

RUSSIAN POLITICAL MIGRANTS' RESPONSES TO RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE: ENGAGEMENT INTO ANTI-WAR AND HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIVITIES

DSA Ireland seminar „The war against democracy and civil society: voices from Ukraine, Russia
and Poland”

27 April 2022

Dr Joanna Fomina
European Studies Unit
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences

INTRODUCTION

- **Follow-up** to my research project (2017-2019) on the interplay between migration and democratization based on the analysis of pro-democratic (anti-Kremlin regime) participation of Russian diasporic and migrant communities after 2011 following Kremlin's increased persecutions against the democratic opposition and civil society. The results published in:
 - *Political Dissent and Democratic Remittances. The Activities of Russian Migrants in Europe* (Routledge 2022)
 - Migration context as a springboard for continuing/engaging into pro-democratic participation, often not possible „back home“.
 - The working definition of „democratic remittances“ – the act of transnational transferring of norms, values, practices, social capital and material and non-material resources in support of the home country's democratization of its political system, its society and the culture that informs social and political institutions and popular orientations.
 - The analysis of actors, their mobilization trajectories, channels of remitting, the role of transnational context, and perceived impacts of democratic remittances by Russians in EU
- **Methods:** - qualitative interviews, social media analysis, table desk research

“RESPONSIBLE EMIGRATION”: VOICE AFTER EXIT

„Responsible emigration” – the idea that (political) migrant activists not only can, but also must engage in anti-Kremlin regime activities from abroad.

Areas of pro-democratic participation of Russian migrants in the EU:

- free and fair elections;
- human rights and civil freedoms;
- fighting corruption;
- environmental protection;
- counteracting Russian state propaganda;
- **anti-war activities** (since 2014) – the **FOCUS** of this presentation

RESEARCH METHODS

Based contacts and sources cultivated within the past project:

- 12 interviews with Russian migrants engaged in anti-war activities (mainly in Poland, including 8 former interviewees and 4 migrants who arrived after 2019);
- Analysis of social media groups on Facebook, Telegram and Signal;
- Analysis of Russian migrant organizations in the EU.
- Table desk research.

ACTORS

- Russian migrant NGOs, informal initiatives (mobilization usually through social media groups); individuals.
- The main hubs of organised opposition movements are now abroad, in particular in the EU MSs, the US, Georgia.
- All of the 75 Russian migrant activists in EU interviewed for the past research project have been also engaged in activities related to the

ANTI-WAR ACTIVITIES BY RUSSIAN MIGRANTS

- The **three dimensions** of Russian migrants' anti-war activities:
- the **material** (both financial and non-financial) (money collections for the Ukrainian army, humanitarian help to Ukrainian population, Ukrainian refugees
- the **symbolic**; and
- the **informational**.

THE MATERIAL DIMENSION

- money collections for the Ukrainian army, humanitarian help to Ukrainian population, Ukrainian refugees;
- Collection, dispatch and distribution of humanitarian help;
- Reception and transportation of refugees from from the Polish-Ukrainian border
- Providing or helping to find with accomodation to refugees;
- Free legal, psychological and translation and interpreting help;
- Free language courses;
- Free assistance at local reception and registration centers.



Russians who left Russia at various different times

Peace, that is, victory to Ukraine in this war!

We are helping the Ukrainian people to be victorious in this war

THE SYMBOLIC DIMENSION

- Organization and participation in anti-war rallies, marches and flash mobs.
- The creation of the new Russian symbols, in particular **the new White-Blue-White flag** of the democratic and antimilitaristic „Russia of the future“. The Blue-White-Blue flag has united pro-democratic Russians abroad and in Russia. It was banned in Russian Federation on accounts of being an „extremist symbol“ in March 2022.
- The flag is a symbol “of peace and freedom”. “Why is the new symbol important? Because it frees Russians of their ties to the Kremlin. By showing this flag, we – Russians – can say no to the war, no to dictatorship, and no to censorship. This isn’t the symbol of a state, it’s a symbol of people joining together.” (The Free Russia Forum in Vilnius)
- “Unfortunately, the Russian tricolour has been completely appropriated by the state propaganda and the military. (...) We needed a flag that had no connection to violence and war.” (Russian activist in Cyprus, The Guardian)

"It is as if someone threw white paint over the red, over the bloodshed that is going on," (a Russian activist, the *Guardian*).





THE INFORMATIONAL, ANTI-PROPAGANDA DIMENSION

- The engagement of Russian migrant journalists, bloggers, social scientists, analysts and activists in the media who cover the war and provide alternative to the Kremlin propaganda media
- Selected Russian migrant media outlets:
 - **The Insider**, Roman Dobrokhoto
 - **Newsader**, Alexandr Kushnar
 - **Cyprus Daily News**
 - **Article 20**, Alexei Kozlov
 - **Spektr.Press (Riga)** Anton Lysenkov
 - **The Riddle**, online journal, Olga Irisova, Anton Barbashin
 - **ARU TV**, (and youtube channel, Riga), Pavel Morozov
 - **Open Media**, Yulia Yarosh
 - **The Unit** (Berlin) Pavel Gafarov, Ali Feruz
 - **Activatica (Tallin)**, Mikhail Matveev, Evgenia Chirikova
 - **R.Politik**, (Paris) Editorial manager and owner: Tatiana Stanovaya
 - **Dossier Centre, (London?)** Supported by Mikhail Khodorkovsky
 - **My Russian Rights (MMR), Berlin**, Youtube channel, Olga Romanova

«Люди везде бывают добрые и...»Pochodzi z Rosji, w Przemysłu po...Журналистка The Insider Оксана...+

theins.ru/politika/249572

MessengerGoogle Mail - Ode...Zaloguj do Synergii...(14) poczta.nazwa.p...Strona główna | Sta...SR 47 Long time re...Migration data in E...Ćwiczenia na płaski...

THE INSIDER

РАССЛЕДОВАНИЯ
РЕПОРТАЖИ
АНАЛИТИКА


USD
84.09

EUR
93.70

OIL
106.03

ПОДДЕРЖИТЕ НАС

English



ПОЛИТИКА

Журналистка The Insider Оксана Баулина погибла под обстрелом в Киеве

The Insider
23 марта 2022


108179

120

85

Журналистка The Insider Оксана Баулина погибла под обстрелом в Киеве при выполнении

Wpisz tu wyszukiwane słowa



5°C ^ 📶 🗣️ 📶 РУС 13:21
31.03.2022 7

DOES THIS REALLY MATTER?

- Democratic resilience – keeping up opposition voices, even if from a distance (-the activists corps, the self-identity, self-therapeutical dimension)
- Space for any anti-war engagement: while anti-war activities in Russia put at risk their freedom and even lives, criticism of the Putin's regime and support for its victims is much easier from the relative safety provided by the EU MSs' residence.
- Contributing to the eventual fall of the autocratic regime in Russia is one reason. Counterbalancing the nationalist, xenophobic and militaristic engagement of Russian diaspora, particularly in selected EU states, including Germany or Latvia is another.
- Being the backbone of any possible future rapprochement between the Ukrainian, European and Russian societies. Russian migrants do not act in a vacuum, but often co-operate with European and Ukrainian volunteers, organizations, media outlets.
- Moreover, the presence of migrant voices and participation in the public sphere is also key for democratic societies of the EU countries.