

Conference

The Russian World against Australia and its region

The ANU Centre for European Studies, The Australian National University

28 October 2022, 9:30-16:00

RSSS Building Auditorium, 146 Ellery Crescent

Australia has typically registered only faintly on Russia's global radar. As Vladimir Putin quipped in 2007, 'I know where Australia is but never think about it'. But times have changed. Australia's robust support for Ukraine's struggle to thwart Putin's neo-imperialist invasion of February 2022; its membership of the QUAD; and its leading role in AUKUS has undoubtedly enhanced Australia's relative salience in the Kremlin's world view.

As the ripple effects of Russia's conduct are felt in Australia's own region, it stands to reason that those Russian agencies charged with mobilising support for Putin among Russian diasporas, and eroding public and political support for Ukraine, have redoubled their efforts. Apart from Russian embassies and consulates, among these agencies 'The Russian World Foundation' – *Russky mir* – plays a leading role.

This conference examines Russian attempts to boost narratives favouring its policy preferences. In particular, it examines Russia's diaspora mobilisation efforts, and seeks to identify what types of information warfare strategies are being deployed by Putin's regime – both in Australia, and in its broader Indo-Pacific region.

PROGRAM

9:15 Registration

9:30-11:00 Session 1: Russky Mir and its origins

Chair: Peter Tesch

Russky Mir is not only a political ideology built on Russia's imperialist-colonialist heritage, but an apparatus that informs and influences operations of every branch of the modern Russian government, internal and external policy. Here we would like to discuss the premise, origins and implications of this ideology, as well as its presence in Australian communities.

- *A historical perspective on the Russian imperialism* – Ilya Fomin (Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ)
- *Russky Mir - Informing Ideology of the Russian Government Apparatus: Concept, Origins and Influence* – Irina Salavatova & Taisiya Payne (Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ)
- *Currents and cross-currents of Russia's influence in the West* – Chris Zappone (*The Age*)

11:00-11:15 Morning tea

11:15-12:45 Session 2: Networks of Russky Mir and their Implications for Australian Society and Democratic Processes

Chair: Dr Kasia Williams

ICCC (International Coordinating Council of Compatriots BKCoPC), Moscow Orthodox Patriarchy patronage and propaganda by the Russian Ministry of International Affairs are examples of how the Russian State uses soft power to influence public opinion in countries, such as Australia. In a case-study, Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ would like to present their findings and analysis of Russky Mir networks that have formed within Australian communities and their impact.

- *Russian information operations in the Indo-Pacific* – A/Prof Matthew Sussex (ANU)
- *The Russian World's cultivation of the Australian far-right* – Dr Robert Horvath (La Trobe University)
- *Russky Mir for Australians. When? Where? How?* – Ivan Pavlenko (Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ)

12:45-13:45 Lunch break

13:45-15:15 Session 3 Counter Influence of Russky Mir in Australia: Methods and Sources

Chair: A/Prof Matthew Sussex

Hubs of counteraction to Russky Mir networks within Russian-Australian communities have existed in Australia since before the mass invasion into Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022. We will examine pro-democratic Russian networks in Australia and their initiatives in countering Russky Mir influence in Russian-speaking communities.

- *Origins of Russky Mir in Australia* – Dr Elena Govor (ANU)
- *Russian-Speaking Community and Russia's 'Compatriots Project'* – Dr Raisa Akifyeva (University of Western Australia) via Zoom
- *Svoboda Alliance: Activism and Activities of Russian-Australian Diasporas* – Evgeniya Manakova and Galina Seredina (Svoboda Alliance AU&NZ)

15:15-16:00 Open Discussion