language of interstate communication between the peoples of the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

This excerpt from Putin’s first Foreign Policy Concept visualizes clearly the linkages that he sees between the renewal of Russian traditional values and culture (here, through language) and a Russian spiritual renewal through eventual collaboration with the ROC. In 2009, the connection between *Russkiy Mir* and the ROC was made official through the signing of a cooperation agreement.⁷²

Certainly, this close cooperation is clear in the activities of some of the centers in Germany. Although for the most part *Russkiy Mir*’s various centers maintain a secular

⁷⁰ Russkiy Mir Foundation. “О фонде [About the Foundation].” *Russkiymir.ru*. Web.

⁷¹ Blitt, R. “Russia’s ‘Orthodox’ Foreign Policy: The Growing Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Shaping Russia’s Policies Abroad.” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 363, 2011, pp. 1-60.

⁷² Russian Orthodox Church. “Подписано Соглашение о Сотрудничестве Между Русской Православной Церковью и Фондом ‘Русский Мир’ [An Agreement on Cooperation Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Foundation “Russian World].” *Department of External Church Relations of the Orthodox Church*, Moscow Patriarchate, 11 Nov. 2009. Web.

online presence, still some of them include religious events and education. For instance, both the Nuremburg⁷³ and Berlin⁷⁴ centers offer Sunday school classes in coordination with local iterations of the ROC. Many of the centers also mark religious holidays, and provide contacts and links to local ROC representation in their communities.

While most of the centers in Germany seem to maintain a more secular program, the center in Hamburg provides an especially interesting example of *Russkiy Mir*-ROC collaboration. The Russian Center in Hamburg is based in the Tchaikovsky Center, which is primarily run by the ROC. All offered courses (Russian language, literature, etc.) take place in the Tchaikovsky Center. Tchaikovsky Hall, which is located within the Tchaikovsky Center, is a musical center focused on showcasing Russian culture and the commonalities between German and Russian culture and music. In this case, *Russkiy Mir*'s center has literally fused with the ROC, thus establishing a unique blend of pure cultural demonstration (through language, literature, and music) and religion.

Obviously, this religious aspect of Russia's modern cultural diplomacy is entirely unique from Soviet cultural diplomacy, considering the Soviet Union's official endorsement of atheism. While the Soviet Union primarily created active measures programs on the basis of spreading ideology to defend national interests, it seems that now religion has partially supplanted ideology as a marker of Russian values. The level of influence seems to vary from center to center in Germany; while some centers make no mention of the ROC and seem to maintain a secular position (Dresden and Mainz) still others (Nuremburg and Berlin) show some linkage, with Hamburg being the most strongly

⁷³The Russian-German Cultural Center Family of Sites. The Russian-German Cultural Center at Nuremberg, 2017. Web.

⁷⁴The Center for Russian Culture in Berlin. *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/ruszentrum/>. Accessed 21 Jan. 2018.

connected to the Church. More research is required to determine how much the ROC is involved in *Russkiy Mir*'s activities in Western European countries. While one might expect a purely secular approach to cultural diplomacy in the West, as this seems potentially more attractive to Western foreign audiences, the research so far suggests this may not be the case.

The Political in *Russkiy Mir*: *Russkiy Mir*'s Narrative in Germany and the German Public's Narrative Regarding *Russkiy Mir*

In Germany, the *Russkiy Mir*-affiliated centers seem to keep their events relatively free from any overt political narratives, beyond the general promotion of the Russian language and culture to promote a positive image. Most of the events covered over the timeframe of this research in the German centers were purely cultural – festivals; film screenings; language and theatre classes; etc. The *Russkiy Mir* narrative in Germany seems to conform to their objectives as stated on the English-language version of the *Russkiy Mir* website (to develop cross-cultural dialogue and to strengthen understanding between cultures and peoples).⁷⁵ Based on the aforementioned activities of the centers in Germany, it seems like the Russian MID has less influence over day-to-day operations in comparison with the host organizations; the activities at the centers seem to align more with the host organization's primary function (language school, musical center, community-led cultural club, etc.) than with the promotion of Russian national interests and narratives.

Only two of the events highlighted on the centers' websites had the potential for any kind of broader political narrative. Both of these events were at the Dresden center. One was a book discussion entitled "Why Syria?"; no further information on the

⁷⁵ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "About Russkiy Mir Foundation." *Russkiymir.ru*. Web.

discussion, the book, or the trajectory of the conversation was provided.⁷⁶ The other event was a lecture on Russia and the West, featuring speakers Alexander Rahr and Heinz Eggert. Whatever the topics of discussion at these events, no coverage of them was found in the German media over the course of the research. The rest of the event calendars would suggest that *Russkiy Mir* has taken a transparent approach to cultural programming in Germany, focusing on the projection of high culture and providing a space for the Russian ex-pat community.

As far as the German public's reaction to *Russkiy Mir* programming, no real mention of any *Russkiy Mir* activities was found in any online German-language media sources. If *Russkiy Mir* truly has been attempting to bridge the gap between Russian and German culture, their work does not seem to be making a large impact in predominately German-speaking circles. As such, no clear conclusions can be drawn as to a largely positive *or* negative reaction to the centers' activity in Germany. Rather, readers might tentatively conclude that the German public has responded rather neutrally, which would support the previous analysis regarding the objectives of *Russkiy Mir*'s cultural programming. While primarily providing space for Russian communities in Germany, cultural programming targeting the German public has also mimicked Western methods of cultural diplomacy (transparency and providing a cultural "mirror" to foreign publics) in a way that makes it acceptable, despite persisting negative attitudes towards Russia more generally in the West.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *The DRKI Family of Sites*. The DRKI in Dresden, 2017. Web. <http://www.drki.de/>

⁷⁷ See the Pew Research Center's 2017 Worldwide Opinion Poll on Russia and Putin: Vice, Margaret. "Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia." *The Pew Research Center*, 16 Aug. 2017. Web.

THE *RUSSKIY MIR* FOUNDATION IN UKRAINE

Location

While most of the cultural centers in Germany seem to be located in pre-existing community spaces catering to the Russian diaspora and those interested in Russian culture, in Ukraine the cultural centers are almost exclusively associated with institutions of higher education and state libraries. Of the eleven *Russkiy Mir* centers in Ukraine, five are affiliated with local universities: the centers in Horlivka,⁷⁸ Kiev,⁷⁹ Kharkiv,⁸⁰ Rivne,⁸¹ and Odessa.⁸² Five Russian cultural centers are affiliated with state, regional, and/or scientific libraries in their respective cities: those in Krivoy Rog,⁸³ Luhansk,⁸⁴ Donetsk,⁸⁵ Dnepropetrovsk,⁸⁶ and Zaporizhia.⁸⁷ The final center in Ukraine is located in Nikolaev,⁸⁸ and is associated with the Nikolaev Academic Art Theatre of Russian Drama (making it the only center in Ukraine located in an establishment similar to the center locations in Germany).

⁷⁸ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "Каталог Русских центров [Catalogue of Russian Centers]." *Russkiy Mir*. Web.

⁷⁹ *The Shevchenko National University Family of Sites*. Kiev National University named after Taras Shevchenko. Web.

⁸⁰ *The Ukrainian People's Academy Family of Sites*. The Ukrainian People's Academy. Web.

⁸¹ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "Русский центр открылся в Ровно [A Russian Center Has Opened in Rivne]." *Russkiy Mir*, 15 Nov. 2010. Web.

⁸² *The Odessa National University Family of Sites*. Odessa National University named after I.I. Mechnikova, 2017. Web.

⁸³ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "Каталог Русских центров [Catalogue of Russian Centers]." *Russkiy Mir*. Web.

⁸⁴ *The Gorkiy Library Family of Sites*. The Luhansk Republican Universal Scientific Library named after Gorkiy. Web.

⁸⁵ *The N.K. Krupskoy Library Family of Sites*. The Donetsk Republican Universal Scientific Library named after N.K. Krupskoy. Web.

⁸⁶ *The Cyril and Methodius Library Family of Sites*. The Dnepropetrovsk Regional Universal Scientific Library named after Cyril and Methodius. Web.

⁸⁷ *The Zaporozhye Scientific Library Family of Sites*. The Zaporozhye Regional Universal Scientific Library named after A.M. Gorkiy, 2017. Web.

⁸⁸ *Nikolaev Drama Theatre Family of Sites*. The Nikolaev Artistic Russian Drama Theatre, 2017. Web.

The history of the centers' locations also illustrates another interesting trend. Of the eleven centers in Ukraine, nine of them are located in Eastern and Southern/Southeastern Ukraine (Odessa, Nikolaev, Krivoy Rog, Zaporizhia, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Horlivka, Luhansk, and Kharkiv). One, the center in Kiev, is located in central Ukraine; the final center in Rivne is the only center in Western Ukraine. The center in Kharkiv was the first Russian center to open in Ukraine in June of 2009. As will be discussed in the later thematic sections, the location patterns demonstrate two things: one, the strategic importance of Ukraine generally in Russian foreign policy and soft power calculations; and two, more specifically the importance of Eastern Ukraine and Ukrainian regions that are overwhelmingly majority Russian speakers.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to explain why the Russian centers in Ukraine are located primarily in universities and regional and state libraries, this paper posits two potential theories. It seems significant that in Ukraine, the Russian cultural centers are more institutionalized. This would give them a stronger and more present force in Ukrainian society; additionally, these cultural centers might also contribute to driving and shaping the discourse at these universities, which would be beneficial in cases where such discourse might affect specific Russian national and material interests. As compared with Western European countries, CIS countries generally have stronger ties to Russian culture and Russian society; thus, it might make sense that public demand for these cultural centers would be stronger at educational institutions in these countries than in Western countries.

Russian Language and Culture: Providing a Space for the Russian Diaspora

In both Germany and Ukraine, the main function of the Russian centers appears to be to support the continuation and the spread of the Russian language, as well as providing

a space for members of the Russian diaspora in these countries to meet, coalesce, and continue their connections with their home country. In Ukraine, however, this function of the centers is much more prominent, much more political, and borrows much more from Soviet practices. Whereas in Germany, the centers employ a hybrid of traditionally Soviet and Western practices in their approach to cultural initiatives, in Ukraine the approach seems much more continuous with the traditional Soviet method. This is marked particularly by the use of active measures in language promotion and cultural practices as well as the presence of a much stronger and clearer state narrative.

Readers should first be reminded of the role that language plays in Ukraine's history. According to a 2008 study of language policy in Ukraine, a survey of attitudes confirmed the general belief that opinions on the preferred language policy of the country were clearly divided regionally and very polarized.⁸⁹ Those people speaking primarily Ukrainian generally preferred a policy of making Ukrainian the primary – and in some cases the only – official language of the country; those speaking mostly Russian favored the continued coexistence of both Ukrainian and Russian as official and equal languages of the state. The two most divergent groups were respectively located in Western and Southeastern Ukraine (coincidentally, most ethnic Russians living in Ukraine live on the Eastern side). Region also plays a role in the more general divide regarding those supporting Ukrainization policies in the country versus those who are anti-Ukrainization and prefer the “status quo” of the historical, political, and social narrative in Ukraine, in which Ukraine's connections and historical ties to Russia are not viewed as controversial (and, in many cases, are in fact viewed in a positive light). While the survey also

⁸⁹ Kulyk, V. “Language Policy in Ukraine: What People Want the State to Do.” *East European Politics & Societies*, 27, 2013, pp. 280-307.

demonstrated some variety in the answers regarding language policy in Ukraine – for instance, ethnic Russians in Ukraine were typically much more vocal in their support for continued bilingualism than Russophones – the language policy question is still a controversial topic regardless. The two most divergent categories of opinion were Ukrainian speakers in the West and ethnic Russians, which is relevant for *Russkiy Mir*'s work in that their centers strive to provide a space for ethnic Russians and the Russian language within Ukraine – and thus sometimes stir up controversy because of the nature of the pre-existing debate on language policy.

The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept⁹⁰ describes Ukraine as a “critical partner” of Russia, especially in the context of the modern post-Soviet landscape. While this focus on Ukraine as a critical strategic interest was scaled back in the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept in light of the invasion of Ukraine,⁹¹ the annexation of Crimea, and the subsequent fall-out, it is clear that *Russkiy Mir*'s initiatives still see the Russian diaspora in post-Soviet Eastern Europe as critical to maintaining Russian influence in these regions.

In many of the Russian centers in Ukraine, community-building activities and the promotion of the Russian language are similar to those in Germany, but intensified through their institutional connections. For instance, the Russian center in Horlivka partners with the Horlivka Institute of Foreign Languages; because of this, this center in particular has a comparatively strong focus on the language component of its cultural activities.

⁹⁰ Mid.ru. “Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 12 февраля 2013 г.) [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on the 12th of February 2013).” *Russian Foreign Ministry*, 18 Feb. 2013. Web.

⁹¹ Kremlin.ru. “Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В. Путиным 30 ноября 2016 г.) [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin on the 30th of November 2016).” *Kremlin.ru*. Web.

Additionally, in comparison with most of the centers in Germany, this center focuses more on Russia's footprint in science and academia – over the time period studied, the center in Horlivka held a number of presentations on Russian figures in science and on Russian contributions to academia and scientific discovery. In Kiev, the center also has a heavy focus on language and science, stating these as explicit and primary goals in addition to other traditional cultural initiatives like literature and film discussions. Like the centers in Germany, most of the centers explicitly mention that they receive funding and resources (from both private and public sources) to provide major universities in Ukraine with Russian language resources, tools, and audio/visual support, and with “modern editions about Russia” – i.e., books on Russian history, culture and art, as well as written works of Russian poetry and Russian contemporary writers.⁹² At some of the humanities-focused universities, the centers focus more on both language and humanities-based Russian culture; at the center in Kharkiv, associated with the Kharkiv University of Humanities, the center has all the usual language resources, as well as a focus on Russian literary and film resources and related events.⁹³

Whereas the Russian centers in Germany provided mostly entry-level education for students at high school level and below, as well as hobby/interest-based clubs, the centers in Ukraine do seem to focus more on an audience in higher education. Perhaps this is not unusual, given the fact that many of the centers are based in universities; at the same time, because of this, *Russkiy Mir's* centers in Ukraine seem to target much more formal connections than those in Germany. These centers are also more interactive in connecting their local audiences in Ukraine with interested parties in Russia. For instance, the Horlivka

⁹² *The Shevchenko National University Family of Sites*. Kiev National University named after Taras Shevchenko. Web.

⁹³ *The Ukrainian People's Academy Family of Sites*. The Ukrainian People's Academy. Web.

center has a very frequent cycle of visiting Russian scientists in and out hosting events and roundtables; in Donetsk, the Russian center hosted a virtual interregional roundtable entitled “In Search of Yourself: Professional Self-Determination of a Young Librarian,” in which 26 regions of the Russian Federation participated alongside representatives of the Donetsk Republic, which is currently only recognized by Russia.⁹⁴ While the centers in Ukraine seemed to have much more interaction with both professional and general public audiences in Russia, the cross-cultural component that was present as a secondary goal with the Russian centers in Germany seemed much less apparent in Ukraine. While the Russian centers in Germany had quite a few cross-cultural festivals and events featuring both German and Russian culture and their historical intersections, for the most part this was absent in the case of the centers in Ukraine.

In addition to the use of active measures like those also used in Germany, the approach of the cultural centers in Ukraine also would indicate that perhaps some vestiges of the “three-camp” approach exist even today in Russian foreign policy. Rather than the synthesized approach used in the West – the leveraging of the Russian diaspora as a form of political pressure as well as the projection of high-culture crossroads between countries – the policies in Ukraine seem to align with more traditional Soviet methods. The promotion of Russian language and culture in Ukraine appears strictly offensive – that is, cultural initiatives appeal to one relatively homogenous target audience in a way that is designed to maintain the status quo in Ukraine, which currently pushes the country in the direction of continued reliance and closer connections with Russia.

⁹⁴ *The N.K. Krupskoy Library Family of Sites*. The Donetsk Republican Universal Scientific Library named after N.K. Krupskoy. Web.

The Role of Scientific-Cultural Exchange

For the Russian centers in Ukraine, scientific-cultural exchanges play a much more prominent role than at the centers in Germany. These scientific-cultural exchanges through the centers in Ukraine are interesting in that they follow the Soviet tradition of student and professional exchanges to and from Ukraine and Russia respectively. As mentioned in the previous section, these exchanges give patrons of the Russian centers in Ukraine more interaction with counterparts in Russia.

Many of the centers explicitly state their focus on Russian scientific culture, whereas the centers in Germany, while still occasionally holding scientific and academic presentations and roundtables, did not ever explicitly mention scientific exchange as one of their primary functions. At the Kiev location, the center's page on the Shevchenko State University's family of sites states that the center "promotes activities that encourage scientific and intercultural cooperation and communication – conferences, seminars, meetings with representatives of culture and public figures, writers from Russia, presentations of publications, round tables, and watching movies."⁹⁵ While many of the activities are the same as those in Germany, the attention to scientific exchange dominates at the center in Kiev compared to its counterparts in Germany. This scientific exchange complements well the aforementioned primary goal of appealing to the Russian diaspora across traditionally Russian (and previously Soviet) spheres of influence – the *Russkiy Mir* center in Kiev also cooperates closely with the Russian Center for Science and Culture in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the Union of Russian Communities in Transnistria.

Like the centers elsewhere, *Russkiy Mir*'s centers in Ukraine have also sponsored the travel of Russian specialists (especially in the sciences) to their locations to discuss a

⁹⁵ *The Shevchenko National University Family of Sites*. Kiev National University named after Taras Shevchenko. Web.

wide range of topics, from cultural and linguistic analysis at a co-sponsored International Scientific Conference near Rivne to a discussion of the impact of Lomonosov and his continued legacy in Horlivka. In addition to this, *Russkiy Mir* has also sponsored the travel of Ukrainian students to Russia in some circumstances – which, as will be discussed later, some of the Ukrainian public has viewed with a sceptical eye, claiming Russian attempts at “cultural imperialism.” At least from review of the centers’ websites, these organized student exchanges seem unique to Ukraine in comparison with the centers in Germany. While the Russian centers in Germany also often arrange the travel of professional speakers to their centers, no mention was found of the arrangement of German students to travel to Russia specifically with the help of *Russkiy Mir*.

The Involvement of the Church

While the signed agreement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation makes it clear that the two do cooperate significantly, no evidence exists of close connections between the centers in Ukraine and the ROC. While some mentions of cooperation and co-sponsored events existed on a few of the Germany centers’ pages, not a single mention was found in the review of the Ukraine centers. While a fierce struggle exists in Ukraine between those in support of the Moscow Patriarchate and those in support of the Kiev Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church,⁹⁶ and while the ROC might play some role in this realm, it does not seem that *Russkiy Mir* is very involved in the religious debate in Ukraine. This is, perhaps, because most of the centers in Ukraine are located at institutions of higher education, thus making them secular by nature.

⁹⁶ Zhuravel, Valery. “Русский мир на Украине: проблемы и перспективы [The Russian World in Ukraine: Problems and Perspectives].” *The Institute of Europe’s Russian Academy of Sciences*, Analytical Note No. 3, 2015.

The Political in *Russkiy Mir*: *Russkiy Mir*'s Narrative in Ukraine

The political in the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation's work is relatively low-profile in comparison with other Russian soft power and public diplomacy initiatives. Certainly in Germany, the work of the centers is only political in that they specifically target the Russian diaspora as a tool of Russian influence abroad and in that they more generally promote a positive understanding of Russian society and culture. In Ukraine, the political narrative of *Russkiy Mir*'s work is more pronounced, because of Ukraine's importance for maintaining traditionally Russian spheres of influence. This contrast is most noticeable in *Russkiy Mir*'s programming in support of the Russian historical narrative regarding Ukraine. Cultural events promote a positive view of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship throughout history while emphasizing the importance of shared Slavic culture and minimizing pro-Western narratives in Ukraine, as well as minimizing revisionist histories of Russia's controversial role in Ukraine's history. Given these differences with *Russkiy Mir*'s operations in Ukraine as compared with Germany, it would seem that the MID has stronger influence over the centers' daily operations, and probably provides frequent guidance regarding their activities, events, and broader purposes. Readers should also recall the differences in terminology used by the Russian Foreign Ministry in discussions of soft power regarding the West versus the post-Soviet space – in Ukraine, the more paternal idea of “humanitarian cooperation” emphasizes a civilizational connection and a shared space; rather than exporting a cultural product to Ukraine, *Russkiy Mir* is taking part in a “humanitarian” endeavor with a Slavic neighbor who has a shared Soviet past.

Over the time period from which data was gathered, much of the political and historical narratives in the centers were designed to support the Russian narrative regarding the 2014 military invasion and annexation of Crimea, as well as Russian support for the

Donetsk uprising and independence movement. All mentions of Donetsk in the centers' literature refer to the Donetsk People's Republic; and in fact, it seems that the political narrative is clearest in the analysis of events hosted from the center in Donetsk. In one exhibition, the Russian center in Donetsk arranged for a photography exhibition by Donetsk artists to be displayed in Korolev, Russia; the exhibition displayed the "founding" of the Republic since the events of 2014, and the photos confirmed a happy outlook on Donetsk's future since its bid for independence.⁹⁷ The titles of two of the artists' collections include "We Are Writing Our History" and "While We Are One – We Are Incompatible." In a similar move, two events were held in Luhansk that promoted typical Russian narratives regarding the region and Ukraine as a whole. The center held a creative workshop called "Crossroads: Culture and Anti-Culture," in which an argument broke out during discussion over "constructive" and "destructive" actions in Ukrainian culture; in another instance, the Russian cultural center in Luhansk supported the establishment of a literary collection entitled "The Time of Donbass," dedicated to literature on war and a military history of the region (a history which supports the Russian historical narrative).⁹⁸

One or two mentions are also made by the centers emphasizing shared cultural and historical ties between Russia and Ukraine; unlike in Germany, however, where these types of events seem designed with a mutual focus on German and Russian culture and history, in Ukraine the narrative focuses more on Russia's positive role in Ukraine's history.⁹⁹ In a press release on *Russkiy Mir*'s website discussing the opening of the center in Kiev, the

⁹⁷ Zhdanov School of the Arts. *Odnoklassniki*, <https://ok.ru/zhdanovsk/topic/67168975629117>. Accessed 1 Jan. 2018.

⁹⁸ *The Gorkiy Library Family of Sites*. The Luhansk Republican Universal Scientific Library named after Gorkiy. Web.

⁹⁹ Bogomolov, A., and O. Lytvynenko. "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine." Russian and Eurasia Programme: Briefing Papers, 2012, pp. 1-17.

author remarks on statements by the center's creators, saying, "At the heart of the concept of the center...is the demonstration of the inseparable and historical and cultural connection between Russia and Ukraine, which can be traced through the fates of the great Ukrainians who lived and worked in Russia..." In this same article, the author later goes on to refer to Ukraine as "Malaya Rus'," or Little Russia. Despite the strong language, and despite the rather racist and antiquated terms used by the host site in other parts of its webpage, *Russkiy Mir*'s online handlers still saw fit to publish the article on their official website and link to the original website.¹⁰⁰

In a press release by the Public Association for "Cultural and Linguistic Equality" in Ukraine, the leader of the Kharkiv branch of this association commented on the opening of the Russian center in this city. At the end of the article, Makarov states that "If we do not intercept the initiative of projecting the future from the pro-American "grant community," we are doomed to lag and push both Ukraine and Russia to the margins of geopolitical processes."¹⁰¹ Makarov is not a representative of *Russkiy Mir*, the Russian government, or the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and his association has a clear bias in the nature of its activities in Kharkiv and in Ukraine more generally. It is interesting, though, to note that supporters of *Russkiy Mir*'s initiatives in Ukraine would choose to define the foundation's work in such clearly political and controversial terms.

"Cultural Imperialism:" The Ukrainian Public's Response to *Russkiy Mir*

In Ukraine, *Russkiy Mir*'s presence is viewed by some in the public with more of a skeptical and critical eye than by German audiences. This is not necessarily surprising,

¹⁰⁰ Russkiy Mir Foundation. "РУССКИЙ ЦЕНТР В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ ШЕВЧЕНКО – ДЕНЬГИ НА ВЕТЕР? [Russian Center at Shevchenko University – Money to the Wind?]." *Russkiy Mir*. Web.

¹⁰¹ The Public Association for Cultural and Linguistic Equality. "В Харькове открыли Центр русской культуры [A Center of Russian Culture Was Opened in Kharkiv]." *Ravnopravie.org*. Web.

given Ukraine's recent history with Russia; especially in the years since Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, criticism of *Russkiy Mir* has increased and calls for the removal of the Russian cultural centers have been more frequent. The Ukrainian public did, in fact, succeed in limiting *Russkiy Mir* minimally since general criticism of Russia has grown in the country recently; at one point, there were a total of 14 *Russkiy Mir* cultural centers in Ukraine. According to Vladimir Kochin, the executive director of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation, the Russian centers that closed in Ukraine did so because they could not "work under present conditions."¹⁰² Presumably, these conditions were growing public outrage at Russia's activities in Ukraine in general, and certainly *Russkiy Mir* has not been excepted from the rise in anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine.

According to some of the most vocal opponents of *Russkiy Mir*'s operations in Ukraine – typically pro-Ukraine, anti-Russia activists in the country – the centers serve as nothing more than a furtherance of Russia's "cultural imperialism" and the "cultural Russification" of Ukraine. In an article from a clearly pro-Ukrainian, anti-Russian website, the author discusses anxieties over this process of "cultural Russification;" in particular, the author takes offense at *Rossotrudnichestvo* and *Russkiy Mir*'s arrangements for Ukrainian young artists, scientists, and other professionals to visit Russia in the context of professional development opportunities.¹⁰³ The article is very politically-charged, with such headings as "We Do Not Cooperate with the Occupiers;" while readers should be aware of this clear bias (and the potential for inaccuracies from such articles), the opinions of these elements of *Russkiy Mir*'s foreign audiences can still tell us much about how

¹⁰² Russkiy Mir Foundation. "If We Were Given Big Budgets – the Russian Flag Would Be All Over the World." *Russkiy Mir*, 31 July 2015. Web.

¹⁰³ Liskovich, Miroslav. "Кто и зачем повез уже "художников" в Россию на «пенэр» [Who (and For What Reason) Has Already Arranged Artist Trips to Russia to Do En Plein Air Work]." *Ukrinform*. Web.

Russkiy Mir is perceived in these countries. In this article, the author warns that young Ukrainian professionals are being “exported” to Russia like schoolchildren; he perceives the activities of the Russian centers as a further extension of Russian aggression, this time in a culturally imperialist context.

In December of 2014, members of the All-Ukrainian Council *Svoboda* called for the removal of the Russian cultural center from the Mechnikov Odessa National University in light of the Russian invasion.¹⁰⁴ Irina Farion, then-deputy of *Svoboda*, denounced the Russian centers’ activities as being “Ukrainian-phobic.” Although the center still continues to operate today, in light of the delicate situation university representatives released a statement to reporters that they had no contacts with and did not cooperate with the Russian center located at the university, as the center was operated independently by representatives of *Russkiy Mir*.

In his response to the backlash against Mechnikov Odessa National University for allowing the Russian center to operate at the university and to take up a portion of the university library’s reading room space, the university’s rector Igor Koval released a statement to the press.¹⁰⁵ He asserted that while the university did not cooperate in the operations of *Russkiy Mir* or any other similar centers of the Russian Federation, the Russian center was still a crucial unit of the university, the work of which “greatly contributes to the improvement of the quality of the preparation of student-philologists,

¹⁰⁴ *Rupor Odessa*. “РЕКТОР ОДЕССКОГО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ИМ. И.И. МЕЧНИКОВА — В ОТПОВЕДЬ СВОБОДОВЦАМ [Rector of the Mechnikov Odessa National University – in the Rebuke of “Svoboda” Group Members].” *Rupor Odessa*, 11 Dec. 2014. Web.

¹⁰⁵ *Odessa Media*. “Игорь Коваль: ОНУ не сотрудничает с фондом «Русский мир» [Igor Koval: ONU Does Not Cooperate with the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation].” *Odessa Media*, 10 Dec. 2014. Web.

historians, international experts, political scientists, [and] cultural studies.” Koval went on to state that “Putin’s regime is one thing, and Russian literature is another.”

The clash between anti-Russian/pro-Ukrainian protestors and the administration at Mechnikov Odessa National University is indicative of the larger clash between divergent sides in Ukraine regarding Ukrainian national identity in the past, present, and future. Beyond this, the debate in Ukraine around *Russkiy Mir*’s work also raises larger questions regarding cultural diplomacy initiatives. At what point can we label cultural diplomacy as the promotion of cross-cultural education, understanding, and tolerance, and at what point do these activities cross the threshold of “cultural imperialism?” How do we determine the interests and nature of cultural activities – by the interests of the executing agencies, NGOs, nonprofits, individuals, and authorities, or by the perceptions of their foreign audiences?

The answers to these questions are not easy. To further complicate the surrounding framework, Reuters recently published an article on the fate of a Ukrainian literature library in Moscow. The administrators report that over the course of the past year or two, Moscow authorities first began seizing some of the books; next, they put the library’s director on trial under accusations of “stirring up ethnic hatred;” finally, they have ordered the transfer of the remaining collection to Russia’s main foreign language library, essentially shutting down the only state-run Ukrainian language library in Russia. Ukrainian commentators on the closure note their belief that this represents another example of Russian attempts to undermine Ukraine’s nationhood. Moscow city authorities denied any political element to the transfer, stating instead that the transfer would only preserve the legacy of Ukrainian literature and “facilitate the popularization of the Ukrainian literary legacy.” One has to wonder, however: if Russian authorities see foreign cultural elements as potentially

threatening, dangerous, and manipulative in Moscow, how then are they approaching their own pursuit of cultural projects abroad (and especially in the post-Soviet space)?

THE *RUSSKIY MIR* FOUNDATION IN EUROPE: SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Measuring the success or failure of *Russkiy Mir*'s programs in Germany and Ukraine is no easy task, for a number of reasons. For policymakers, it has always proven difficult to determine the degree of success of cultural initiatives, primarily because the results are diffuse, affected by a number of other involved actors, and are designed to result in very long-term positive change. Changes in a country's image abroad might also have less to do with their cultural programming and more to do with other things – for instance, in the case of Russia, recent revelations about their disinformation campaigns and attempts to influence elections in Western Europe have had an increasingly negative impact on how those countries view Russia. Despite the difficulty, however, there are some minor markers of the relative success and failure of the Russian cultural centers in Germany and in Ukraine.

In the Soviet era, the U.S.S.R. pursued an aggressive and expansive program of active measures activities abroad; from this information, one can draw tentative conclusions on how today's active measures programs might be measured in terms of success. In an interview with Richard Shultz and Roy Godson, former Czech intelligence officer Ladislav Bittman had this to say about how the Soviet Union determined the success of these programs:

With regard to active measures, you were evaluated in terms of the number of operations proposed and conducted, and the success of these actions...influence operations conducted through journalists had specific measurements of effectiveness. These included the number of articles published, how effectively

they were written, and where they were published...It is also important to note, however, that the Communist approach to questions of effectiveness is different from the Western approach. The Communist concern focuses more on the overall cumulative effect over time. Furthermore, the Communist view of time is much different from the Western view. Hence, Communist leaders do not emphasize the specific effectiveness of each type of active measures operation, many of which are difficult to evaluate, to the extent this is emphasized in the West.¹⁰⁶

Given the remarkable similarities between Soviet active measures campaigns to Russia's contemporary active measures campaigns, this paragraph remains relevant (simply substituting "Russian" for "Communist" in the above excerpt). Readers may take a few things away from this regarding the success of Russia's cultural diplomacy programs, which constitute one subset of Russia's active measures activities: 1) success is determined more in terms of the overall success of the combined efforts of the active measures programs, and not just in terms of these cultural programs on their own; 2) the success of the individual centers is probably determined more in terms of output (activities and events that took place in a given timeframe); 3) Russian active measures programs are expected to have a long-term, cumulative effect, and so Russian leaders and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs probably consider this when evaluating program effectiveness.

Looking at *Russkiy Mir* in Germany, the foundations seemed to serve two major goals: consolidating and providing a connective space for the Russian diaspora, as part of the Russian government's larger effort to rely on the Russian diaspora as a tool for pressuring and influencing the German government on policies in which the Russian

¹⁰⁶ Godson, Roy, and Richard H. Shultz. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Pergamon Brassey's, 1984.

government has important interest; and interacting with the German public to increase understanding of Russian culture, as part of the larger effort to improve Russia's international image. In Germany, the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation has likely achieved the first goal; in the second, *Russkiy Mir* has seen middling success, if any at all.

In providing a common space and uniting force for the Russian diaspora, one might argue that *Russkiy Mir* has been relatively successful. Thinking in terms of Soviet conceptions of success for these programs, all of the centers have certainly demonstrated an active and continuous effort to engage the Russian diaspora, and output for programs has certainly been remarkable. Over the time frame studied, the centers in Germany had created a constant flow of weekly literature, film, and culture clubs, as well as hosting special events quite regularly – probably at least three to four times a month, the centers hosted special speakers or held large events marking traditional Russian holidays. In terms of output, these centers were very successful.

Looking at other research regarding the Russian diaspora in Germany as well, the programs seem to have had some success. While in previous years the Russian diaspora was not visible in public political and social debates in Germany, recently they have become more active. In an article for the Berlin Policy Journal, Rina Soloveitchik references various Russian information programs as being relatively successful in targeting and mobilizing the East German Russian diaspora specifically.¹⁰⁷ Germany's Russian immigrants have felt excluded from policy discussion in recent years, making them vulnerable to Russian propaganda (which Russian leaders have clearly noticed). While in the past these immigrants were “mostly invisible,” around 2016, Soloveitchik notes, these *Russlanddeutsche* (Russian Germans) became increasingly vocal about their difficulties in

¹⁰⁷ Soloveitchik, Rina. “Little Russia.” *The Berlin Policy Journal*, March/April 2017.

Germany – primarily, that although the Russian German population in this region is considered a “model immigrant” community, they have felt unwelcome throughout their history – persecuted and made to feel “un-German,” despite identifying in the past as primarily German.

These feelings of being an outsider, coupled with some nostalgia for Russia, have made these groups increasingly vulnerable to Russian propaganda campaigns:

“The Russian government has been trying to manipulate these Russian Germans in order to further its own interest...The Russian Germans have multiple identities, that’s why they are open to Russian perspectives,” Gauks adds. In his view, Russia has been trying to mobilize Russian Germans through its information campaigns. The far right also increasingly sees an opportunity as it gathers its strength throughout Europe.¹⁰⁸

According to Soloveitchik, these efforts on the part of the Russian government to mobilize and manipulate the Russian German diaspora have been relatively successful; Russian Germans have been especially vocal in the local political debate, especially in regards to the refugee crisis, about which many in these communities feel great anxiety. Although it is impossible to contribute the success of these mobilizations entirely or directly to the *Russkiy Mir* centers alone, in the larger terms of Russia’s information campaigns, it is clear that they are directing Russian German opinion and activity in the desired direction.

Where *Russkiy Mir* has failed, or at least floundered, is in their promotion of a more positive image of Russia in Germany. The non-Russian-speaking German public does not seem quite as receptive to *Russkiy Mir*’s efforts; for the time frame under which the data was studied, no mentions of *Russkiy Mir* centers’ activities were found in any German

¹⁰⁸ Soloveitchik, Rina. “Little Russia.” *The Berlin Policy Journal*, March/April 2017.

language online media. If Germans are attending center events, if they are participating in the festivals and going to the literature clubs, they do not seem to be talking about it. Looking at the overarching goal beyond interacting with the foreign public, *Russkiy Mir* certainly has not succeeded in improving international opinion on Russia – according to a PEW Research Center poll, in Germany (and in Western Europe more generally), perceptions of Russia have only worsened in the past year.¹⁰⁹ This is likely a result of other Russian active measures programs and activities abroad; rumors about Russian meddling in Western European and U.S. elections,¹¹⁰ as well as the news regarding the poisoning of Russian-turned-British spy Sergei Skripal in Great Britain¹¹¹ have only served to harden public attitudes in the West against Russia.

In Ukraine, it is much harder to determine *Russkiy Mir*'s success, mostly because so many confounding factors have influenced the social and political landscape in the past few years – the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea; language politics; other Russian active measures (particularly the dissemination of disinformation); etc. The Russian centers in Ukraine seem to be operating with three primary objectives in mind: 1) like Germany, the creation of a space for the Russian diaspora, which would allow the maintenance of connections between Russians and their homeland; 2) directing historical and political narratives in Ukraine in ways which would favor a positive evaluation of the Ukraine-Russia relationship; and 3) maintaining Russian influence in Ukraine and preventing closer ties between Ukraine and the E.U.

¹⁰⁹ Vice, Margaret. "Publics Worldwide Unfavorable Toward Putin, Russia." *The Pew Research Center*, 16 Aug. 2017. Web.

¹¹⁰ Noack, Rick. "Everything We Know So Far About Russian Election Meddling in Europe." *The Washington Post*, 10 Jan. 2018. Web.

¹¹¹ Serhan, Yasmeen. "The Russian Ex-Spies Who Got Poisoned in Britain." *The Atlantic*, 7 March 2018. Web.

In regards to the first goal, the obfuscating factors make it very difficult to examine the specific effect that *Russkiy Mir* has had in consolidating the Russian diaspora in Ukraine. Local politics in the years since the Russian invasion have only further polarized the anti-Russian/pro-Russian divide in Ukraine; thus, a more vocal Russian diaspora has likely been the effect of many different issues over the past few years and the resultant polarization. Regardless, if readers were to evaluate success on the same terms as the Kremlin, they might regard *Russkiy Mir* as likely being successful in this regard. Russians living in Ukraine have certainly been more vocal since 2014 in the language policy debate;¹¹² additionally, many “pro-Russia” Russian-speaking activists have moved from simply asserting and vocalizing opinions to forming organized rebel movements, especially in the contested Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.¹¹³ In regards to this last point, however, once again a number of other factors are affecting the radicalization of the Russian diaspora in Ukraine. Although beyond the scope of this research, evidence suggests that more active Russian state influence might contribute to the organization of these rebel movements in Ukraine – even to the point of providing Russian troops to bolster rebel movements. Despite this fact, the efforts of the Russian cultural centers still play into the more general concept of active measures – thus, if active measures programming seems to be resulting in a cohesive Russian diaspora community in Ukraine that is mobilized and radicalized in the name of Russian national interests, one might consider that the Russian cultural centers have achieved their goal (no matter how small their role in this process).

¹¹² Kulyk, Volodymyr. “One Nation, Two Languages? National Identity and Language Policy in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine.” *PONARS Eurasia, Policy Memo* 389, Sept. 2015. Web.

¹¹³ Loshkariov, Ivan, and Andrey Sushentsov. “Radicalization of Russians in Ukraine: from ‘Accidental’ Diaspora to Rebel Movement.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 16 no. 1, 2016, pp. 71-90.

As to the second and third goals, it is almost impossible to determine success, especially in the short-term. As far as maintaining a positive narrative of Ukraine-Russia relations, the work of the centers does not seem to be having the desired effect; revisionist histories focusing on the injustices of the relationship, and the exploitation of Ukraine at the hands of Russian influence continue to see increasing public acceptance.¹¹⁴ The work of the centers in challenging the Ukrainian public's emerging research and revisionist ideas regarding their own history is only likely to inflame anti-Russian sentiments even further, especially in the context of the present military crisis. In their goal of maintaining Russian influence in Ukraine, it is impossible to tell at the moment if *Russkiy Mir* is seeing any level of success. While Ukrainian ambitions to join the E.U. have certainly been thwarted, this was hardly due to *Russkiy Mir* influence, and rather a result of political upheaval and military conflict with Russia. Additionally, the tabling of Ukrainian plans to join the E.U. now does not mean that the country and civil society will necessarily refute closer ties with the West over keeping their traditionally close relationship with Russia. One result of the continuing conflict with Russia is that anti-Russian attitudes in Ukraine have been hardening, and the development of an independent Ukrainian identity has been emerging and strengthening, especially in the years since 2014.¹¹⁵ The political debate over Ukraine's future path is so polarized and controversial in the country right now that it is hard to predict which way the people will lean, but the future certainly does not seem to look favorably on a renewed and strengthened Ukraine-Russia partnership.

¹¹⁴ Kappeler, Andreas. "Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial Past and Competing Memories." *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, vol. 5 no. 2, July 2014, pp. 107-115.

¹¹⁵ Pifer, Steven. "How Ukraine Views Russia and the West." *Brookings*, 18 Oct. 2017. Web.

Conclusion

In the Reagan era, some in the American diplomatic and policymaking community – including Reagan himself – had begun to view American cultural diplomacy as less of an internationalist function and more as a tool for fighting “the Cold War of ideas.”¹¹⁶ This concept – using culture to win the “war of ideas” – although outdated now in the American context, provides a nice framework with which to understand Russia’s modern-day cultural initiatives. In particular, their use as a means of reaching out to the Russian diaspora especially demonstrates this. The concept of the “Russian world” – even before this phrase became the name of the foundation carrying out Russia’s international cultural projects – has become a central part of Russia’s geopolitical ideology in the past few years, and lies at the heart of Russia’s ever-developing compatriots policies dealing with Russians living abroad. According to Mikhail Suslov:

The implicit geopolitical meaning, civilizational rhetoric and anti-Westernism of the “Russian world” concept came at the fore when Russia was reconsidered recently as a “state-civilization.” This rhetoric frames the vision of the “Russian world” as a distinctive civilization, situated on a distinctive territory, ruled by a single political subject, and struggling with other civilizations for resources and influences. Its meaning became associated with the idea of “recollecting the Russian lands,” which is far from, perhaps even opposite to its initial meaning as the network community of deterritorialized Russian speakers.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Arndt, Richard T. *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*. Potomac Books, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Suslov, Mikhail. “Russian World: Russia’s Policy Towards its Diaspora.” *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No. 103, Ifri, July 2017.

In this respect, *Russkiy Mir*'s activities in Germany and Ukraine share the primary similarity that the centers operate first and foremost with the Russian diaspora in mind – both in keeping them closely connected to Russia and in relying on them as an important source of Russian influence in their given countries. In this way, both in Western Europe and in Eastern Europe Russia's cultural diplomacy programs show clear continuity with the Soviet era of cultural diplomacy through the example of *aktivnye meropriyatiya*, or active measures.

At the same time, Suslov's explanation of the evolution of the "Russian world" concept also emphasizes another point: that those in the Russian leadership responsible for the country's foreign policy have increasingly seen this concept in irredentist terms; this has resulted in *Russkiy Mir*'s cultural initiatives in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries becoming more paternal, and more continuous with Soviet cultural diplomacy in its focus on maintaining influence in the "buffer" zone between Russia and the West.

Generalizing from the above research on Russia's cultural programs in Germany and Ukraine, there does seem to be two distinct strands of cultural diplomacy operating in Western Europe and in Eastern Europe/CIS countries. In Western Europe, as demonstrated by the case of Germany, *Russkiy Mir*'s cultural centers show a hybridization of cultural policy: that is, a mix of Soviet-era cultural diplomatic policy and typical Western cultural diplomatic policy. In addition to relying on active measures, the centers employ Soviet nostalgia in their programs geared towards ethnic Russian communities; they also use typical Western methods of combining cultural diplomacy with other methods of public diplomacy, as well as promoting cross-cultural connections and avoiding blatant and vocal political messaging. This absence of overt political/historical narratives in the initiatives in

Germany, as well as the continual emphasis on the intersections of German and Russian culture, give these centers a feeling more of transparency and sincerity than of paternalism.

In Ukraine, the Russian centers seem to focus more singularly on the projection of Russian culture, and specifically to Russian-speaking and Russian-supporting audiences. When the centers do host events related to Ukrainian culture, the emphasis of these events seems to be on irrefutable Slavic roots, maintaining traditional historical narratives relating to the Ukrainian-Russian relationship, and promoting regional politics that reinforce other Russian foreign policy objectives, goals, and priorities in the region. Rather than promoting understanding and cross-cultural tolerances, *Russkiy Mir*'s work in Ukraine seems more targeted to maintaining Russian influence in the region and directing political narratives. While German audiences seemed relatively neutral to the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation's activities in Germany, Ukrainian audiences see the cultural centers' activities in Ukraine in a much more controversial and polarizing light, deeming their work "cultural imperialism" in the most extreme cases. These differences highlight differing objectives for *Russkiy Mir* in Western Europe versus Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space. In the West, Russia's cultural programs seem designed to promote greater understanding of Russia, an appreciation for Russian high culture, and to promote a more positive image for Russia more generally. In the East, programs are designed to maintain influence in regions where Russia feels that it has a historic right to be dominant, especially regarding post-Soviet states.¹¹⁸

If one were to evaluate the relative success or failure of *Russkiy Mir*'s initiatives based on the apparent objectives, it would seem that they have not achieved much.

¹¹⁸ Bogomolov, A., and O. Lytvynenko. "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine." Russian and Eurasia Programme: Briefing Papers, 2012, pp. 1-17.

International polling suggests Russia's image has only worsened in recent years; success in the post-Soviet space is more difficult to determine, and at best might be inconsistent. Additionally, Russia's other public diplomacy efforts seem to actively undermine the goals of *Russkiy Mir*. Russia's disinformation campaigns, aggressive media campaigns where Russian interests are at stake (particularly in the post-Soviet region), and proactive political involvement with a wide range of political actors in former Soviet states to shape policy in these regions have all contributed to a worsening of Russia's negative international image.¹¹⁹

These contradictions might not matter much, however, looking at Russian foreign policy and public diplomacy priorities in the past few years. Russia's cultural diplomacy programs are only one minor part of the larger framework of Russian active measures. Other active measures on the overt side include diplomatic relations and overt Kremlin-run international media; on the covert side, the Russian government is still actively pursuing policies regarding agents of influence abroad, the support of front organizations, and disinformation campaigns. Compared with the disinformation campaigns of the Soviet era, today's Russian disinformation campaigns have become increasingly sophisticated and effective, primarily due to rapid technological innovation and the emerging primacy of online social networks. Now, cyber-warfare and disinformation campaigns seem to dominate among Russia's various active measures programs. Entire departments, known as troll factories,¹²⁰ are devoted to publishing fake news articles, organizing inflammatory events in foreign countries (for instance, a Russian troll's creation of a Facebook event for

¹¹⁹ Avgerinos, K. "Russia's Public Diplomacy Effort: What the Kremlin is Doing and Why it's not Working." *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 20, 2008, pp. 115-132.

¹²⁰ MacFarquhar, Neil. "Inside the Russian Troll Factory: Zombies and a Breakneck Pace." *The New York Times*, 18 Feb. 2018. Web.

a pro-Trump rally in Florida),¹²¹ and commenting on popular articles and in popular forums based on weekly (and sometimes daily) guidelines given to these departments directly from the Kremlin and the MID. If one were to consider the goal of the most recent disinformation campaigns to be the undermining of Western values, faith in Western institutions, and faith in democracy, they might arguably determine that these objectives have been fulfilled; through interference in recent European elections and the 2016 U.S. election, these active measures campaigns have succeeded in exploiting pre-existing rifts and tensions in American and Western societies.

Relatively speaking, the objectives of *Russkiy Mir* seem to be lower on the list of priorities for Russia's active measures efforts more generally. The problem with cultural diplomacy, from the perspective of both Russian and Western policymakers, is that it is difficult to control and its success is both a long-term effort and hard to determine. Despite this, as Arndt writes, cultural diplomacy is also a remarkably useful long-term tool for engagement as "...education costs less than policing the world; ...educational diplomacy nurtures...growth and strength;...more than a means of building...image abroad, [cultural diplomacy] builds trust and confidence."¹²² We would all do well to remember this lesson.

¹²¹ *The Economist*. "Russian Disinformation Distorts American and European Democracy." *Economist.com*, 22 Feb. 2018. Web.

¹²² Arndt, Richard T. *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*. Potomac Books, 2006.

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