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Russkiy Mir (Russian World): An Exemplification of All-Russian Nationalism. The Strategy of Neo-Imperial Expansionism of the Russian Federation in Regional and Global Dimensions

Abstract: Purpose: The primary aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the Russian world (*russkiy mir*) as the main doctrine of neo-imperial expansionism. Russia consistently pursues the strategy of regaining influence in the post-Soviet area and, through the internationalization of the Russian world, seeks to achieve a dominant position on the European continent. The research problem is to analyze the extensive scope of influence of Russian ideology and the profound impact of this ideology on political and social processes taking place in other countries in Europe and the world. The impact through political and economic lobbying, propaganda, and informational operations of influence is extended not only to the area of the former USSR but also aimed at political circles and citizens of other European countries. Methods: The research optics adopted by the Author imply the use of the historical method of comparative and critical analysis of source texts. Result of the study: The analysis carried out leads to the conclusion that the ideology of the Russian world is expanding its sphere of influence mainly through propaganda and disinformation influence aimed at nationalist and Eurosceptic circles, including among representatives of the political elite of European countries identifying with such views.

Keywords: *Russian Federation, nationalism, Russian world, neo-imperial expansionism, political strategy*

Introduction

In this article, the Author delves into the strategic underpinnings of Russian nationalism, sometimes referred to as ‘all-Russian,’ its main components, and the spatial extent of this ideology. As noted in the title, *Russkiy mir*, or the Russian world, serves as a strategic concept that exemplifies the idea of Russia as a civilization center separate from Asian and Western

civilizations (Wierzbicki, 2015; Wasiuta, 2017). The Russkiy mir is a conceptual category that can be considered in both a narrow and broad sense. It is evident that it is not limited to the issue of cultural support for the Russian-speaking diaspora but is, in fact, a profoundly strategic cover for foreign economic and military expansion beyond the territory of the former Soviet Union, reaching into Europe and beyond.

All-pervasive expansionism determines the qualitative nature of the Russian political establishment's activities, whether on the political, economic, cultural, or military level. The first step to legitimizing direct political interference in another country's internal affairs is making claims regarding humanitarian issues. The priority is the requirement to "protect" the Russian language and the right to participate in the cultural life of the Russian-speaking population.

The next stage involves the activation of pro-Russian separatist political movements, which, in a relatively short period, "ask for fraternal help and protection," which gives consent sanctioned in Russian legislation for direct military intervention, as was the case in Crimea and Donbas. The Russian Federation consistently strives to strengthen its leading position in the post-Soviet area, and the element intended to ensure this is, among other things, "expanding its living space" by gradually regaining territories lost due to the collapse of the USSR. The scenario, referred to in the literature as "land gathering" (Pirozhkov, 2001), is related to territorial expansion and maintaining the acquired lands, which were part of the former empire. Imperial Tsarist Russia was created by expanding its territory and conquering new peoples and nations whose proximity to Russia became a necessity. The collapse of the USSR resulted in a significant reduction of the territory of the Russian Federation (to 17 million and 75 thousand km²) and caused the secession of many nations. A particularly severe loss is undoubtedly the newly created states west of the Russian border and the complete loss of extensive spheres of influence. The collapse of the USSR also resulted in a decrease in population, accompanied by a low birth rate among Russians, and what is even more serious is that this increase is much lower than in most nations inhabiting the Russian Federation. According to the assumptions of this scenario, Vladimir Putin was to become the main initiator and "modern tsar," whose primary mission was to rebuild Russia's international role and influence gradually.

Apart from territorial gains, these actions were primarily aimed at restoring the unity of the "Russian nation," sometimes also referred to as the "Russian-speaking community." The instruments intended to implement this concept effectively were to attempt to integrate the post-Soviet area within a tight bloc, such as the Eurasian Economic Union, or, in extreme cases, by creating a state entity covering at least part of this area. It is based on the discussed community of the "Russian world"; a priority political project is being implemented called the Eurasian Economic Union (Wiśniewska, 2013). Therefore, we can see that we are dealing with a multi-layered political strategy, covering the ideological, political, economic, military, and information dimensions.

Since 2004, we have observed a gradual evolution of the political strategy of the Russian Federation towards neo-imperial expansionism. It is because, in the 1990s, the Russian Federation declared its willingness to act as an “arbitrator” and “guarantor of stability” in the post-Soviet space (Orzechowski, 2013, p. 89). The policy pursued and is still being pursued by the Russian Federation, which, while defending the status quo in the post-Soviet area, tried to keep Ukraine and other former Soviet Union republics in its sphere of influence. The current military doctrine and security strategy of the Russian Federation formulate Moscow’s aspirations for total control in the region and rebuilding its superpower position (Orzechowski, 2015b, p. 188).

The analysis of this argument led the Author to use a structure in the article that reflects the issue-oriented and spatial scope of the influence of Russia’s neo-imperial expansionism in the ideological dimension. As the practice of operations shows, this ideology is an effective tool for complex influence operations carried out in European states. This is particularly true for those states that can effectively paralyze decision-making processes within the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. It is, therefore, essential to seek ‘ideological allies’ among European conservative and far-right groups whose leaders hold views that coincide with the ideology of the Russian world. The systemic impact of this ideology can be better seen by analyzing the attitudes of representatives of European political elites towards issues such as the war in Ukraine and the effects of liberalism and globalism on world politics. Therefore, the correlation between the internal and external circle of influence of the Russian world ideology will, in the Author’s opinion, be better seen in the structural view of the issue under discussion proposed below.

Russkij mir, Eurasianism, and the Putin Doctrine - the inner circle of influence of all-Russian nationalism

Wasiuta defines the *Russkiy mir* as the systemic, aggressive propagation of Russian imperialist ideas at the level of political symbols, language, and culture and a form of unlimited influence on people’s consciousness and behavior, using deliberate distortion of history (Wasiuta, 2017, p. 68). The *Russkiy mir* is perceived as a civilizational phenomenon on a regional, but above all, global scale because it is addressed to people who feel Russian regardless of where they live, are carriers of Russian culture and Russian language, and admit to a “spiritual connection with Russia” (Potulski, 2005, p. 27). In this sense, *Russkiy mir* is a concept having its origins in Eurasianism, understood as Russia’s ‘special way’ and civilization, opposed to the Euro-Atlantic one, identified primarily with the North Atlantic Alliance and democratic forces in the US political establishment (Bäcker, 2000, p. 182; Potulski 2005, p. 27). At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the leading ideologist of Eurasianism, as well as Russian neo-imperialism and traditionalism, was the philosopher and political scientist Alexander Dugin, who in 1988 became a member of one of the first

organizations of Russian nationalists – the National-Patriotic Front “Memory.” and in 2003 he organized the International Eurasian Movement, which included famous politicians and military figures. Alexander Dugin propagates the idea that particularly emphasizes the civilizational distinctiveness of Russia, the dominant power in Eurasia (Orzechowski, 2015a, pp. 270–271). The fundamental task facing the Russian nation is creating a great continental empire (Dugin, 2007). He also clearly expresses the thesis that this is supported by objective historical, geographical, ethnic, religious, and political arguments (Eberhardt, 2010, pp. 222–223). Roman Bäcker, assessing Alexander Dugin’s views against the background of other Russian concepts, claims that they are the basis of Russian global geopolitics: The most important element of the Eurasian way of thinking is geopolitics. Eurasian projects, according to Dugin, consist of close strategic integration of the CIS countries, which, to overcome US domination, should create a whole system of strategic alliances with some Arab states of North Africa and the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, China, and other Far Eastern countries located in the Pacific Ocean zone. (...) It is a program of expansive imperialism justified by the hostile nature of American mondialism. Still, it is primarily a not very disguised program of conquest, if not of the world, then at least a large part of it (Bäcker, 2003, pp. 263–273).

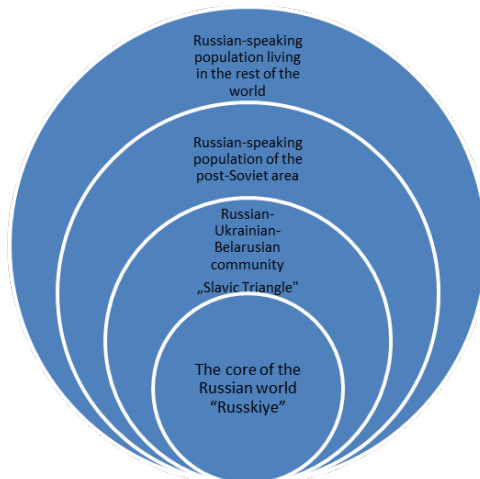
An analysis of Aleksandr Dugin’s works, including the Manifesto of the Great Awakening and the writings of the time of war, leads to several conclusions. Firstly, in this Author’s works, we are dealing with the multifaceted presence of a phenomenon described as Great Russian chauvinism: regardless of the historical moment, Russia, like the Messiah, is chosen by God and history to do ‘Great Things.’ These ‘Great Things’ are, first and foremost, territorial conquests in the name of providing ‘protection’ to the conquered peoples, thus achieving a higher level of spiritual development and a sense of belonging to the Great Empire.’ This has been the case in the past, and it is still the case today, where the fight against Ukrainian neo-Nazism gives social consent to the genocide and extermination of civilians.

Alexander Dugin expresses extreme views characteristic of Russian chauvinism. There is no room in them for empathy and understanding of the conquered peoples’ cultural traditions, let alone any cultivation of the traditions of statehood. The only acceptable unifying entity for the ‘Eurasian island of the world’ is the great Russia, whose guiding mission is the ultimate unification of Eurasia into one great empire. It is no accident that Alexander Dugin uses terms such as ‘world island’ or ‘heart of the land’ (Bäcker, 2023, pp.174–175). There is an apparent reference to Halford John Mackinder’s geopolitical concepts from the beginning of the last century. It is a kind of ‘projection’ intended by the Author to ‘mask’ the all-Russian, neo-imperialist, and chauvinist elements present in Dugin’s vision of the Eurasian world. This treatment is not practical, as all the aspects mentioned in the previous sentence are all too evident, not only in Dugin’s views but have an unusually suggestive effect on Putin’s vision of the world and the mighty propaganda machine that creates entire narrative lines based on the ideas mentioned above. In his passionate adoration of the neo-imperial Russia of the 21st century, Dugin even goes so far as to claim that only Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, can lead

the Russians themselves and other states toward the ultimate salvation of humanity from the corrupting influence of globalist liberalism as the greatest threat to traditional values such as gender identity, family, faith and empire. In such an interpretation, Russia appears as the incarnate good and the morally supreme state entity. According to the Author, the views expressed in the Manifesto of the Great Awakening represent the next most extreme, chauvinistic, and neo-imperialist stage in Alexander Dugin's thought development.

Dugin's concepts constitute an essential part of the so-called Putin Doctrines. The basis of Putin's doctrine is conservatism – the tradition of Russian Orthodoxy and distinctiveness from the West (Stępniewski, 2017, pp. 124–125). It refers not only to the experience of the Byzantine Empire but also to the achievements of the Russian Empire as a continuation of this idea. The starting point of the conceptual assumptions of the so-called “Putin Doctrine” is a vision of the world in which Russia plays the role of the center of the “Russian-speaking civilizational commonwealth.” This commonwealth takes the form of concentric circles; the basis of the first of them is the previously mentioned close bond connecting Russia with Ukraine and then with Belarus and other countries that emerged after the collapse of the USSR. Here, we can refer to the theory of concentric circles as an idea related to multi-stage and diversified European integration, aiming to achieve the economic and political unification of the entire continent. (Ruszkowski, 2010, pp. 7–27). According to this modified version of the theory of concentric circles, the core of this Russian world is the territory of the Russian Federation; the next circle is to become the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarusian commonwealth; its essential area: the Russian-speaking population of post-Soviet countries; and in the broadest sense, people living in various parts of the world and meeting the criteria mentioned above.

Figure 1. Russkiy mir – geopolitical concentric circles



Source: Own elaboration based on Menkiszak. 2014.

Initially, the “Russkiy mir” was the ideological basis for the geopolitical organization of the Eurasian Union, i.e., the restoration of the former Soviet Union in new conditions and environment, the most critical part of which was to be loyal to pro-Russian Ukraine (Putin, 2021). Much earlier, Russian chauvinist circles began to spread the all-Russian idea of uniting the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian nations into a unique (triune) Russian nation, sometimes also referred to as the so-called Slavic Triangle (Moshes, Nygren, 2002).

The “Russkiy mir” is also interpreted as the East Slavic civilizational pole (Pan-Slavism), remaining a counterweight to the European pole (Menkiszak, 2015). As a common “civilizational space,” it is based on three pillars:

- Moscow Patriarchate – a synonym of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), “Holy Russia,” which includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, as well as Kazakhstan and Moldova;
- Community of language and culture – a cultural and civilizational project, an alternative to the European Union;
- Historical memory covers the Middle Ages, the Romanov Empire, and the Soviet Union, defined as “common historical memory and common views on social development.”

Table 1. Pillars of the “Russian world”

Russian world		
Orthodox believers gathered around the Moscow Patriarchate	community of language and culture	historical memory

Source: Own elaboration based on Menkiszak. 2014.

Regarding the first pillar, the Russian Orthodox Church is considered the basis of universal Orthodoxy, and the Moscow Patriarchate is the only church that maintains authentic faith and uses ideology to unify the Ukrainian and Russian nations.

Putin himself mentioned that the Russian world also refers to the civilization sphere: the Eurasian Union is a project preserving the identity of nations and the historical Eurasian space in the new century and the new world.

As mentioned, the Russian Federation assumes the role of the sole guarantor and defender of the rights of the Russian-speaking population living in the former Soviet Union

republics. The inalienable right to protect people declaring Russian origin and identifying with the history, culture, and tradition of this country was a determinant and impulse for the actions we are observing in Ukraine after 24 February 2022, called a “special military operation.” Precisely understood that good neighborliness was replaced by the need to fight Nazism and defend “traditional values.” Vladimir Putin described its goal as the “denazification” and “demilitarization” of Ukraine. Russians “intervene” in Ukraine for their interest, in their defense, and defense of Ukrainian Russians, which means that Ukraine, in this concept, is only part of the Russian Empire, and Russia is a victim, not an aggressor. In this way, Putin refers to the idea of the “*Russkiy mir*” and tries to justify military aggression primarily with historical arguments (Putin, 2021).

The Russian Federation, as the modern ‘heir’ to the Russian superpower, is identified with the entire cultural-ethnic-political legacy of the Eurasian area. Thus, ‘the post-Soviet area should be exclusively under Russia’s strategic control,’ and there is no room for other centers of influence. In this situation, Ukraine’s potential accession to the North Atlantic Alliance or the European Union is a ‘fatal blow to Russia’s sovereignty’ (Bäcker, 2023, p. 175).

The right to use military force to protect the Russian-speaking population outside Russia came when the Kremlin recognized that there had been a severe violation of the security rules of Russian citizens and Russian soldiers stationed abroad. How former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych’s “request for help” was interpreted to justify military intervention, and the annexation of Crimea was presented as a result of the implementation of the “right of nations to self-determination,” as evidenced by the referendum (Menkiszak, 2015). However, in both cases, it was possible to notice the lack of efforts to maintain the legality of the actions and procedures used. It leads to the conclusion that in a situation where reliable legal and international legal argumentation cannot be used, the authorities of the Russian Federation use justification for the actions taken in the name of unwritten principles of equity and justice or possibly Russian legislation regarding the issue in question (Orzechowski, 2015b, p. 173).

How, then, to reconcile all-Russian nationalism with the struggle against Ukrainian fascism? The question is legitimate in analyzing Russian ideology’s so-called outer circle of influence. One has to agree with the opinion of Yuri Felshtinsky, a Russian historian and dissident, who believes that Putin, basing his doctrine on the Eurasianism of Alexander Dugin, has created a kind of ‘hybrid.’ Its nationalist and chauvinist character makes ‘*Russkiy mir*’ a form of National Socialism (Nazism), a Russian neo-imperialist, the geopolitical, cultural-historical idea of an international and inter-state community, united by attachment to Russia, the Russian language and culture, under the slogans of unity and protection of the bearers of the Russian language and culture, the Orthodox faith, a common historical memory and common views on social development.’ This is precisely how the ideologies of the Russian world are defined in the draft law ‘On the condemnation of communist and

national-socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols' submitted to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine back in late 2018.

Thus, we are dealing with a peculiar paradox; here, viewpoint elements characteristic of National Socialism have become ideological vehicles for values such as peace, religion, family, tradition, and history. And it is in the name of these values that the Russians are carrying out the mass extermination of the civilian population in Ukraine by razing both villages and larger towns to the ground and shelling critical infrastructure buildings and places such as schools, hospitals, and kindergartens. In such an interpretive narrative widely presented to the world by Russian propagandists and their supporters in other European countries, the 'special military operation' is, therefore, a 'glorious mission' to finally crack down on fascism and bring about world peace, or rather 'Russian peace.' The deliberate equivocation of the words 'peace' and 'world' is related to the semantic scope of the Russian word *mir*, which can mean both 'peace' and world.

Russian ideology's outer circle of influence – populism, disinformation and political lobbying

The Russian Federation's strategy of neo-imperial expansionism is not confined to the post-Soviet area. The reconstruction of the empire requires regaining gradual control over the former USSR area. This process is to take place in several stages, from the complete acquisition of control over the most strategically important territories, such as Ukraine, through the consolidation and expansion of spheres of influence in the former Soviet republics to regaining at least partial control over the countries of the Central European area and winning political allies in Western European states. This 'external circle of influence' is essential because of its ability to influence decision-making processes within the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. Given the ongoing war in Ukraine, these activities take on crucial importance in the context of both the aid provided to Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014. Russia, with its rich intelligence traditions combined with its ability to attract 'lobbyists' for its interests in various parts of Europe and the world, is broadening its instrumentation of influence, taking advantage of the fact that in the ideology of the Russian world, one can find many elements with which not only politicians but also representatives of various social groups identify. After all, criticism of globalist liberalism, the protection of traditional values enshrined in conservatism, and, finally, various populist slogans hitting immigrants, representatives of national, religious, or sexual minorities have a wide circle of supporters in practically every European country. Thus, crucial to the success of influence operations is the skillful combination of populist narrative, disinformation, and political lobbying, often linked to financial 'support,' which makes Russia capable of influencing opinion formation in many states' political and social space. One should not forget modern 'ICT tools,' the power of social media, or hacking attacks, which are part of hybrid

warfare. This provides a full spectrum of possibilities for undermining the unity of European states on many politically important issues, not only in the decision-making process at the supranational level but also shows how much influence can be gained on the results of parliamentary or presidential elections in individual states. The coordination of activities at several levels allows Russia to achieve the desired results of its influence operations.

For many years, Russia's actions in this regard have been directed against both the United States and leading European states. The aim of the external dimension of the strategy of neo-imperial expansionism is to challenge the coherence and effectiveness of the West as a normative force maintaining a global order based on universal principles rather than force. The critical country for the efficacy of this strategy in Europe is Germany. By weakening this country, Russia can effectively dismantle the European Union as an institution and the unity of European states, and it can seek to break the transatlantic bond between the Union and the United States. Ideological and, above all, political allies are needed to implement these actions effectively. As a result of ongoing 'special disinformation operations' based on the aforementioned populist slogans, identical to the ideological information narrative of pro-Russian activists and agents of influence, these allies can achieve excellent or outstanding electoral results, thereby facilitating Russian interests in Europe. The effectiveness of these actions can be seen, for example, at the EU level, where Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has repeatedly blocked various initiatives or even decisions that would hit Russian politics and the economy.

The influence of the ideological factor cannot be overestimated in situations where European politicians, both in their own countries and, for example, in the European Parliament, can lobby for solutions that would allow Russia to continue its hostilities in Ukraine and even escalate the conflict to other European countries. While in the 20th century, Moscow's European allies were recruited mainly from left-wing or communist groups, we have already seen a change in this trend for a dozen or so years, and the declared sympathy for Russia is visible, to a greater or lesser extent, mainly among the nationalist right-wing political parties. The idea of cooperation with far-right political parties appeared in the Kremlin in 2008, when some representatives of the Hungarian Jobbik party supported the Russian intervention in Georgia. Populist groups in Bulgaria and Slovakia also sided with Russia. Since then, Russia's propaganda influence has managed to reach and find centers willing to cooperate in Western Europe.

Nationalist and ultra-radical political movements in Europe hold a special place on the list of information influence channels of strategic importance. Front National in France, UKIP and BNP in the UK, AfD in Germany, Jobbik in Hungary, Latvijas Krievu Savienība in Latvia, Ataka in Bulgaria, Forza Italia in Italy – these are just some of the organizations from the long list of those that the Kremlin finances, not only their activities and election campaigns but also the media belonging to them. Moscow is estimated to spend no less than \$200 million on such support (Połoński, 2017).

The French National Rally (Rassemblement National), the Italian League (Lega), the Austrian FPÖ, the Hungarian Fidesz, and the German AfD – many far-right political parties lobbied against the introduction of sanctions against Russia, considering it a threat to the national interests of their own countries, or even—as it has been put once by Viktor Orban – the Hungarian *raison d'état* (Połoński, 2017).

Pro-Russian lobbying in Europe has a long tradition, especially since Vladimir Putin's rule started. Starting with Gerhard Schröder, the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, who was one of the first leading European politicians to befriend the Russian president, publicly calling him a 'clean as a whistle democrat' through former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Karin Kneissl, who served as Foreign Minister of Austria from 2017–2019 to Viktor Orban and current Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico on several occasions. Such political allies of politicians in essential positions in European countries strongly influenced political decisions more than parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition groups. For some European politicians, good contacts with the Russian leader provided the opportunity to obtain well-paid positions in Russian institutions. It was the case for Schröder, who, after leaving office as Chancellor, took up a position on the Russian-controlled Nord Stream consortium's supervisory board and sat on Russian energy companies' supervisory boards. Karin Kneissl, on the other hand, took over the leadership of the 'Geopolitical Observatory on Russia's Key Problems, a think tank at St Petersburg State University in 2023.

The biggest challenge from an ideological and political lobbying point of view is the upcoming European Parliament elections for Russia. 9 June 2024 is a significant date regarding the distribution of political forces in the European Parliament. Eurosceptic conservative and extreme right-wing forces want to achieve the best possible result; hence, not only the electoral activity of these political forces but also their mutual support should not come as a surprise, as evidenced by the convention of the Spanish Vox party. This extreme nationalist party preaches anti-women, homophobic, and anti-EU slogans. Guests included Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Viktor Orban. Many of the slogans and demands inherent to the electoral programs of these groups dovetail perfectly with the nationalist and anti-immigrant slogans proclaimed as part of the ideology of the Russian world and the need to combat global liberalism, which poses many threats to Europe.

The cooperation of European nationalists with Russia is based on the fight against a common enemy, which is, first of all, the European Union, as well as moderate political groups on both the right and the left side criticizing the government in Moscow and primarily the actions in Ukraine. Also, on the Polish political scene, it is possible to find groups that, using anti-Ukrainian rhetoric, tried to build their political capital and increase support before the parliamentary elections.

In addition to political lobbying, an essential instrument of influence is the activity of Russian associations, which are supposed to promote cultural and historical cooperation

and serve as a platform for organizing more or less official meetings of representatives of the scientific and artistic community and European politicians. An example of such an organization is the Saint Basil's Charity Foundation, founded in 2007 by Konstantin Malofeev, a Russian businessman described in the media as an 'Orthodox oligarch.' He has previously supported separatist groups in the Donbas in various ways. He is now known primarily for his financial support of right-wing and nationalist groups in European countries. This activity is carried out, among other things, through the Foundation's statutory activities, and its beneficiaries include the Northern League, an extreme Italian party headed by Matteo Salvini. In addition to symposia, conferences, and round tables to which politicians from extreme European political parties, such as the German AfD, are invited, Malofeyev also finances numerous projects through his Cargrad media company. Malofeyev greatly supports Eurasianism, as observed by Aleksandr Dugin, and considers Putin an outstanding statesman who 'should rule in half of the European countries'.

Conclusions

A vital element legitimizing the Russian ideological narrative is the declarations of politicians who supported the annexation of Crimea, considering it legitimate (Matteo Salvini, Marine Le Pen). The same is true of the war in Ukraine. The ideological success of the Russian narrative is to convince not only European politicians but also public opinion in European countries of the futility of continuing to support Ukraine and escalating the conflict. Hence, the 'anti-war' demonstrations, including in Poland, illustrate the scale of influence of Russian ideological content skillfully integrated into information narratives disseminated willingly in many European countries.

To sum up the considerations in this paper, it should be stated that the "Russkiy mir" is a crucial element of the strategy of neo-imperial expansionism, consistently implemented by the Russian Federation for many years. As M. Delong rightly notes, it is based on the exclusivity of the Russian civilization world and Russian spirituality, the unique messianic role of Russian Orthodoxy, and the right to political and cultural expansionism (DeLong, 2020, p. 62).

In the post-Soviet area, it involves the use of military force, as in the case of Ukraine, further concentric circles are an area of influence of an informational, propaganda, economic, and political nature. There is no doubt that Russia is exceptionally effective in infiltrating political circles on the European continent. In most cases, these are political parties that contain Eurosceptic elements in their programs and, at the same time, have a negative attitude towards national and ethnic minorities. By supporting nationalist and Eurosceptic political parties, Vladimir Putin seeks to politically destabilize Europe, which in the long run may slow down or even completely block the process of further enlargement of the European Union. A change of power in some European countries could strengthen the "Eurosceptic wing" in the European Parliament, allowing Russia to influence the decision-

making process in the EU indirectly. That is why it is so important to influence and control centers of influence in neighboring countries through disinformation and propaganda activities, which, combined with financial support, gives Russia a powerful instrument to influence the political situation in individual European countries.

In the current conditions, the political technology of the “Russkiy mir” is an essential source of exacerbating separatist sentiments and supporting the ideological platform of the activities of extremist organizations. The propaganda of the idea of “Russkiy mir” aims to shape mass social awareness in a way that benefits the Kremlin’s decision-making center. In the case of Ukraine, it also served to prepare a platform for full-scale military aggression.

It has long been known that Vladimir Putin is waging a hybrid war against European democracies. However, some European political and opinion-forming circles seem to forget about it or marginalize Russian actions. He has found valuable allies and agents of influence in far-right political movements and leaders across the continent. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the threat posed by Russian neo-imperialism not only on a regional scale but also (and perhaps above all) globally.

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