

# Global Russians: In Search of Lost Time

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## Abstract

The thirty years of joint efforts to build an effective dialogue between the Russian government and the Russian diaspora abroad have produced controversial results. The Russian diaspora has remained one of the most divided and disunited in the world. Its potential as a lobbyist and broker has gradually shrunk to zero, while no system capable of protecting the rights of compatriots has been built by Moscow to this day. Recent years have seen still greater fragmentation and polarization of Russians living abroad, triggered by the Kremlin's foreign policy actions in 2014. There has developed a confrontation between those who associate themselves with their compatriots and the Russian world, on the one hand, and Global Russians, on the other hand. The latter were rejected by the

Russian authorities and some experts, who equated Global Russians with cosmopolitans. A review of the existing studies and empirical examples shows that this interpretation was erroneous and Global Russians were artificially opposed to other parts of the Russian diaspora and the international Russophile community (compatriots and the Russian world) as the Kremlin revised its strategy towards the Russian diaspora.

**Keywords:** Global Russians, Russian diaspora, the Russian world (Russkiy Mir), securitization, soft power, transnationalism, theory of political identification.

Restoration of lost ties with the Russian diaspora abroad was one of post-Soviet Russia's foreign policy priorities in the 1990s. After a seventy-year gap, there emerged the realization that the Russians living abroad were not a group of traitors and enemies, but a "kindred socio-cultural world" and a "peripheral center of Russianness" (Batanova, 2009, p. 13), which Russia itself needs. An active rapprochement began on both sides. The Russian government was keen to create special conditions for those who voluntarily or involuntarily found themselves outside the Motherland, regarding them as links to local societies and potential envoys of not only Russian culture, but also of the new Russia's political and economic interests. Inside the Russian diaspora itself, there occurred a long-awaited, albeit no easy, turn "to face Russia" (Facing Russia was the title of a new strategy adopted in 1989 by the Russian emigrant scouting Organization of Young Russian Pathfinders—abbreviated as ORYuR in Russian; the strategy's purpose was return to Russia), and reconcile itself with the Motherland's controversial Soviet past and turbulent present. Despite all the obstacles, the process of rapprochement was quite successful.

However, today, thirty years later, we see that the Russian diaspora has remained disunited and divided, showing drastic polarization as regards cooperation with the historical Motherland. The Russian leadership has carried out certain "cleansing" to single out "professional compatriots" and reject that part of the Russian diaspora which

researchers call Global Russians. It is noteworthy that from the very first steps towards Russia's unification with its diaspora abroad, it was Global Russians who constituted the priority target for the Russian government's foreign policy. Also, they turned out to be the first to be rejected by it. How and why did relations between Russia and the Russian diaspora come full circle this way? What is the fundamental feature of Global Russians as part of the Russian diaspora abroad? What is the political role of the Global Russians in relations with Russia and in world politics in general?

This article offers an explanation of how the Russian strategy was built in relation to compatriots abroad and the Russian world, and how the phenomenon of Global Russians is understood in the Russian political and academic discourse. With regard to Global Russians, Russia has accumulated a lot of incorrect definitions and even prejudices stemming from the outdated dichotomy of "patriots"/"cosmopolitans." The article offers a new interpretation of Global Russians through a four-level identification model, which allows for lifting the current (seeming) contradictions with other segments of the Russian diaspora and with patriotism, as well as helps understand the role Global Russians may play in relations between the diaspora and Russia and in world politics in the future.

### **THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPTS OF 'COMPATRIOTS' AND 'THE RUSSIAN WORLD': FROM INCLUSIVENESS TO SECURITIZATION**

When relations between Russia and the Russian diaspora began to be restored in the 1990s, the outlook was encouraging. The new government adopted a number of official acts to emphasize the special importance of "compatriots living abroad" for modern Russia (Declaration of Support for the Russian Diaspora and Patronage of Russian Compatriots of 1995 and the Federal Law of 1999 "On the State Policy in Relation to Compatriots Abroad"). Various official agencies and non-governmental organizations held numerous events, inviting representatives of the Russian diaspora as special guests. This period in relations between the Russian diaspora and Moscow culminated with the First World Congress of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad

(2001), which Russian President Vladimir Putin opened himself, and which proclaimed the idea of the Russian world at the official level for the first time (Putin, 2001).

Originally, Moscow's approach to the concept of 'compatriot' was as wide and inclusive as possible. It applied to everyone who had at least a distant family relationship with Russia and wished to "maintain spiritual relations with Russia regardless of their nationality and present legal status in the countries of residence" (Deklaratsiya, 1995). This interpretation was legally enshrined in a 1999 law that defined compatriots as "all individuals living abroad who either currently hold Russian citizenship or are descendants of former citizens of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation."

At that time, a pragmatic approach to the Russian diaspora, proposed by political consultants Pyotr Shchedrovitsky and Gleb Pavlovsky, enjoyed priority. It was addressed to successful compatriots, well integrated into their countries of residence and capable of serving as an effective link to promote Russia's economic interests (Suslov, 2017), that is, in fact, to those whom Kommersant publishing house founder Vladimir Yakovlev would later call "Global Russians." However, apart from official declarations, acknowledgements and high-profile events (Zevelev, 2014), no real steps were taken by Moscow to protect the rights of compatriots where they needed it, or to simplify bureaucratic procedures for compatriots resettling to Russia. The institution of dual citizenship failed (Zevelev, 2008), while politician Vyacheslav Nikonov's idea of their visa-free entry remained on paper.

At the beginning of cooperation between the historical Motherland and its diaspora, the widest possible range of participants—public, private and non-governmental—was covered regardless of the degree of their affiliation with Russia and political orientation. However, according to Mikhail Suslov, an assistant professor of Russian history and politics at the University of Copenhagen, this period came to an end back in 2004, when the pragmatic and inclusive approach gave way to the institutionalization and instrumentalization of the idea of cooperation with the Russian diaspora. It was during that year that Russia made a turn towards recentralization of the vertical chain of

command in domestic politics and, under the influence of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, started to adopt a defensive-aggressive and anti-Western stance (Suslov, 2017, 22). The conceptualization of the Russian soft power in 2008-2009 (Ageeva, 2021) was followed by the institutionalization (and, as it turned out later, vassalization) of Russia's relations with the diaspora. In 2007, the Russkiy Mir Foundation was established. In 2008, Roszarubezhtsentr was transformed into the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo). In 2009, the World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots was established to unite disparate local councils from different countries and formalize their relations with Russian embassies.

At first glance, such institutionalization served good purposes. For one, it coordinated, optimized and unified efforts of official agencies and non-governmental initiatives. However, in practice, it formalized and politicized contacts with the Russian diaspora. Only close and loyal compatriots could count on support.

For instance, diplomat Alexander Chepurin in 2009, while reviewing the obstacles to “the emergence of a full-fledged Russian diaspora,” openly pointed to “some natives of Russia” who criticize Russia's foreign and domestic policy, who “make money on anti-Russian sentiment,” and who “adhere to Russophobic approaches” (Chepurin, 2009). In some cases, inconsistency with state interests was used as a pretext to “deny support to well-known human rights activists in Russia's near abroad, because they ‘were of no interest’ to a specific official” (Poloskova and Skrinnik, 2003).

The emergence of so-called “professional compatriots” was perhaps the most disastrous effect of the institutionalization of Russia-diaspora relations. By analogy with “professional patriots,” they used support from the Russian agencies concerned to attain selfish professional aims or to embezzle scanty financial resources (Chepurin, 2009; Poloskova and Skrinnik, 2003). Their negative impact on Russia's image abroad was acknowledged both by Russian officials themselves (Ostrovskii, 2010) and by foreign mass media (Klensky, 2014; Mitrofanova, 2013).

But then an important change took place in Russia's attitude towards foreign compatriots. In 2010, some amendments were adopted to the law on compatriots to significantly narrow the very notion of 'compatriot.' The former citizens of the Soviet Union and their descendants were excluded from it to be replaced by "people and their descendants who belong to nationalities historically dwelling on the Russian territory."

The real purpose of these seemingly insignificant changes was to separate descendants from Central Asia (who turned out to be descendants of Soviet citizens) from "compatriots." This, in fact, established a "semi-ethnic" criterion for this notion and was consonant with the nationalist and anti-immigrant posture of the Russian establishment (Suslov, 2017, p. 23). In parallel with the institutionalization and instrumentalization of the Russian strategy towards the foreign diaspora, there occurred a decisive departure along the conservative direction from post-imperial legal inclusiveness towards "semi-ethnic" cultural exclusiveness (Suslov, 2017, p. 24). These processes obviously narrowed the potential audience of the political project called Compatriots, some of whom (including Global Russians) began to distance themselves from toxic associations, while the other part was forcibly marginalized by the Russian leadership.

The Kremlin's active promotion of the idea of the Russian world contributed to the further fragmentation of the Russian diaspora. Over the past thirty years, it has made a long way from a cultural and politically neutral concept to the ideological basis of an expansionist policy. The very idea of the Russian world has a long and rich history—Marlene Laruelle, research professor at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, traces its first references to Prince Izyaslav, who wrote in the 11th century a letter to the Pope, entitled "Kherson and the Russian World," and connects its evolution to prominent Russian philosophers such as Vladimir Solovyov and Nikolai Berdyaev, who made a significant impact on the development of the concepts of 'Russian spirit' and 'Russian idea' (*Russkaya ideya*) (Laruelle, 2015, p. 3). In the 20th century, it survived oblivion during

the Soviet era to stage a comeback to the Russian academic and political discourse only at the end of the century.

At the origins of its revival and conceptualization were Yefim Ostrovsky, Pyotr Shchedrovitsky, Gleb Pavlovsky, Sergei Chernyshev and Mikhail Gefter, who between 1993 and 1997 worked on its crystallization “from pre-understanding and an amorphous feeling of the desirable form to its final name.” The original definition they proposed was as broad and inclusive as possible. “Russkiy mir” was to become a network of all Russian-speaking and Russian-thinking people across the globe (Shchedrovitsky, 2000). Such an interpretation of the idea, which brings the Russian language to the forefront, set a cultural tonality for it and oriented it towards what Ambassador Yevgeny Astakhov called “the energy of Russian culture” (Astakhova and Astakhov, 2015, p. 321), as the main resource, and steered it onto an apolitical track.

Moreover, the interpretation proposed by Shchedrovitsky and Ostrovsky made it possible to expand the concept’s scope. After all, not only Russians can speak Russian and think in Russian, but also foreigners studying Russian and interested in Russian culture and history. In its early years a broad (comprehensive) culture-oriented interpretation of the concept of the Russian world was in great demand among the Russian political elite, which saw the Russian world as a potentially strong element of the emerging concept of Russian soft power. The foundation of the same name, which the Russian government established in 2007, used for its ideology precisely this interpretation of the concept of the Russian world, “which includes Russia and Russian compatriots and which unites individuals regardless of their nationality, particularly those who feel themselves Russian, bear Russian culture, speak the Russian language, and feel connected to and responsible for Russia’s destiny” (Batanova, 2009, p. 14).

Gradually, however, neutrality began to vanish from the concept of the Russian world. The civilizational turn, set by both the academic and expert community (for example, by Valery Tishkov and Gleb Pavlovsky) and the country’s political leadership was the first step towards its politicization. Also, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)

was quick to incorporate this concept into its discourse (for example, Patriarch Kirill authored a book entitled *Seven Words about the Russian World*, 2015).

By itself, embedding the Russian world into the civilizational discourse would not have entailed negative effects. It would have even looked logical, but the conservative and anti-Western tinge that this discourse soon acquired had a destructive effect on it. The concept derived its concrete ideological content from Vladimir Putin's speech at the plenary meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club in October 2013. Later, this speech would begin to be unofficially referred to as the "Manifesto of the Russian World." Putin said: "We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan... People in many European countries are embarrassed or afraid to talk about their religious affiliations" (Putin, 2013).

However, neither the Orthodox nor the conservative tilt that the concept developed during those years had such devastating consequences as Crimea's reincorporation into Russia in March 2014, when the reunification of the Russian world was used as a rhetorical device in the Russian leadership's official discourse. While the inclusion of Orthodoxy in the Russian world as a common denominator could potentially alienate non-believers and representatives of other religions, particularly Muslims (Marlene Laruelle (2015, p. 18) predicts that Russia will have problems using this concept in Central Asia), and the conservative agenda is likely to be rejected by the progressively-minded part of society (intellectuals, representatives of creative professions and even young people), the events in Crimea irreversibly split the Russian world that had been built through painstaking efforts by the authorities and society since the 1990s. This fragile and delicate structure was hopelessly ruined in the wink of an eye (Poloskova and Skrinnik, 2003; Sochnev and Kuzmenko, 2015).

The Russian world began to be used as a bugbear by various countries (sometimes even to scare themselves), especially those with large Russian-speaking communities, or which have “disputed” territories with Russia. Starting from 2014, the idea of an aggressive Russian world has been a cliché in the foreign media and academic articles, in defiance of calls from Russia, in particular, from the Russian Orthodox Church, for not politicizing or portraying the Russian world as a bogey (Patriarch Cyrill, 2015). Some Russian experts even argued that the concept of the Russian world was “dead.” After its rapid securitization (Zevelev, 2014) that concept lost its soft power potential and began to symbolize a narrowing reality around Russia, which had already “ejected” Ukraine and began to be regarded by the other fraternal countries as a lesson (Sochnev and Kuzmenko, 2015).

It is noteworthy that back in 2008, political scientist Igor Zevelev wrote that the Kremlin’s neo-imperialist rhetoric regarding the Russian world and compatriots served as a kind of compensatory psychological mechanism in a situation of its own impotence, protecting the near abroad from Russian aggression. At the same time, he admitted that the issue of reunification of the Russian people, in principle, might be used by some political forces to woo the electorate (Zevelev, 2008). This forecast partially came true in August 2008 during the conflict with Georgia. In 2014, it materialized to the full extent.

The securitization of the Russian world triggered even stronger polarization within the Russian diaspora abroad. Those who associated themselves with their compatriots and the idea of the Russian world came out in support of the Russian authorities on the Crimean issue. “Professional compatriots’ expressed their solidarity with Russian people living in Crimea and their decision to join the Russian Federation” (Smirnitskaya, 2014). Famous Russian emigre families signed and published an open letter entitled “Solidarity with Russia over the Tragedy in Ukraine.” Among signatories were Prince and Princess Shakhovskiy, His Highness Prince Yurievskiy, Naryshkin, Muruzi, etc. (Prokofiev, 2014). Those who found it impossible to support what looked as military aggression and annexation of foreign territories to them came out with an alternative viewpoint. Their attitude was

expressed in the Alternative Letter from the Descendants of White Emigrants (von Hahn, 2014). In this letter the other part of the diaspora rejected any solidarity with Russian actions in Ukraine and the Russian government. It was the first sign of the further fragmentation of the Russian diaspora abroad, which led to the crystallization of Global Russians as a separate group within it.

### **GLOBAL RUSSIANS AS A TRANSNATIONAL PHENOMENON UNDERESTIMATED BY MOSCOW**

The term ‘Global Russians’ was coined by the founder of the *Kommersant* publishing house, Vladimir Yakovlev, back in 2008. As he launched the *Snob* magazine, Yakovlev declared that the periodical’s target readership was Global Russians—those who “live where they want, do what they want, absorb any cultures, become part of any communities, but at the same time retain bonds with Russian-language culture and remain its integral part” (Nikitina, 2017).

It is remarkable that for a long time the phenomenon of Global Russians did not attract considerable attention either from the political science community or from the public at large. It began to be actively discussed (and criticized) by researchers of the Russian foreign diaspora not earlier than 2017-2018. To understand this temporal gap it is worth recalling that originally Global Russians were an organic part of the Russian diaspora abroad and, moreover, a priority target audience from the Kremlin’s viewpoint (suffice it to recall the focus of the official strategy on economically successful and intellectually influential personalities in the 1990s and early 2000s (Suslov, 2017, p. 21).

Then, due to certain events, an estrangement with Global Russians followed. Mikhail Suslov believes that this process began at the end of 2004, when the Orange Revolution in Ukraine “turned the Russian leadership towards a more defensive-aggressive and anti-Western position” (Suslov, 2017, p. 22), which, in turn, “hindered a meaningful dialogue with ‘Global Russians,’ who were split between loyal ‘professional compatriots’ and the majority reluctant to be treated as Russia’s pawns in its geopolitical games” (ibid, p. 24). The subsequent events, such as the conflict with Georgia in August 2008, the tightening

of the Russian regime in 2011 (Gelman, 2019; Zygar, 2016; Holmes and Krastev, 2020), and, finally, the incorporation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbass in 2014, strengthened this trend, which eventually caused the transformation of Global Russians into a separate, although not united, group within the Russian diaspora abroad. By 2017-2018, their active role on the world political scene was already hard to ignore: Telegram messaging app founder Pavel Durov (listed as a Global Russian by Suslov and Ivanchenko), Russian economist Sergei Guriyev (with whom the author conducted a scientific interview) and some others, to be mentioned further on, can serve as examples.

The discussion about Global Russians that unfolded on the Internet portal of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) in February-July 2018 turned out to be very timely. It began with a discussion of the seemingly unrelated issue of fathers-and-sons relations in the Russian community of international political scientists, initiated by an expert of the Center for Strategic Research (at that time) Anton Tsvetov and Harvard doctoral student Olga Breininger (Tsvetov and Breininger, 2018), who had identified herself as a Global Russian in an interview with RIAC a few months earlier. In their discussion of the generation gap between the Russian experts a parallel was drawn with Global Russians. Then there followed a brief but important debate involving retired Russian diplomat Alexander Kramarenko, Anton Tsvetov himself, who felt obliged to make a reply, and then Vladimir Ivanchenko, an expert at the Creative Diplomacy Center. Their exchange of opinions reflected the full range of inaccuracies and distortions concerning the term ‘Global Russians’ that occurred over the years due to the lack of proper academic analysis.

The widespread tendency to equate Global Russians with cosmopolitans was the main distortion. In fact, it is completely inconsistent with both Yakovlev’s original definition and the empirical examples of this phenomenon. It can be found in an article by Alexander Kramarenko (2018), who refers to Global Russians as part of the “global cosmopolitan elite, weakly rooted in their countries,” in an article by Vladimir Ivanchenko (2018), in which he, while rightly pointing to the polarity of opinions in Russia regarding

Global Russians, defines them rather as “migratory birds” seeking a life “outside political, ideological, and national boundaries,” and who, being liberals whose attitude towards the state is a good litmus test, try to avoid any official contacts with the Kremlin. In the interview with Olga Breininger the idea of “Global Russian = cosmopolitan” is unmistakably present, too. As a result of this distortion, Global Russians are unfairly demonized. Kramarenko warns that if Global Russians, completely estranged from the Russian people, rise to power, there will emerge “the risk of losing the country at the level of language, and therefore, of losing it politically” (Kramarenko, 2018). It is important to note that such a negative connotation in discussing the cosmopolitan nature of Global Russians is present only in some (not all) socio-political discourses in Russia.

The lack of clear definitions and distinctions between “compatriots” and representatives of the Russian world, too, brings a great deal of confusion into the discussion about Global Russians. For example, Ivanchenko writes that their “political views ... may range ... from cosmopolitanism ... to clearly expressed patriotism or even to positioning themselves as defenders, apologists for the Russian authorities...,” thus mentioning Pavel Durov and Iosif Brodsky in the same breath with foreign compatriots who actively vote for the incumbent authorities in elections (for example, in the 2018 presidential election) (Ivanchenko, 2018).

Such illegitimate generalizations result in the emergence of proof-by-contradiction-like definitions—for example, the introduction of the term ‘non-Global Russians’ to describe those Russians who do not get assimilated in the Russian diaspora abroad, who do not “get globalized,” but form Brighton-Beach-type of neighborhoods (ibid). The term is obviously confusing and conceptually empty, which raises many questions: Do non-Global Russians tend not to blend in, that is, not to undergo assimilation in the host country, and does this automatically make them pro-Russian? Or do they avoid getting globalized, that is, fail to become adherents of the globalist ideology, actually cosmopolitans, but then what makes them different from Global Russians? What is their political orientation and how do they

pass the litmus test for their “attitude towards the state?” Are they loyal or oppositional, liberal or conservative? What are their other distinguishing features apart from non-assimilation and opposition to Global Russians? Without answering these and a number of other questions the use of the term ‘non-Global Russians’ in relation to the Russian diaspora will remain rather confusing.

In reality, contradictions in defining the Global Russians phenomenon can be eliminated, if it is correctly distinguished from the already existing terms ‘compatriots’ and the ‘Russian world,’ which describe both Russia’s political projects and the Russian foreign diaspora’s self-identification models.

Anton Tsvetov and Mikhail Suslov made a significant contribution to the further conceptualization of Global Russians. In his essay written in response to Alexander Kramarenko’s “accusations of being detached from grassroots, being incompetent and coming close to the betrayal of national interests,” Tsvetov emphasized that Global Russians’ important mission is to “create and maintain ties, search for the best in Russia to share it with the world and for the best in the world to share it with Russia” (Tsvetov, 2018). Mikhail Suslov, in his fundamental study of the evolution of the Russian diaspora and of the Kremlin’s official strategy in relations with it over the past twenty years, proposed a number of criteria for defining Global Russians and comparing them with other segments of the diaspora (compatriots, the Russian world): the attitude towards the Soviet legacy, Russian ethnicity, and Russian cultural affinity. According to Suslov, for Global Russians the first two criteria are irrelevant; only Russian cultural affinity remains the common denominator for all Russian emigrants. Furthermore, he provides a more complex description of Global Russians as “those who left Russia voluntarily ... and settled in the West for better economic conditions, quality of life or greater freedom of expression.” They are professionally successful in the host country, which is why “they do not seek Moscow’s protection” (Suslov 2017, p. 13). Suslov concludes that being incapable to control Global Russians, the Kremlin is seeking to downplay their importance and even alienate them and reinterpret them as “the traitors” of Russia.

The estrangement between the modern Russian authorities and Global Russians can be considered mutual. The author of the concept, Vladimir Yakovlev himself is even more pessimistic today: in an interview for *Zima* magazine, he claims that “today it is indecent to use the term ‘Global Russians,’” because it “sounds insulting to the people of those countries which are suffering today because of Russia’s actions.” In the end, he concludes that there are no more Global Russians, there are only refugees from Russia (Nikitina, 2017). This statement seems too emotional to be regarded as a declaration that the phenomenon of Global Russians is dead in reality: after all, despite their rejection by the present Russian government they still “live where they want” and “become part of any communities,” while “retaining bonds with Russian-speaking culture and remaining part of it themselves” and continue to search for “the best in Russia to share it with the world and for the best in the world to share it with Russia,” which is bigger than its political regime.

Today we can see quite a few Global Russians active at the international level—in business, politics, culture, science and sports. As examples, experts regularly cite Pavel Durov (VKontakte, Telegram), Sergei Guriev, and Vladimir Yakovlev himself (Suslov, 2017; Ivanchenko, 2018). Suslov also lists Sergei Brin (Google), Max Levchin (PayPal), and Stepan Pachikov (Evernote) among them (Suslov, 2017, p. 14). We would disagree with the last examples because Brin and Levchin left Russia (the USSR) in their childhood and do not display any special interest towards it either in their work or profession or in private life, while Pachikov openly positions himself as a cosmopolite. At the same time, we consider it possible to propose other examples—prose writer Lyudmila Ulitskaya, journalist Vladimir Pozner, tennis player Maria Sharapova, and physicists (both Nobel laureates) Andrei Geim and Konstantin Novosyolov. What are the criteria that enable us to include representatives of such different professions in one category of Global Russians?

To answer this question, to distinguish between Global Russians and cosmopolitans, and to define this phenomenon in the most complete way, let us turn to the theory of transnationalism.

Russia's entire discussion about them ran into the dead end of the "patriots-cosmopolitans" dichotomy, while the phenomenon of Global Russians went beyond it to remain misunderstood and underestimated.

In the era of globalization, diasporas around the world have gradually acquired the features of transnational actors. Transnationalism has become a new type of agency (Vertovec, 2009, p. 5), which turned out to be very close to emigrants, Creoles, children of a "third culture," strongly aware of their complex and multi-component identity. It is not synonymous with cosmopolitanism or even cultural hybridity, of which the entire history of its emergence and development is bright evidence. The term itself was introduced by Randolph Silliman Bourne, a left-wing American intellectual, writer and journalist, who at the beginning of the 20th century and under the influence of Horace Kallen's *Democracy Versus the Melting Pot* created a theory of American pluralism. Keen to overcome the problem of assimilation of emigrants into the Anglophile culture of the United States, he rejected the "melting pot" concept and propagated the idea of a transnational America, interpreting the history of the North American community as a history of ethnic diversity and racial dialogue among individuals (Akopov, 2015, p. 137). For him, transnationalism was associated "with the inner freedom of a person, the emancipation of the individual's spirit through communication and the establishment of friendly relations in order to overcome one's own provinciality," while the world's past according to him is "a history of individual meetings 'at the junction' of different cultures and their dialogue" (ibid, p. 138). The future of the United States is connected "with other countries by numerous threads of many kinds and colors" (quoted after Akopov, 2015, p. 139).

Sergei Akopov stresses that "Bourne's concept can hardly be attributed to an unequivocally cosmopolitan model," since it is "rooted in the North American culture and is not even devoid of a tinge of American messianism" (ibid, p. 139). Bourne was not destined to develop his theory. He died from the Spanish flu pandemic when he was just thirty-two. The idea of "transnationality" emerged from the

practical difficulties of assimilation and integration in the United States and became a kind of compromise among patriotism and cultural pluralism, nationalism, and pacifism. Moreover, up to the 1950s, the expression “transnational relations” was actually used as a synonym for international relations (ibid, p.140).

Subsequently, its usage narrowed. It began to be applied to a special type of international interaction, a variety of connections among various international actors (governmental and non-governmental—TNCs, NPOs and individuals) through diverse channels. In this regard, the very term ‘transnational’ was given various interpretations (economic, cultural, etc.). Here, what is important for us is the reflection of transnationality in the specific form of individuals’ self-identification. (According to Akopov (2015, pp. 26-29), *identification* as a process is a more correct term than the concept of static identity.) Identification becomes possible due to the features of a new technological era —“the emergence of network society, the growth of global information economy, worldwide expansion of the Internet, outspread of multilinguals, and the development of multiple political citizenships” (Akopov, 2015, pp. 152-164).

The features of transnational identification are well traced within the framework of the theory of political identification with macro-political community (developed by Russian scholar Olga Malinova (2012)). According to this theory, a person’s belonging to broader entities such as states helps internalize rules, norms, and values through solidarity that surmounts ideological boundaries. Identification with a macro-political community can go along different lines: national, civilizational, cosmopolitan or transnational. An important feature of the transnational level of identification is its compatibility and even connection with the national and civilizational levels: in fact, transnational identification does not contradict these levels, but rests upon them, combining the national and civilizational with the global (Akopov, 2015, p. 180).

The application of Malinova’s multilevel model (Table 1) to the Russian diaspora and to the international Russophile community

(the Russian world) resolves imaginary contradictions and eliminates terminological confusion.

**Table 1.**

| <b>Individuals, permanently residing outside Russia</b> | <b>Types of self-identification</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Compatriots   | National                            |
| Adherents of the Russian world                          | Civilizational                      |
| Cosmopolitans (who lost Russian roots)                  | Cosmopolitan                        |
| Global Russians   | Transnational                       |

The main criteria of compatriots and those who associate themselves with the Russian world are:

1. Russian ethnicity or “descendance of Russian historical nations” (this criterion is not mandatory for the Russian world)
2. Competence in Russian language and culture
3. Cultural self-identification as Russians/part of Russian civilization
4. Regular involvement in cooperation with modern Russia (including that at the state level)
5. Financial dependence on the Russian government (and, consequently)
6. Absence of critical assessment of Russia’s current policies.

As far as Global Russians are concerned, items 5 and 6 should be excluded and the following ones added:

1. Transnational identity
2. Global professional recognition
3. Intellectual and financial autonomy from the Russian government (which often results in critical assessment of Russia’s policies).

Similarities and distinctions between various segments of the Russian diaspora and the Russophile community today may look like this:

**Table 2.**

| <b>Characteristics:</b>                                       | <b>Russian Compatriots</b>    | <b>Russian world adherents</b> | <b>Global Russians</b> | <b>(‘Russian’) Cosmopolitans</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Russian ethnicity or descendant of Russian historical nations | +                             | optional                       | optional               | optional                         |
| Competences in Russian language and/or culture                | +                             | +                              | +                      | optional                         |
| Self-identification as Russians/part of Russian civilization  | +                             | +                              | +                      | no                               |
| Regular involvement in cooperation with Russia                | +                             | +                              | +                      | no                               |
| Intellectual/financial autonomy from Russian government       | no (professional compatriots) | no (since 2014)                | +                      | irrelevant                       |
| Professional recognition                                      | optional                      | optional                       | +                      | irrelevant                       |
| Transnational identity  | no                            | no                             | +                      | no                               |

It is important to note that Russian researchers such as Shchedrovitsky in his 2000 article *The Russian World and the Transnational Russian* (2000), as well as Zevelev (2008) have already written about the transnational nature of the Russian diaspora. Zevelev pointed out that the most effective strategy for the Kremlin would be “turning compatriots into an instrument of soft power and strengthening the transnational Russian world” (Zevelev, 2008). However, their ideas were not further developed either in Russian academic or political circles. Relevant works appeared in foreign “Russian transnational studies,” but their authors did not study the Global Russians segment.

The theoretical framework of transnationalism makes it possible to better understand the phenomenon of Global Russians as part of the Russian foreign diaspora and allows for formulating its definition as follows: “Global Russians are individuals who self-identify themselves with Russian civilization, promote Russian language and culture, even while not residing in Russia, and get involved in regular activities with Russian society; while their professional international recognition allows them to contribute to the world’s cultural, intellectual and

economic development, they are also characterized by having significant dispositions and abilities for ‘critical’ (reflective) thinking about Russian social developments, based on their wider exposure to alternative media, educational, travel and other transnational practices and experiences.”

The examples of Global Russians can be categorized as follows:

**Table 3.**

| <b>Type of Global Russians</b>                  | <b>Examples</b>   |
|---|---|
| Transnational artistic intelligentsia           | <b>Ludmila Ulitskaya (writer)</b><br><b>Alexei Serebryakov (actor)</b>  |
| Athletes  | <b>Maria Sharapova (tennis player)</b><br><b>Vyatcheslav Fetisov (hockey player)</b><br><b>Alexander Ovechkin (hockey player)</b>   |
| Businessmen                                     | <b>Pavel Durov (Telegram founder and CEO)</b><br><b>Grigory Guselnikov (former BIN-Bank top-manager, current owner of Norvik Banka)</b><br><b>Vladimir Yakovlev (journalist and businessmen in media)</b> |
| Scholars and transnational public intellectuals | <b>Sergei Guriev (professor at Sciences Po, Paris)</b><br><b>Andre Geim and Konstantin Novosyolov (Nobel Prize laureates in 2010)</b><br><b>Vladimir Pozner (journalist)</b>                              |

Obviously, the list is incomplete and could include many other examples of Global Russians that fall under the above criteria.

The Russian foreign diaspora, just like any other diaspora, is prone to transnationalization to one degree or another, as new means of communication and transport affect everyone in the world without exception. The Global Russians represent the most transnational part of the Russian diaspora, while its other parts may partially accept their transnationality and the globality of the world itself or intentionally reject them.

This article is one of the first modest attempts to clarify the little-studied phenomenon of Global Russians. Ageeva and Akopov (2021) studied the biographies of some Global Russians, which illustrates the correctness of the formulated criteria. However, the empirical research into the phenomenon of Global Russians should be continued, because many questions remain unanswered: Can Global Russians live

permanently in Russia itself? Can political emigrants and refugees be considered Global Russians? Likewise unclear are the positions of other segments of the Russian diaspora, which no longer associate themselves either with their compatriots or with the Russian world, but at the same time are not Global Russians, or cosmopolitans or assimilated members of the host community.

The lack of proper analysis based on field research, as well as the Kremlin's excessive politicization of relations with the Russian diaspora are the main obstacles to their mutually beneficial cooperation. The policy of expelling from the ranks all those who disagree or even simply criticize (in articles by Chepurin (2009) and Kramarenko (2018), they are perceived almost as enemies) leaves no room for developing a modern approach to compatriots around the world, for "accepting and understanding Russians abroad, both Global and non-Global, instead of turning away from them as traitors or alien elements" (Ivanchenko, 2018).

Today, there is a feeling that the chance to build a constructive relationship between Russia and Global Russians has been missed, although Russia has been oriented towards such economically successful and intellectually influential compatriots starting from the 1990s and still retained such orientation in 2009. Chepurin wrote that "only a community that is not assimilated or marginalized, but closely intertwined with and integrated into the socio-political life of the country of residence and capable of positively influencing the world around can become a full-fledged part of the global Russian world" (Chepurin, 2009). There still remains the hope for a joint evolution, on the one hand, of Russian society and politics, and on the other hand, of the Russian diaspora, which continues to "empathize with Russia's fate" and sometimes takes an active part in it—an evolution that will help build new bridges and open new windows of opportunity.

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