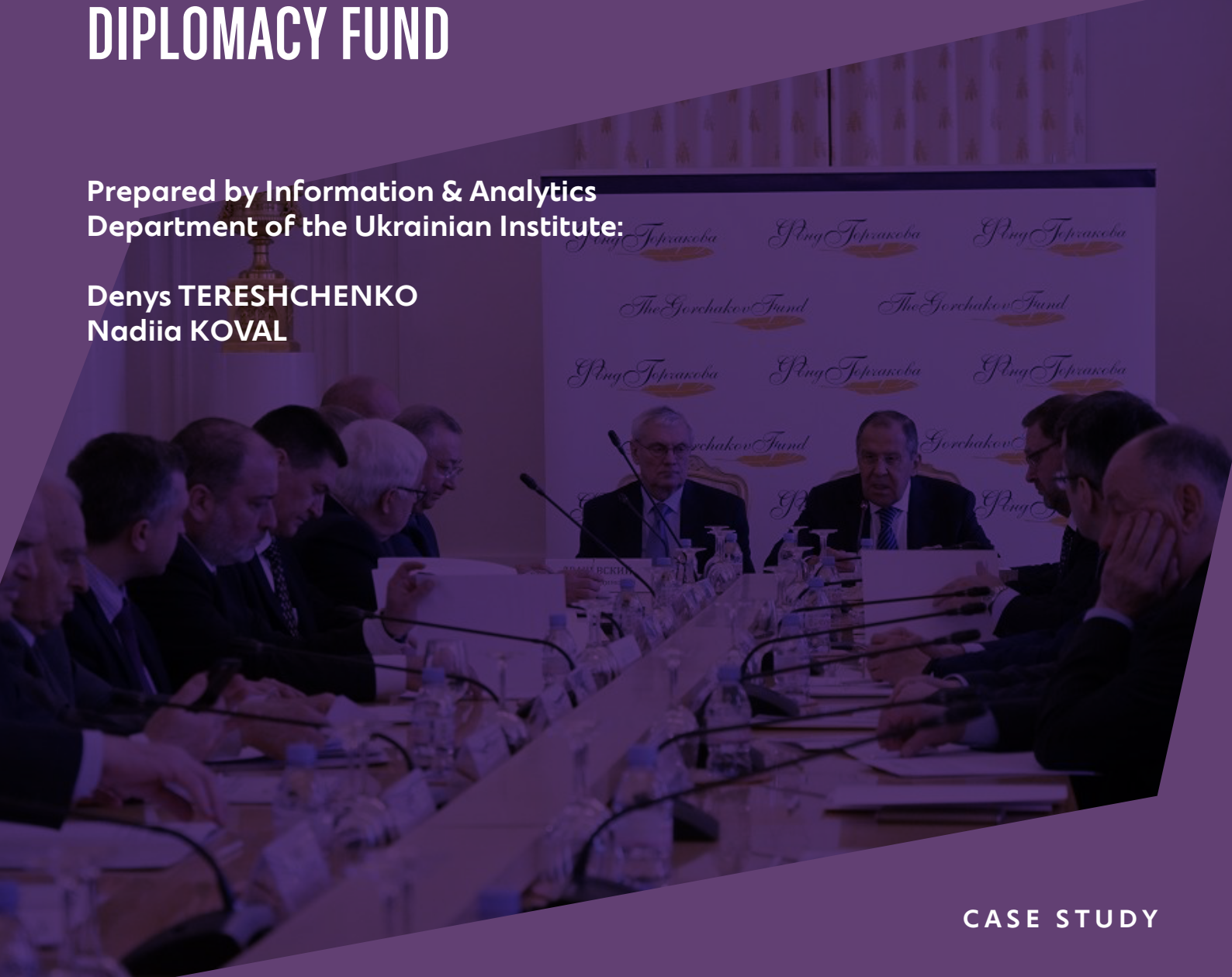


# FIRST ROUBLES, THEN GUNS:

## THE ALEXANDER GORCHAKOV PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FUND

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Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Alexander Gorchakov  
Public Diplomacy Fund on March 27th, 2019.

Source: <https://russkie.org/news/fond-gorchakova-utverdil-prioritetnye-napravleniya-raboty-na-2020-god/>

## ▶ **FIRST ROUBLES, THEN GUNS: THE ALEXANDER GORCHAKOV PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FUND**

**The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund** is a Russian government-controlled non-governmental organisation tasked with developing and disseminating pro-Kremlin foreign policy narratives, both within the country and among foreign audiences. The Fund allocates grants for projects of young professionals in international relations, political science, economics, history, or journalism. Those projects deal with the topic of public diplomacy but also align well with the Russian foreign policy priorities. Another component of the Fund's activities is its own projects and events, such as summer schools or conferences on international affairs in certain regions. Via its academic and educational programs, the Fund nurtures a network of young professionals likely to become the next generation of political elites in Russia and abroad, educating them in Kremlin policy narratives. In addition, through larger events at a higher political level, such as the regular Potsdam Meetings between Russian and German parliamentarians, the Fund supports initiatives that foster rapprochement between Russian and European politicians in the framework of the Kremlin's global «security architecture» revision policy. Although the Fund's activities are relatively limited, its indoctrinating impact may resurface in future generations of politicians in Russia and other countries.

# CONTENTS

<b>In the name of chancellor Gorchakov: Russia collecting itself</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Inter pares: Gorchakov Fund in the ecosystem of (pro-) government public diplomacy organisations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>An unequal battle with Europe? The Fund's own activities and projects</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Dialogue with an eye to the future</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>On the approaches to Berlin: the Potsdam meetings</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Grants à la russe: financial support of individual projects</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Limited geography, modest achievements: representative offices abroad</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>The Fund's rhetoric after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>30</b>

# In the name of chancellor Gorchakov: Russia collecting itself

And he alone continued the brave battle,  
the unequal battle with Europe.

Fyodor Tyutchev, *For the Jubilee of Prince Alexander Gorchakov*

The figure of Alexander Gorchakov, Russia's Foreign Minister and «the last chancellor» of the Empire, has gained popularity among the Russian international relations professionals since the early 2000s, in the wake of rethinking of the Russian Empire's historical heritage and under the sway of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister **Yevgeny Primakov**<sup>1</sup>. This appropriation of Gorchakov's legacy by Russian elites can be explained by the fact that they found striking parallels between the context in which he put forward his own foreign policy concepts and the foreign policy challenges faced by Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>2</sup>.

Alexander Gorchakov became Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire in 1856, immediately after Russia's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War and the signing of the Peace Treaty of Paris imposed by the great Western powers. Under its terms, Russia was losing influence in the Black Sea region and European affairs in general. One of the major blows to its prestige was the disposal of the right to keep warships and arsenals in the Black Sea. Gorchakov proposed a revanchist foreign policy doctrine, summarised in one of his most popular quotations: «*Russia is not sulking, Russia is collecting itself*» (*La Russie ne boude pas. La Russie se recueille* as the original diplomatic dispatch, written in French, put it).

**The collapse of the Soviet Union, described by Putin as «the greatest tragedy of the 20th century», has been a starting point for Russia's new revanchist policy since the early 2000s.**

«Collecting oneself» in the doctrine of Gorchakovism meant Russia's need for internal reforms to demand a revision of the regional «security architecture»

1 Braun, Aurel (2009). NATO and Russia: Post-Georgia Threat Perceptions. IFRI Russia/NIS Center. <https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifrirussianatobraunengavril09.pdf>. P. 10.

2 Splidsboel-Hansen, F. (2002). Past and Future Meet: Aleksandr Gorchakov and Russian Foreign Policy. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 54(3), 377–396. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/826482>.

after restoring its state power. Another vital aspect of Gorchakovism was the need to reduce the perception of the threat from Russia among other great powers<sup>3</sup>. The greatest, though somewhat limited, successes of Gorchakovism were enhanced cooperation with Prussia (attempts to attract France were less successful) and the remilitarisation of the Black Sea in 1870.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, described by Putin as «the greatest tragedy of the 20th century», has been a starting point for Russia's new revanchist policy since the early 2000s. The semantic framework of Gorchakovism has been of great use to it. Russia demanded «new inclusive security architecture» while developing bilateral political and economic relations with some Western countries, especially France and Germany. This was accompanied by attempts to split the transatlantic unity between the US and the EU by actively supporting the idea of European strategic autonomy from the US in its security and defence policies. Promoting these and related discourses has been at the heart of Putin's public diplomacy when working with Western political leaders, prominent researchers and analysts, and the youth who wanted to join those circles. The choice of Gorchakov as a patron for an organisation that should guide and fund this policy was quite logical.

Finally, the persistent Russian baculine arguments favouring a new revanchist order soon acquired a practical dimension with the Russo-Georgian war, the occupation of Ukrainian Crimea, the start of the war in the Donbas, and now the full-scale war against Ukraine<sup>4</sup>. No wonder Vladimir Putin last quoted Gorchakov's «Russia is not sulking, Russia is collecting itself» at a press conference on December 23rd, 2021, in response to a question about a possible war with Ukraine<sup>5</sup>, just two months before the attack.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 381.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 384.

<sup>5</sup> Big press conference of Vladimir Putin. The official website of the President of the Russian Federation. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67438>. (In Russian).

# Inter pares: Gorchakov Fund in the ecosystem of (pro-) government public diplomacy organisations

The **Alexander Gorchakov** Public Diplomacy Fund was established as a «non-governmental organisation» by order of Russian President **Dmitry Medvedev** dated February 2nd, 2010, No.60-RP, and is de-facto subordinated to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A former diplomat, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, **Leonid Drachevsky** has been the Fund's Head since its foundation. Curiously, more than a third of the budget of this «non-governmental organisation» is provided by the federal budget, and unnamed individuals supply the rest. Thus, the Gorchakov Fund is an example of what social scientists call a **GONGO** (Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation). Authoritarian regimes like Russia use GONGOs to promote the government's agenda in the civil sector while creating a semblance of legitimacy for these organisations as non-governmental structures. One of the two areas of the Gorchakov Fund's activities is the allocation of grants for NGO projects. Via this tool, so was it planned<sup>1</sup>, the Fund could closely coordinate the activities of Russian and foreign NGOs promoting Russia's public diplomacy efforts by defining priority areas of their work in strict accordance with government priorities<sup>2</sup>.

**The goal had to be achieved via the support of Russian public diplomacy activities, the encouragement of Russian non-governmental organisations to cooperate with foreign counterparts, and the active involvement of civil society institutions in the foreign policy processes.**

As stated on the official website, the Fund's goal is to encourage Russian public diplomacy development and promote a favourable social, political, and business climate for Russia abroad<sup>3</sup>. The Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> "Public Diplomacy Has Great Potential" (June 7th, 2012). Rosbalt. <https://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2012/06/07/990104.html>. (In Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Greg Simons (2018) The Role of Russian NGOs in New Public Diplomacy, Journal of Political Marketing, 17:2, 137-160, DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2018.1447755. P. 152, 157.

<sup>3</sup> Mission and Tasks of Gorchakov Fund. Website of Gorchakov Fund (retrieved from Wayback Machine on October

of the Fund also formulated it as «creating a *proper image of Russia* and of our national and cultural values in the eyes of the world community» (italics are by us – Authors)<sup>4</sup>. The goal had to be achieved via the support of Russian public diplomacy activities, the encouragement of Russian non-governmental organisations to cooperate with foreign counterparts, and the active involvement of civil society institutions in the foreign policy processes<sup>5</sup>. The Fund's target audience is young scholars and researchers from the «near abroad», i.e., in Kremlin parlance Russia's neighbouring countries, with particular attention to the countries that were previously part of the USSR. The Fund's two major domains of activities are conducting its **own events** (public lectures, conferences, courses, schools) and providing **grant support** for projects of Russian non-governmental organisations dealing with public diplomacy.

In fact, the Fund, through the distribution of grants and its educational activities, has been creating an interconnected network of experts who are carriers of views and ideas about Russia that are complementary to the Kremlin and who, in the future, can spread these views in their countries. This network is institutionalised in the «Gorchakov Club» (see below the section on the Fund's own projects). This scheme is supposed to facilitate the adoption of decisions favourable to Russia in the foreign capitals.

The Gorchakov Fund is not the only non-governmental organisation closely associated with the government that promotes Kremlin discourses and narratives among the Russian and foreign think-tanks and academic circles. The junction of the Fund with both Russia's hierarchy of governance and the horizontal ecosystem of similar non-governmental organisations are its governing bodies, **the Board**, which carries out the operational management of activities, and the **Board of Trustees**, holding the supervisory function. The **Board** also has an **Expert Council** that defines priority areas for the funds' allocation and prepares recommendations on grant applications. An **Academic Council** ensures the participation of the academic community in public diplomacy projects and «analyses the Fund's research projects». Together, as we assume, their task is to oversee the ideological compliance of the Fund's activities with the foreign policy goals of the country's leadership.

According to the order of the President of the Russian Federation

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16th, 2021). <https://web.archive.org/web/20211016021825/https://gorchakovfund.ru/about/mission/>. (In Russian).

**NB:** The official website of the Gorchakov Fund (<https://gorchakovfund.ru/>), as well as a number of webpages of other state institutions of the Russian Federation, which were the main sources for this paper, were not available from the territory of Ukraine completely or partially, or have been removed as of March – early April 2022. To access the relevant data, we had to use the Web Archive resource or view the cache in Google.

4 Executive Director's Address. Website of the Gorchakov Fund (retrieved from Wayback Machine for October 15th, 2021). <https://web.archive.org/web/20211015221743/https://gorchakovfund.ru/about/appeal/>. (In Russian).

5 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 60-RP dated February 2, 2010 (amended as of October 19th, 2011) "On the Establishment of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund". THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION CODIFICATION. <https://rulings.ru/president/Rasporyazhenie-Prezidenta-RF-ot-02.02.2010-N-60-rp/>. (In Russian).



establishing the Fund, its Board of Trustees is formed by persons recommended by the Russian Foreign Ministry, «interested federal executive bodies», the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, the media, as well as civil society organisations.

As a result, the Fund's Board of Trustees, legally a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, is chaired by Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**, who personally attends its meetings. Moreover, the Fund receives allocations from the federal budget via the budget programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the Fund's Board includes **Konstantin Kosachev**, an ideologue of Russian foreign policy, former director of Rossotrudnichestvo (the government body responsible for shaping Russia's positive image abroad), chairman of the Federation Council's Committee on International Affairs, and since 2021 – Deputy Head of the Federation Council of Russia (upper house of parliament)<sup>6</sup>. The Russian hierarchy of governance is also represented in the Fund by the advisor to the President of Russia on foreign policy issues **Yuri Ushakov** and members of the Russian Parliament, **Alexandr Karelin** and **Suleyman Kerimov**.

The **Board of Trustees** also includes **Yevgeny Primakov** (the grandson of his namesake, former prime minister, and foreign minister), head of **Rossotrudnichestvo**, **Anatoly Torkunov**, the rector of the **Moscow State Institute of International Relations**, as well as several Russian oligarchs, possibly financial supporters of the Fund<sup>7</sup>.



Head of Rossotrudnichestvo and, in combination, a member of the Fund's Board of Trustees **Yevgeny Primakov** (on the left) gives the Fund's Head **Leonid Drachevsky** a departmental award «For the Strengthening of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation». March 25th, 2022.

[Photo from the Gorchakov Fund's website](#)

<sup>6</sup> Konstantin Kosachev is, among other things, the author of an important text for Russia's foreign policy discourse, where he substantiates the importance of so-called "compatriots" for Russia's foreign policy in the "near abroad". Kosachev, Konstantin (2004). Foreign Policy Vertical. Russia in Global Politics, No.3. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/vneshnepoliticheskaya-vertikal/>. (In Russian).

<sup>7</sup> Smagliy, Kateryna (2018). Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in Moscow, Europe and the U.S. A Case Study on Think Tanks and Universities. Institute of Modern Russia. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f8f41ef14aa13b95239af0/t/5c6d8b38b208fc7087fd2b2a/1550682943143/Smagliy\\_Hybrid-Analytica\\_10-2018\\_upd.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f8f41ef14aa13b95239af0/t/5c6d8b38b208fc7087fd2b2a/1550682943143/Smagliy_Hybrid-Analytica_10-2018_upd.pdf). P. 20.

Horizontal links with related organisations are represented through mutual membership of their representatives in their counterparts' governing bodies. For instance, the Board of Trustees of the Gorchakov Fund brings together **Igor Ivanov** (the President of the **Russian International Affairs Council**<sup>8</sup>, RIAC, a think-tank that disseminates Kremlin-friendly foreign policy narratives); **Alexander Bessmertnykh**, Head of the **World Council of Former Foreign Ministers**<sup>9</sup> **Viktor Kamyschanov**, President of the **Federation of Peace and Conciliation**<sup>10</sup> as well as **Vladimir Yakunin**, Head of the Board of Trustees of the **Fund of St. Andrew the First-Called**<sup>11</sup> and the **Centre of National Glory of Russia**. The links between the organisations are close and, importantly, reciprocal. Thus, for example, **Leonid Drachevsky** is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the RIAC since 2011.

Even though the Russian state broadly supports the Gorchakov Fund, the share of allocations flowing directly from the federal budget is not very large compared to what other similar structures receive. Thus, according to the pro-government Russian media RBC that analysed the data obtained from the official government portal of the Russian Federation *spending.gov.ru*, out of the Fund's budget of 102.1 million roubles (about 1.3 million US dollars<sup>12</sup>), only 48.4 million roubles (about 614 000 US dollars) came directly from the federal funding in 2016. In that year, the Fund received 38.8 million roubles (492 000 US dollars), or 38%, from the unnamed «Russian organisations and citizens»<sup>13</sup>. From 2014 to 2019, the amount of federal budgeting for the Fund remained at about 50 million roubles (634 000 US dollars)<sup>14</sup>. Still, in 2020, according to *spending.gov.ru*, the Fund received a subsidy from the Russian Foreign Ministry of more than 171 million roubles (about 2.17 million US dollars)<sup>15</sup>. In addition, it is noteworthy that at least in

**The Gorchakov Fund is well integrated into the partnerships between the Russian regime and oligarchs.**

8 Website of the Russian International Affairs Council. <https://russiancouncil.ru/>. (In Russian).

9 Alexander Bessmertnykh on the website of the Russian International Affairs Council. <https://russiancouncil.ru/aleksandr-bessmertnykh/>. (In Russian).

10 Federation of Peace and Conciliation on the website of the Russian International Affairs Council. <http://ir.russiancouncil.ru/organisations/ifpc/>. (In Russian).

11 Website of the Fund of St. Andrew the First-Called (retrieved from Wayback Machine on March 25th, 2022). <http://fap.ru/>. (In Russian).

12 Hereinafter, the U.S. dollar equivalent of sums in roubles is calculated in accordance with the exchange rate of U.S. dollar to the rouble as of February 22nd, 2022, at the Wall Street Journal Markets website. <https://bank.gov.ua/ua/markets/exchangerates?date=22.02.2022&period=daily>.

13 Saving on "Soft Power". Russia to Cut Spending on Foreign Policy Agenda (July 24th, 2017). RBK Newspaper. <https://www.rbc.ru/newspaper/2017/07/24/59723c879a794741088d42d8>.

14 Ibid.

15 All subsidies of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund (retrieved from Webcache Google on February 3rd,

2017, one of the Fund's key events, **Dialogue for the Future**, was held at least with a partial financial contribution from a grant from the President of the Russian Federation, which was provided by the Presidential Grants Fund «for the civil society development»<sup>16</sup>.

In 2015, the Fund's executive director boasted that the share of public funding in the organisation's budget was declining<sup>17</sup>. However, non-state funding sources are unknown since the Fund does not publish information about donors. Most likely, those are the oligarchs and heads of big state enterprises represented in the Fund's Board of Trustees. Those include:



**Vladimir Yevtushenkov,**  
head of the Board of Directors of  
«Sistema» Investment Company



**Dmitry Mazepin,**  
head of the Board of Directors  
of «Uralkhim», one of the largest  
companies in the Russian mineral  
fertilisers market



**Alexey Mordashov,**  
head of the Board of Directors  
of «Severstal» Steel and Mining  
Company



**Mikhail Prokhorov,**  
President of «ONEXIM» Investment  
Group

2022). Public Spendings. <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:TAWHVUII60J:https://spending.gov.ru/subsidies/receivers/450%25D0%25951036/>. (In Russian).

16 "Dialogue for the Future – 2017" Ended in Moscow (November 21st, 2017). The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/v-moskve-zavershilysya-dialog-vo-imya-budushchego-2017/>. (In Russian).

17 Leonid Drachevsky: "The Gorchakov Fund Is Ready to Expand the Scope of Its Activities." The official website of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/leonid-drachevskiy-fond-gorchakova-gotov-k-rasshireniyu-sfery-deyatelnosti/>. (In Russian).



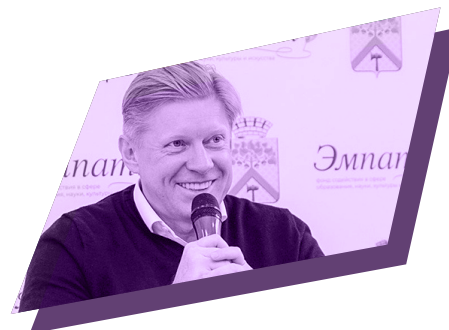
**Nikolay Tokarev,**  
President of JSC «Transneft»,  
which transports oil products



**Alisher Usmanov,**  
founder of «USM Holdings» Metallurgy  
and Mining Holding



**Sergei Chemezov,**  
Director General of «Rostekh», a  
state company in the field of high-  
tech industry



**Mikhail Shelkov,**  
deputy head of the Board of Directors  
of «VSMPO-Avisma» Metallurgical  
Company

The Gorchakov Fund is well integrated into the partnerships between the Russian regime and oligarchs. That system has been construed and maintained to develop and promote the Kremlin's foreign policy narratives. This structure consists of closely related organisations and actors who exchange views and jointly organise and fund events. The regime presumably co-opted oligarchs and heads of large state-owned enterprises by including them in the Fund's Board of Trustees to provide resources for the Fund's activities. After the start of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, some of these people came under individual sanctions from the European Union, the United States, and other countries opposing Russia's illegitimate war.

# An unequal battle with Europe? The Fund's own activities and projects

One of the ways the Fund disseminates the ideas and narratives of Russian foreign policy discourse to its target audiences is via organising its events. To this end, it holds several programmes aimed at initiating cooperation between young Russian and foreign researchers of international relations, often with the participation of the Russian leadership, including Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**. Such programs include:

- **The «Dialogue for the Future» Forum**, one of the oldest (launched in 2011) annual programmes of the Fund for young researchers in international relations, political scientists, journalists, and analysts from Russia and other countries, who spend several days in discussions in Moscow, visit the Russian Foreign Ministry and have the opportunity to converse with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (see the section on the Dialogue below)<sup>1</sup>.
- **The Potsdam Meetings**, a bilateral Russian-German high-level conference attended by MPs from Germany and Russia (see the section on Meetings below).
- **The Potsdam Meetings Youth Forum**, an event accompanying the Potsdam Meetings, attended by younger participants from Germany and Russia<sup>2</sup>.
- **Diplomatic seminar for young specialists**, an annual programme of meetings between young professionals in international relations, journalism, political science, and history, representatives of public organisations, and well-known Russian political scientists, researchers of international relations, government officials. The programme has been running since 2012, and as of 2021, **400** people from about **30** countries have participated<sup>3</sup>.
- **The annual meetings of the Gorchakov Fund's Friends**, annual informal meetings of Russian and foreign international relations professionals (mainly from the «near abroad» countries), which have been taking place since 2013 in Moscow. These professionals are members of the «Gorchakov Club», an alumni association, and the Fund's «most active young participants in academic and educational programs.» In 2021, the «Gorchakov Club» had more than 250 members<sup>4</sup>.

1 The youth forum «Dialogue for the Future». The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/news/view/e1d0fc0a-e370-41ae-a3d7-0b6934b15d3a>. (In Russian).

2 The youth forum of the Potsdam Meetings. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/youthpotsdam>. (In Russian).

3 Diplomatic seminar for young specialists. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/dipseminar>. (In Russian).

4 The annual meetings of the Gorchakov Fund friends. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/gorchakovclub>. (In Russian).

- **The Arctic<sup>5</sup>, Balkan<sup>6</sup>, and Caucasian dialogues<sup>7</sup>**, regular programmes offering meetings between Russian and foreign experts and young professionals in international relations, economics, and security from the respective regions to discuss the most pressing issues related to Russia's foreign policy developments there. The Arctic Dialogue is held biennially, and the Balkan and Caucasian dialogues are held annually. All three regions are of strategic interest to Russia, as reflected in its 2016 Foreign policy concept.
- **The School for Central Asia**, the Fund's annual educational program that brings together interested experts to discuss «issues of comprehensive development of relations between Central Asia and Russia.» Since 2016, the event has been held alternately in one of the region's countries<sup>8</sup>.
- **The International Youth Media School**, an educational programme of the Fund, which offers master classes on media projects for young journalists but also for political scientists and international relations professionals from Russia and other countries<sup>9</sup>.
- **The Russian-Slovak Expert Forum**, one of the Fund's events dedicated to specific European countries, along with the Potsdam Meetings. The Forum has been held since 2016. It is attended by Russian and Slovak experts who discuss topics of common interest selected from prior consultations<sup>10</sup>. In 2019, for instance, the subject of discussion was «cooperation within the OSCE, the impact of external factors on bilateral relations, and the results of the EU Eastern Partnership policy»<sup>11</sup>.
- **The Expert Mobility and Russian Perspective**, programmes offering trips for Russian scholars and experts to participate in international conferences abroad and to speak at universities and research centres<sup>12</sup>. The Fund has not updated public information about these programmes on its website, so we do not know whether they are still operational as of early 2022. The expert mobility projects included the «InteRussia» research internship programme for foreign specialists», but information about it is available only on the website of the partner organisation of the Fund, the Russian International Affairs Council<sup>13</sup>.

5 The Arctic dialogue. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/arcticdialogue>. (In Russian).

6 The Balkan dialogue. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/balkandialogue>. (In Russian).

7 The Caucasian dialogue. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/caucasiandialogue>. (In Russian).

8 The School for Central Asia. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/centralasianschool>. (In Russian).

9 The International Youth Media School. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/mediaschool>. (In Russian).

10 The Russian-Slovak Expert Forum. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/rossiyskoslovatskiyekspertnyyforum>. (In Russian).

11 The 4th Russian-Slovak Expert Forum (October 2019). The Gorchakov Fund Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.2551920611497956&type=3>. (In Russian).

12 On February 2nd, the Gorchakov Fund Turns 10 Years Old! (Retrieved from Webcache Google for January 8th, 2022). The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:5mx6CJIW000J:https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/2-fevralya-fondu-gorchakova-ispolnyaetsya-10-let/>. (In Russian).

13 Gleb Ivashentsov Delivered a Lecture for the Participants of the InteRussia Gorchakov Fund Programme. Website of the Russian International Affairs Council. <https://russiancouncil.ru/news/gleb-ivashentsov-vystupil-s-lektsiy-dlya-uchastnikov-programmy-interussia-fonda-gorchakova/>. (In Russian).

# Dialogue with an eye to the future



A banner advertising the Fund's educational programme «Dialogue for the Future».

[Photo from the webpage of the International Foundation for the Improvement of Education and Skills among Youth](#)

«**Dialogue for the Future**» is one of the first programmes of the Gorchakov Fund, defined as «key» by the Fund itself<sup>1</sup>. It is a discussion platform attracting young (25 to 35) journalists, political scientists, and think-tanks representatives from the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic states for meetings with and lectures from senior officials, including Russian Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**. In addition, the Fund invites to the Dialogue the «most experienced participants», that is, its alumni and those to whom the Fund and its management are assumably most sympathetic given their foreign policy views.

**The «Dialogue» has also gathered pro-Russian or Russian-curious political scientists, international relations researchers, and experts.**

The «Dialogue» is usually dedicated to discussing Russia's foreign policy.

<sup>1</sup> Dialogue for the Future. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/dialogueforthefuture>. (In Russian).

Since 2014 the representatives of Iran, Turkey, China, and the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria have also been invited to participate<sup>2</sup>.

In a few instances, Western politicians have participated in the «Dialogue» and thus legitimised the event promoting pro-Kremlin narratives. For example, in 2017, the «Dialogue» meeting was opened by Franco Frattini<sup>3</sup>, a former Italian foreign minister who sat in Silvio Berlusconi's cabinet. At the meeting, he urged Europeans and Russians to resume strategic relations immediately<sup>4</sup>.

The «Dialogue» has also gathered pro-Russian or Russian-curious political scientists, international relations researchers, and experts such as **Hanna Notte** or **Alexander Rahr**, who at a meeting in December 2021 expressed concern that the EU «did not pay attention» to the Eurasian project of Russia, in order not to «allow it to become a strong player», and that is why no one was really working on the shared space «from Lisbon to Vladivostok»<sup>5</sup>.

However, the event's target audience is students, young academics, and professionals from Russia and foreign countries. We do not know the exact amount of annual funding for the event. Still, we know that the Fund pays for the participants' accommodation in Moscow, food, cultural programme, and transportation through the city<sup>6</sup>.

Like most events of the Fund, this programme attracts young professionals interested in international relations, including those pursuing graduate studies, and, presumably, will influence the prevailing narratives among political decision-makers in Russia and abroad in the future.

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2 Smagliy, Kateryna (2018). Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in Moscow, Europe and the U.S. A Case Study on Think Tanks and Universities. Institute of Modern Russia. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f8f41ef14aa13b95239af0/t/5c6d8b38b208fc7087fd2b2a/1550682943143/Smagliy-Hybrid-Analytica-10-2018-upd.pdf>. P. 19.

3 Ibid.

4 The "Dialogue for the Future – 2017" Ended in Moscow (November 23rd, 2017). Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in Germany. <http://korsovet.ge/international/dialog-2/>. (In Russian).

5 11th «Dialogue for the Future», Day One: about the New World Order and the Era of Turmoil. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/xi-dialog-vo-imya-budushchego-den-pervyy-o-novom-miroporyadke-i-epokhe-nestabilnosti/>. (In Russian).

6 Dialogue for the Future. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/dialogueforthefuture>. (In Russian).



# On the approaches to Berlin: the Potsdam meetings



President of the Federal Republic of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier during the Potsdam Meetings in 2016 in Berlin.

[Photo from Deutsche Welle](#)

The **Potsdam Meetings** were initiated in 1999<sup>1</sup> by then German President Roman Herzog as a regular conference of German and Russian high-ranking officials, including representatives of the German Bundestag and the Federal Assembly of Russia. They were held jointly under the German-Russian Forum's auspices<sup>2</sup> to discuss the topics of common interest related to science and culture. Since then, the Meetings have taken place annually and even biannually in the recent few years, despite the growing aggressiveness of Russia's foreign policy over the past decade. From the very beginning, one of the event's partners has been the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, affiliated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU)<sup>3</sup>.

Meetings are usually attended by several dozen representatives from

<sup>1</sup> The Potsdam Meetings. The German-Russian Forum website. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/ru/o-nas/sfery-deyatelnosti/potsdamskie-vstrechi>. (In Russian).

<sup>2</sup> About Us. The German-Russian Forum website. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/ru/o-nas>. (In Russian).

<sup>3</sup> Am 25. Mai 2020 finden die XVIII. Potsdamer Begegnungen per Video-Konferenz statt. Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung. <https://www.kas.de/de/veranstaltungen/detail/-/content/am-25-mai-2020-finden-die-xviii-potsdamer-begegnungen-per-video-konferenz-statt>. (In German).

both sides (the total number of participants can reach 60 people), including ordinary MPs, heads of parliamentary committees, representatives of various factions, including the opposition. Unfortunately, the information on the cost of the event is not publicly available.

Although the Gorchakov Fund was established much later after the Potsdam Meetings launch in 1999, it has been actively involved in its funding and organisation since 2010, when the Fund's Executive Director began to participate in the meetings.

It is clear from the topics of annual conferences and press releases that what began as a series of discussions on relatively narrow and sometimes somewhat abstract issues has eventually become a platform for discussing geopolitics and foreign policy interests. After 2014, fewer and fewer press releases mentioned exhibitions, literary readings, or film screenings that were previously used to accompany the Meetings. Moreover, after the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, there has been an increasing securitisation and politicisation of discussions, despite the initial focus of the Potsdam Meetings on culture and science. The last few meetings were held under the personal patronage of the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Russia, who opened the conferences with welcoming speeches<sup>4</sup>.

**Moreover, after the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, there has been an increasing securitisation and politicisation of discussions, despite the initial focus of the Potsdam Meetings on culture and science.**

The tendency is eloquently evidenced by the change in the topics of meetings: from cultural identity (2000), urban cultures (2002), values (2006), the problem of ageing (2007), discussions on water (2011), the Internet (2012) to such foreign policy and security-related topics as:

- «Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok: An unalterable path to European stability» (2016),
- «Russia and the West: Ways of political and economic exit from the crisis» (2017),
- «New Governments in Germany and Russia: The Road to Mutual Understanding in Politics and Economics» (2018)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Potsdam Meetings": How Germany and Russia Can Get Out of the Spiral of Escalation (May 18th, 2021). Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/potsdamskie-vstrechi-kak-germanii-i-rossii-vybratsja-iz-spirali-ieskalacii/a-57573920>. (In Russian).

<sup>5</sup> The Potsdam Meetings. The German-Russian Forum website. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/ru/o-nas/sfery-deyatelnosti/potsdamskie-vstrechi>. (In Russian).

In 2013, Russia's rhetoric concerning Europe was relatively peaceful: during a discussion on identities and interpretations of history, one of the participants, Konstantin Asadovsky, quoted Russian historian Nikolay Karamzin while appealing to Russia's unalterably European future<sup>6</sup>.

But since 2014, the Russian representatives started to politicise the Meetings openly, while the German ones stressed the Meetings' importance for the continuation of the dialogue. In 2015, the topic covered was the Helsinki Accords and considerations of possible new security architecture in the European region. One year after the attempted annexation of Crimea and the launch of Russia's war against Ukraine in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the participants discussed the possibility of a new «pan-European unity» through OSCE renewal and the implementation of the «Helsinki-2» process<sup>7</sup>. This had to ensure the prospects of establishing a free trade zone «from Lisbon to Vladivostok» (i.e., between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union) and eliminate the urgency of the question of Ukraine's belonging to either Western or Eastern Europe. The search for «common narratives» for Germany and Russia continued in 2016<sup>8</sup>. Even in 2019, German politicians, such as **Dirk Wiese** (a member of the Bundestag from the Social Democratic Party), insisted that international issues could be resolved «only together with Russia»<sup>9</sup>.

The rhetoric of the German representatives has also somewhat evolved. In May 2021, the 25th Potsdam Meetings were opened with a welcoming speech by German Foreign Minister **Heiko Maas**. He called for dialogue but criticised Russia for suppressing civil society, «sabre-rattling on the border with Ukraine», and organising covert special operations in Germany and Europe<sup>10</sup>.

The last conference of the Potsdam meetings took place in December 2021<sup>11</sup>. The Russians continued to insist on their agenda, namely the need for a European-Russian dialogue without the participation of the US and questioning Europe's Atlantic orientation that Russia deems problematic<sup>12</sup>.

Eventually, Russia's open and large-scale war against Ukraine, which

6 XV. Potsdamer Begegnungen (2013). Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/xv-potsdamer-begegnungen/394>. (In German).

7 XVII. Potsdamer Begegnungen (2015). Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/xvii-potsdamer-begegnungen/504>. (In German).

8 Potsdamer Begegnungen mit Sergej Lawrow am 8. November 2016 in Moskau (2016). Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/potsdamer-begegnungen-mit-sergej-lawrow-am-8-november-in-moskau/2907>. (In German).

9 XXII Potsdamer Begegnungen in Berlin. (2019). Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/xxii-potsdamer-begegnungen-in-berlin/1760936>. (In German).

10 Welcoming Remarks by Federal Minister Heiko Maas on the Occasion of the 25th Potsdam Meetings (May 18th, 2021). Website of the German Representative Offices in Russia. <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-ru/aktuelles/-/2460146>. (In Russian).

11 "Let's Start by Disarming the Language!" What Was Discussed at the Potsdam Meetings in Moscow (December 20th, 2021). "Kommersant" <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5099082>. (In Russian).

12 Ibid.

began on February 24th, 2022, forced the German co-organisers of the meetings to announce the Meetings' suspension in early March 2022. The head of the German-Russian forum, **Matthias Platzeck**, who was responsible for organising the meetings, resigned<sup>13</sup>.

However, the Potsdam meetings had already assisted the development of bilateral ties between parliamentarians and, consequently, the political elites of both countries while bringing more understanding of each other's political demands. This rapprochement of German and Russian politicians was mutual as both foreign ministers attended the latest meetings.

Apparently, before the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine, the Russian government hoped to ensure its territorial expansion in the region «without moving a gun or a rouble» (in the words of a Russian diplomat and poet Fyodor Tyutchev), i.e., without significant military or economic efforts and losses. However, it gravely miscalculated.

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<sup>13</sup> Zum angekündigten Rücktritt Matthias Platzecks (02.03.2022). Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V. <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/zum-angeku-ndigten-ru-cktritt-matthias-platzecks-vom-amt-des-vorsitzenden/5603361>. (In German).

# Grants à la russe: financial support of individual projects



Participants in a grant competition by the Gorchakov Fund, who received financial support for their projects based on the results of the presentations in the fields of the International Youth Forum «Eurasia Global» in September 2021. The photo shows young people from India, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mexico, China, and Iraq.

[Photo from the Big Asia website](#)

The grant allocations for public sector projects from the Gorchakov Fund, as the Executive Director himself acknowledged, were intended to serve as a «transmission gear» between the state and the NGOs dealing with public diplomacy<sup>1</sup>.

The Fund's work is normally organised in two grant cycles during the year, one extending from January 15th to February 15th, the other from July 15th to August 15th. Both Russian and foreign NGOs can compete for grants<sup>2</sup>.

An organisation needs to apply on the Fund's website, after which it undergoes an examination, that is, an assessment of feasibility and ideological compliance, in an Expert Council headed by RIAC President and former

<sup>1</sup> "Public Diplomacy Has Great Potential" (June 7th, 2012). Rosbalt. <https://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2012/06/07/990104.html>. (In Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Grants. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/events-and-news>. (In Russian).

Russian Foreign Minister **Igor Ivanov**. After that, grant offers are finalised at the meeting of the Board of Trustees. According to the Fund's Executive Director, as of 2015, only about 17–20% of applications received a positive response due to a large number of submitted proposals. According to another representative of the Fund, quoted in one of the studies, the Fund annually conducts about **260** projects in **20** thematic areas<sup>3</sup>.

Funds are distributed according to priority areas. In 2022, all of those corresponded to Russia's foreign policy vectors as defined in the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, approved by Vladimir Putin in 2016. Among them are strengthening relations with former Soviet states and other neighbouring states, regional policies in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, the Arctic policy in the context of Russia's chairmanship in the Arctic Council, possible geopolitical configurations in the Balkans, a «constructive agenda» in relations between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic region, «integrative processes», and «shaping Russia's objective image abroad»<sup>4</sup>. Thus a presumably non-governmental organisation, established by order of the President of Russia and de facto subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, distributes the funds strictly following government priorities.

Unlike respectable grant-giving organisations, the Gorchakov Fund does not publish information on the amount of allocated funds and supported activities, even though the Fund is one of the largest grant organisations of such kind in the Russian Federation. However, information about the activities sponsored by the Fund can be found either in the Fund's materials or on its partners' websites. For instance, some of them are mentioned in the Fund's presentation

**The Fund, together with similar pro-government organisations, actively promotes Russian interpretations of the current state of the international relations and Russian understandings of its geopolitical interests. The spread of these understandings was intended to eventually reach the decision-making circles of foreign governments, including European ones, and influence their policies, particularly their policies towards Eastern Europe and Ukraine.**

<sup>3</sup> Vendil Pallin, Carolina & Oxenstierna, Susanne. (2017). Russian Think Tanks and Soft Power. FOI-R reports. 2017. P. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Decree of the President of the Russian Federation "On the Approval of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" dated November 30th, 2016, No. 640. Official Internet portal of legal information. <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&firstDoc=1&lastDoc=1&nd=102416644>. (In Russian).

published on its website, others on the Fund's page on Timepad<sup>5</sup>.

The activities supported by the Fund could be categorised into those related to international relations and those targeting the field of culture. For instance, the Gorchakov Fund supported the awarding of the «East-West. Golden Arch» film prize in 2021 (the Fund's Executive Director headed the Board of Trustees)<sup>6</sup>, an international educational school, a youth conference of Russian compatriots in Great Britain, a series of workshops by film industry professionals<sup>7</sup>, and an international film festival in Serbia<sup>8</sup>. Among the Fund's grant recipients are many young people from Russian regions.

Some foreign organisations could be considered the Fund's regular partners since they have received its grants for organising events more than once. For instance, several events were held in collaboration with the **Italian Institute for Eurasian Studies**, chaired by former Italian Foreign Minister **Franco Frattini** (see above about his participation in the **Dialogue for the Future**), such as the online discussion «Between Centrifugal and Inertial: The Future of European Integration During the Pandemic Times» (November 30th, 2020)<sup>9</sup>, online lecture by Italian Ambassador to Russia Pasquale Terracciano (December 4th, 2020)<sup>10</sup>, and online discussion «Afghanistan After the Withdrawal of US Troops: Who Will Help Create a Strong State?» (August 3rd, 2021)<sup>11</sup>. Another foreign organisation that can boast close cooperation with the Fund is the «**Franco-Russian Dialogue**» **Association** chaired by pro-Russian politician Thierry Mariani (online discussions «Security in Europe: The Role of Russia and France»<sup>12</sup> and «Gaullist Europe of Nations. Significance of the Concept for Soviet and Modern European Policy»<sup>13</sup>) and the Scottish group «**Friends of Russia**» (online discussion «Russian-British Relations 2020: Expert Opinion»<sup>14</sup>).

Among Fund's financial support recipients are its long-term domestic

5 The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund. Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/events/>. (In Russian).

6 International Film Award "East-West. Golden Arch." <https://www.eurasiacinema.org/>.

7 "Cinema and Literature. Frame and Word." Workshop by Vadim Abdrashitov. Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1850967/>. (In Russian).

8 Reid, Ernest. (2020). Godišnjak FPN. 14:23. 119-140. <https://www.fpn.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/FPN-Godisnjak-23-2020.pdf#page=119>. P. 128.

9 Online discussion "Between Centrifugal and Inertial: The Future of European Integration During the Pandemic Times." Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1491848/>. (In Russian).

10 Online lecture by Italian Ambassador to Russia Pasquale Terracciano. Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1497432/>. (In Russian).

11 Online discussion "Afghanistan After the Withdrawal of US Troops: Who Will Help Create a Strong State?" Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1722843/>. (In Russian).

12 Online discussion "Security in Europe: the Role of Russia and France". Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1829437/>. (In Russian).

13 Gaullist Europe of Nations. Significance of the Concept for Soviet and Modern European Policy. Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1607938/>. (In Russian).

14 Russian-British Relations 2020: Expert Opinion. Timepad. <https://fond-gorchakova.timepad.ru/event/1515479/>. (In Russian).

partners: the **Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Federation**, the **Institute of World Economy and International Relations**, and the **Council on Foreign and Defence Policy**. In addition, the Fund promotes conferences<sup>15</sup>, international summer schools<sup>16</sup>, and open lectures with the participation of similar Russian pro-government or peri-governmental organisations, which is another evidence of the existence of a whole ecosystem of such organisations aimed at spreading pro-Kremlin foreign policy narratives. Sometimes even reputable Western think tanks co-organised events in cooperation with the Fund, but such cases have not been widespread<sup>17</sup>.

By offering grants to NGOs projects that meet Russia's foreign policy goals, and bringing together activists, experts, and researchers in the framework of the Gorchakov Fund's Friends Club, the Fund, together with similar pro-government organisations, actively promotes Russian interpretations of the current state of the international relations and Russian understandings of its geopolitical interests. The spread of these understandings was intended to eventually reach the decision-making circles of foreign governments, including European ones, and influence their policies, particularly their policies towards Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

However, the Fund has a relatively limited budget for an institution that aims to ensure Russia's «soft power» and public diplomacy efficiency. Its budget amounts just to a little more than a million euros. The size of individual grants distributed by the Fund can reach 200-300 thousand roubles (around 2 500 – 3 800 US dollars, meaning those are relatively small-scale activities). Some alumni of the Fund's programs have claimed that the Fund's activities exhibited a «lack of money, attitude, infrastructure, and comfortable conditions», which was combined with an overload of ideological propaganda, which makes it less attractive when compared to American and European counterparts<sup>18</sup>.

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15 The Problems of the Middle East Were Discussed at a Conference at the Diplomatic Academy. Website of the Russian International Affairs Council. [https://russiancouncil.ru/news/problemy-blizhnego-vostoka-obsudili-na-konferentsii-v-diplomaticheskoy-akademii-/?sphrase\\_id=89423586](https://russiancouncil.ru/news/problemy-blizhnego-vostoka-obsudili-na-konferentsii-v-diplomaticheskoy-akademii-/?sphrase_id=89423586). (In Russian).

16 International Russian-Chinese Summer School on International Relations. <https://we.hse.ru/ruschn/>. (In Russian).

17 Deutsch-Russische Beziehungen 25 Jahre Nach Dem Zwei-Plus-Vier-Vertrag: Historische und aktuell-politische Perspektiven. (2015). DGAP. <https://dgap.org/de/veranstaltungen/deutsch-russische-beziehungen-25-jahre-nach-dem-zwei-plus-vier-vertrag>. (In German).

18 Gussarova, Anna. (2017). Russian Soft Power in Kazakhstan (and Central Asia): Taken for Granted? Central Asia Institute for Strategic Studies. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kasachstan/14108.pdf>. P. 13.



# Limited geography, modest achievements: representative offices abroad



The news from the Russian state-control news outlet RIA News, «The Security Service of Ukraine accused the Gorchakov Fund in Kyiv of 'anti-state propaganda'».

[Photo from RIA Novosti](#)

Unlike the extensive networks of the «Russian World» Foundation or Rossotrudnichestvo, the Gorchakov Fund has only two affiliated institutions abroad, the Centres in Tbilisi and Minsk. Between 2013 and 2015, the Fund's Information Centre also operated in Kyiv, but it was closed by the Security Service of Ukraine. Information on the budget and staff of individual centres in Tbilisi and Minsk is not publicly available.

**Georgian-Russian Public Centre named after Evgeny Primakov in Tbilisi<sup>1</sup>.** The Primakov Centre was established in 2013 based on an institution friendly to the Gorchakov Fund, the Georgian Institute of International Relations in Tbilisi<sup>2</sup>. These were Zaza Abashidze, the founder and first director of the Centre (2013-2015), former and current directors Berkhan Khurtsidze

<sup>1</sup> Russian-Georgian Public Centre named after Evgeny Primakov. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/dfeb6403-0b1a-4d21-b49e-c3291c95e2a8>. (In Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Georgian-Russian Public Centre named after Evgeny Primakov – Now in Instagram! The Gorchakov Fund page in Instagram. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZyoX74luxy/>. (In Russian).

(2015-2018)<sup>3</sup> and Dimitri Lortkipanidze (2018-present), and also project coordinator Natalia Tsereteli and co-worker Nino Kizikurashvili<sup>4</sup>. They have generally supported Russia's foreign policy priorities and promoted them in Georgian public discourse.

The **Centre** operates in two main activity domains:

**1. Free Russian language courses** (operational since 2015). The courses are designed for nine months, as of 2020–2021 (i.e., during the pandemic). At the Centre, there were four study groups, in which a total of 50 people studied Russian<sup>5</sup>. According to «Ekho Kavkaza» (Echo of the Caucasus), in 2018, 80 people took these Russian language courses<sup>6</sup>.

**2. Other events**, such as conferences, seminars, and lectures (including online) with the participation of Georgian and Russian professionals in the field of international relations. For example, in February 2022, shortly before the start of the full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine, the Centre organised a lecture by Doctor of Psychology Alexander Rusetsky, «Issues of Scientific and Practical Support of the Georgian-Russian Peace Process.» A few months before the event, the Centre began posting videos of the lectures on its YouTube channel.

**Between 2013 and 2015, the Fund's Information Centre also operated in Kyiv, but it was closed by the Security Service of Ukraine.**

**The Centre for Analysis and Forecasting of Union Integration Processes in Minsk** was established in 2020. As of April 2022, the Centre's director is Sergey Palagin. Its main task is postulated as «the organisation of educational and scientific-practical activities, participants of which can get full information about the current integration processes of Russia and Belarus»<sup>7</sup>. Among the partners of the Fund are key state academic and analytical organisations of the Republic of Belarus.

The Centre in Minsk seems less interesting than the Georgian one, given that relations between Belarus and Russia are less controversial, and Russia's soft power in Belarus is visibly stronger. Moreover, unlike Georgia, Belarus has

3 Dimitri Lortkipanidze: "Relations between Russia and Georgia are Placental" (December 15th, 2018). Federal Georgian national-cultural autonomy in Russia. <http://kartvelebi.ru/sobytiya/9/149726/>. (In Russian).

4 Dzvelishvili, Nata and Kupreishvili, Tazo (2015). Russian impact on Georgian media and NGOs. Damoukidebloba.com. <https://idfi.ge/en/russian-influence-of-georgian-ngos-and-media>. P. 5, 43–44.

5 Russian language courses. The Gorchakov Fund page in Instagram. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.instagram.com/p/CaB7xEUK7ZE/>. (In Russian).

6 Russian Centre in a Glass of Water. (December 9th, 2019). "Ekho Kavkaza" (Echo of the Caucasus). <https://www.ekho-kavkaza.com/a/30316411.html>. (In Russian).

7 The Centre for Analysis and Forecasting of Union Integration Processes in Minsk. The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/portal/page/9bc8f70b-d5ca-416f-b4b3-adaac941f95e>. (In Russian).

not had an armed conflict with Russia in the recent past. As a consequence, Russia has not had such a negative image that should be corrected through public diplomacy.

**Information Centre of the Gorchakov Fund** operated in Kyiv from 2013 to 2015 at the Institute of International Relations of the National Aviation University of Ukraine (IIR of the NAU)<sup>8</sup>. As in the case of the Georgian Centre, the Fund established its branch within a university Department of International Relations. The timing of the Centre's creation was hardly coincidental: in November 2013, the Ukrainian government announced a decision not to sign Ukraine's Association Agreement with the European Union, which was apparently imposed by Moscow, and Russia could prepare to deploy a propaganda infrastructure to promote its integration projects instead. Employees of the IIR of the NAU, some of them members of the Gorchakov Fund's Friends Club<sup>9</sup>, began to support this agenda in December 2013 actively. In late December, the Centre was visited by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara, who promised support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and announced his intention to hold an expert roundtable on «Russian-Ukrainian relations with high-ranking guests from both countries» in the spring of 2014<sup>10</sup>.

In February 2015, the Security Service of Ukraine closed the Centre after a request from students who complained that it was conducting subversive activities<sup>11</sup>. According to the executive director of the Gorchakov Fund, the branch continued to operate but without any reference to the «parent» structure in Moscow<sup>12</sup>. However, we could not find any mention of its operations after 2015.

Unlike Rossotrudnichestvo or the «Russian World» Foundation, the Gorchakov Fund does not have an extensive network of representative offices abroad, which might be hindered by its limited budget and the type of its activities, which are mainly centred around the grant distribution. However, the Fund managed to establish representations in Georgia, a country Russia attacked in 2008, and Belarus, a country engaged in a Union State integration

8 Ukrainian Students Handed Over Russian Pseudo-Diplomats to the Security Service of Ukraine (February 2nd, 2015). Ukrinform. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). [https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/1810521-ukrainski\\_studenti\\_zdali\\_v\\_sbu\\_rosiyskih\\_psevdodiplomativ\\_2017008.html](https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/1810521-ukrainski_studenti_zdali_v_sbu_rosiyskih_psevdodiplomativ_2017008.html). (In Ukrainian).

9 Milovanova, Olha. Diplomatic Seminar for Young Experts (2013). Newspaper of the National Aviation University "Aviator", No.28 (1473). <https://www.pdf-archive.com/2014/01/07/28/28.pdf>. P. 6. (In Ukrainian).

10 The Ukrainian Foreign Minister Visited the Information Centre of the Gorchakov Fund in Kyiv. (December 26th, 2013). The Gorchakov Fund website. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/glava-mid-ukrainy-posetil-informatsentr-fonda-gorchakova-v-kieve/>. (In Russian).

11 Ukrainian Students Handed Over Russian Pseudo-Diplomats to the Security Service of Ukraine (February 2nd, 2015). Ukrinform. (visited on March 30th, 2022). [https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/1810521-ukrainski\\_studenti\\_zdali\\_v\\_sbu\\_rosiyskih\\_psevdodiplomativ\\_2017008.html](https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/1810521-ukrainski_studenti_zdali_v_sbu_rosiyskih_psevdodiplomativ_2017008.html). (In Ukrainian).

12 Leonid Drachevsky: "The Gorchakov Fund Is Ready to Expand the Scope of Its Activities." The official website of the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund. <https://gorchakovfund.ru/news/view/leonid-drachevskiy-fond-gorchakova-gotov-k-rasshireniyu-sfery-deyatelnosti/>. (In Russian).

project with Russia. An attempt to open the branch in Ukraine happened at the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity in December 2013. In Georgia and Ukraine, branches were established at some university departments. The scale of these branches' activities is relatively insignificant, at least from first sight. Those activities primarily include lectures and seminars, and in the case of the Georgian Centre, Russian language courses for several dozen people a year.

# The Fund's rhetoric after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine

IX МОЛОДЕЖНЫЙ ФОРУМ  
«ПОТСДАМСКИХ ВСТРЕЧ»



ПРИЕМ ЗАЯВОК  
ПРИОСТАНОВЛЕН

A photo from the Fund's Facebook page announcing that the call for applications for participation in the next Potsdam Meetings Youth Forum has been suspended. March 2nd, 2022.

[Photo from the Gorchakov Fund's Facebook page](#)

After the beginning of the full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Gorchakov Fund continued its activities. It organises and advertises its lectures and publishes articles about Russian cultural figures. The Fund's Facebook page was still active even after the ban of this social network in Russia. On February 26th, the Fund announced a youth session on «Security in Europe: Finding Spaces for Dialogue», where one of the topics was the crisis of the security architecture in Europe and the possibility of de-escalation of the confrontation between Russia and NATO<sup>1</sup>. On March 2nd, an economist Vasily Koltashov gave a lecture on removing Russian banks from SWIFT<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the Fund had to announce the «suspension» of applications for participation in the Potsdam Meetings

<sup>1</sup> The Primakov Centre and the Council of Young Scientists and Postgraduates of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, under the Auspices of the International Forum "Primakov Readings", Organize a Youth Session on the Theme "Security in Europe: Finding Spaces for Dialogue". Facebook page of the Gorchakov Fund. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.facebook.com/FondGorcakova/posts/5019940021362657>. (In Russian).

<sup>2</sup> On the SWIFT System and Its Significance in the Modern World Economy. Facebook page of the Gorchakov Fund. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.facebook.com/FondGorcakova/posts/5031525366870789>. (In Russian).

Youth Forum<sup>3</sup>. On March 4th, the page rebroadcast an interview with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the war against Ukraine and economic sanctions against Russia<sup>4</sup>. On March 10th, another expert gave a lecture on the history of sanctions (obviously very relevant for today's Russia)<sup>5</sup>. As before the war, the Fund continued to forward messages from the country's political leadership on foreign policy, which now had to adapt to the new reality.

**As before the war, the Fund continued to forward messages from the country's political leadership on foreign policy, which now had to adapt to the new reality.**

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3 The 9th Potsdam Meetings Youth Forum – Applications Suspended. Facebook page of the Gorchakov Fund. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.facebook.com/FondGorcakova/posts/5031921890164470>. (In Russian).

4 Video recording and text version of the interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to RT, NBC News, ABC News, ITN, France 24, and China Media Corporation. Facebook page of the Gorchakov Fund. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). <https://www.facebook.com/FondGorcakova/posts/5036805319676127>. (In Russian).

5 "Expert Opinion": Igor Semenovskiy on the History of the Application of Sanctions in the Global Economy. Facebook page of the Gorchakov Fund. (Visited on March 30th, 2022). [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=456442316169346](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=456442316169346). (In Russian).

# | Conclusions

Founded in 2010 on a wave of economic boom and increasing Russian federal budget revenues driven by rising global energy prices, the Gorchakov Fund GONGO has become part and parcel of an ecosystem of interconnected state pro-government organisations promoting the Kremlin's foreign policy narratives. The status of a non-governmental organisation has probably been intended to enable the Fund to hide the sources of a significant (over 50%) part of its revenues and report as little as possible on its expenditures.

The Fund has been serving as an instrument of Russia's policy to promote the Kremlin's and its close circles' vision in the international arena, whitewashing Moscow's foreign policy decisions by promoting its interpretations of Russia's «objective» foreign policy interests. The task of the Fund is a kind of «the long run», as its activities are focused on creating lasting ties between young researchers and experts from Russia and foreign countries, promoting and consolidating in this way the necessary Russian narratives.

The Fund's chief strategy is to invest in non-governmental organisations. By deploying this strategy, it seeks to emulate, at least pro forma, the activities of Western (American and European) grant donors. However, while imitating Western institutions, the architects and leaders of the Fund have omitted that the source of the «soft power» of Western societies is primarily their values and way of life, not mere ideological indoctrination with the Kremlin's narratives<sup>1</sup>. But it is still possible that the Fund's activities will have consequences in the future when its circle of Friends becomes part of the Russian political elite or the elites of Western countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Tafuro, Eleonora. (2014). Fatal Attraction? Russia's Soft Power in Its Neighbourhood. FRIDE Policy Brief, No.181 – May 2014. [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180660/Fatal%20attraction\\_%20Russia%E2%80%99s%20soft%20power%20in%20its%20neighbourhood.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180660/Fatal%20attraction_%20Russia%E2%80%99s%20soft%20power%20in%20its%20neighbourhood.pdf). P. 5

The Ukrainian Institute is a public institution affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Our mission is to strengthen Ukraine's international standing through the means of cultural diplomacy. We facilitate international connections between people and institutions and create opportunities for Ukraine to interact and cooperate with the world.

This paper is a part of the Ukrainian Institute's Information & Analytics Department research project conducted jointly with the research agency MZ Hub. The project aims to discover the strategies and instruments of Russia's cultural diplomacy operations in the world. Rossotrudnichestvo, «Russian World» Fund, and the Gorchakov Fund, the three biggest Russian state or state-affiliated organisations whose aim has been to spread Kremlin's geopolitical and cultural narratives as well as to keep in touch with Russians and Russia's sympathisers abroad, have come into the limelight of this series of papers.

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