

Soon after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, hundreds of thousands of Russian political émigrés fled abroad, including to Europe and North America. Their arrival puts democratic values and principles of host countries to the test. This raises numerous questions that inspired our project, including: How do democracies accommodate incoming migration from closed autocracies? What facilitates self-organization of emigrants and their engagement in support of democratic opposition in the country of origin? How can receiving states strike a balance between security, protecting democracy, and adhering to the principles of tolerance and inclusion?

The project focuses on defining the political impact of new émigré communities from Russia on host countries and their potential to affect political change in their country of origin. In particular, the project aims to address the following research questions: 1) How might Russian political migrants impact their countries of destination and vice versa? 2) How do exile communities affect domestic politics back in Russia? 3) How does Russian state propaganda capitalize on political emigration domestically and affect the perceptions of Russian émigrés?

The project is located at the intersection of democratization studies, transnationalism and migration studies, and media and propaganda studies. It utilizes various methods – both quantitative and qualitative, combining a worldwide online survey among post-February 24th emigrants from Russia, including those who already returned, with semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in 8 countries with varying state of democracy and in Russia, focus groups, and automatic text analysis of Russian media.