

The European Struggle Over the Russian Diaspora

A Comparison Between IFRI and Kozhokin

Introduction: Two Strategies for the Same Challenge

In mid-June 2024, the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) published a report that would come to define Western discourse on the new Russian diaspora. The authors—Dmitrij Gudkov, Vladislav Inozemtsev, and Dmitrij Nekrasov, all three Russian intellectuals who left the country themselves—presented a radical analysis: the massive migration that began in 2022 constituted not merely a refugee problem but a geopolitical opportunity for Europe to weaken Putin's regime through active integration of highly skilled competencies.

Dmitrij Gudkov (born 1980) is an opposition politician and former State Duma member who co-founded the Russian Anti-War Committee in 2022 after being forced into exile in 2021. Russian authorities have designated him a "foreign agent" and issued arrest warrants for his criticism of the war in Ukraine. He currently operates from EU-based exile through the think tank CASE.

Vladislav Inozemtsev (born 1968) is an economist and founder of the Centre for Post-Industrial Studies. He has been a visiting researcher at several European institutions including Chatham House and the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. Also classified as a "foreign agent" by the Russian state, he now researches from exile. His unique position having operated close to power before standing outside gives him insight into both the regime and the diaspora's perspective.

Dmitrij Nekrasov is an economist and former opposition political actor who, after exile, cooperates with Gudkov and Inozemtsev through CASE from bases in the United States and Cyprus. He also carries "foreign agent" status from Russian authorities.

All three are themselves "relocators" in the sense they describe in the report: highly educated, critical of the regime, active in European institutions, and all formally identified by the Russian state as threats. The fact that the Kremlin actively has tools aimed at them—from foreign agent status to the 2026 "treason law"—underscores that the struggle over the diaspora is not abstract politics. It is a personal reality for the authors behind the report.

More than 18 months later, in December 2025, came the Kremlin's response. A secret 15-page document, authored by Professor Evgeny M. Kozhokin at MGIMO's Institute of International Studies and addressed to the newly established unit for strategic partnership within the presidential administration, presented a counter-strategy that not only opposed IFRI's vision but also identified exactly which groups and territories needed control to secure Russia's long-term influence.

This article analyzes the core points of the two strategies, their respective vulnerabilities, and what their contemporaneity reveals about the ongoing struggle over the Russian diaspora's future. For if IFRI's report describes how Europe *ought* to act, then Kozhokin's document shows how the Kremlin actually *acts* and why timing may be decisive for which scenario prevails.

Six Strategic Points of the IFRI Report

The IFRI report "*The New Russian Diaspora: Europe's Challenge and Opportunity*" builds on six central arguments that together form a coherent policy recommendation.

Point 1: Relocation as a Temporary Process. The authors emphasize that today's migration differs fundamentally from historical emigration. Those who have left Russia since 2022 do not consider themselves emigrants but "relocators"—people on temporary visit who often consider returning. More than 80 percent view their departure as temporary, and the majority retain Russian citizenship. This uncertainty creates a dynamic situation where the diaspora can be influenced in different directions.

Point 2: Highly Skilled, Young, and Affluent Workforce. The profiles differ dramatically from the average Russian. Over 81 percent have higher education, 60 percent earn over €3,000 monthly, and the majority work in IT, finance, or science. They are younger, predominantly male, urban and entrepreneurial with values approaching European ones: secular, tolerant, and critical of Putin's policies.

Point 3: Economic Power Both for Host Countries and Against Russia. The influx of Russians drove GDP growth in countries such as Armenia (12.6 percent in 2022), Georgia (10.4 percent), and Kyrgyzstan (7.0 percent). Simultaneously, the outflow constitutes a serious competence shortage in Russia that the authors compare to economic sanctions—a dual effect weakening the regime.

Point 4: Europe Is Wasting an Opportunity. Despite relocators sharing European values and having capital, they face bureaucratic obstacles: restrictions on bank accounts, property purchases, and visas. EU countries issue fewer residence permits than demand. The authors argue Europe misses a unique chance to strengthen its economy while simultaneously weakening Russia.

Point 5: Cyprus as a Model. Cyprus presents itself as a success example where Russians constitute over 6 percent of the population. Through fast work visas (three weeks), favorable tax regimes, and a fast track to citizenship in four years, the island has attracted Russian IT companies and professionals. The model is based on self-sufficient immigrants who create jobs, pay taxes, and do not burden welfare systems.

Point 6: Strategic Recommendation—Active "Brain Drain" Policy. The authors urge the EU to actively facilitate Russian middle class and professionals moving to Europe. The purpose is twofold: give Europe economic resources while simultaneously weakening Putin's regime by draining Russia of competence and capital. This should occur through simplified residence permits tied to employment requirements, presence, and financial self-sufficiency.

Kozhokin's Three-Group Model

Kozhokin's document, titled by Michael Weiss as "SVR's Plan for Influence Over the Russian Diaspora," constitutes the Kremlin's official response to the challenges IFRI identifies. Instead of attempting to prevent emigration, the document focuses on steering, categorizing, and loyalty-binding those who have already left or are about to leave.

Group 1: Loyalists. This category includes diaspora members who already embrace the Kremlin narrative, actively participate in state-sponsored cultural projects, and can be mobilized through

Soviet-inspired creative programming. They are viewed as the most reliable ambassadors of Russian culture and politics abroad.

Group 2: Pragmatists or the "Utility" Segment. This group is driven by economic or professional opportunities rather than ideology. They exhibit limited political commitment but are receptive to engagement and incentives. They represent the largest decisive group of people wanting security, career advancement, and a better everyday life without necessarily taking political positions.

Group 3: Oppositionists. This group is hostile toward the Kremlin, often involved in anti-Russian activities abroad, and therefore requires "containment" or counter-influence strategies. Kozhokin's document suggests limited dialogue and humanitarian support to avoid further alienation but clearly marks they should remain under surveillance.

Exemplification of Kozhokin's Three-Group Model with Contemporary Structures

Here is how these four structures exemplify Kozhokin's model, with brief explanatory comments according to the three-part breakdown:

Group 1 Loyalists: The Institute for Internet Development (IRI) produces and distributes state-funded multimedia content—series, games, youth material—actively reaching Russian-speaking diaspora groups in the EU. Meanwhile, Russia's return to the Venice Biennale in 2026, after four years of absence, indicated that state cultural projection onto Western European soil was already underway.

Comment: Both examples show how cultural institutions function as soft power applications of Kozhokin's loyalty strategy: they activate belonging rather than political loyalty, which is precisely the subtle distinction he makes.

Group 2 Pragmatists: Rybar LLC, with over 1.5 million subscribers on Telegram and sanctioned by the United Kingdom for electoral interference.

Comment: Rybar exemplifies how the Kremlin reaches pragmatists—not through ideology but through professional quality. One binds the group by offering something they actually need, sinking the political narrative into the periphery of information consumption.

Group 3 Oppositionists: The Expert Institute for Social Research (EISI), a Kremlin-affiliated think tank sanctioned by the United Kingdom, maps diaspora political attitudes and emigration patterns. This intelligence becomes operational in combination with the July 2026 "treason law," which strips property rights, bank accounts, and consular support for Russians abroad classified as foreign agents.

Comment: Here we see how Kozhokin's strategy becomes concrete: EISI delivers the intelligence (who is oppositionist, where they sit, what they do) and legislation delivers the force (to withdraw rights, freeze assets). It is soft monitoring combined with hard repression—exactly the double tactic Kozhokin sketches for Group 3.

The three examples together demonstrate that Kozhokin's three-group model is not merely theoretical but already has operational structures: IRI and the Venice Biennale deliver culture to loyalists (Group 1), Rybar delivers professional content to pragmatists (Group 2), and EISI combined with the 2026 treason law delivers mapping and repression against oppositionists (Group

3). The chain runs from culture (identity) → information (utility) → control (repression)—a proven governance model where each group is addressed with adapted tools.

Geographic Competition: Europe versus South Caucasus

A central difference between the two strategies is geographical focus. IFRI concentrates on EU member states—Germany, France, Cyprus, Poland—where relocators can be integrated into Western European structures. Kozhokin, meanwhile, places emphasis on South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) plus Africa and Asia.

This is not a random distribution but a conscious strategic choice. South Caucasus represents transit countries where many relocators find themselves after leaving Russia. These countries function as buffer zones where the diaspora is still in motion, has not determined its final destination, and is therefore particularly susceptible to influence.

Kozhokin's insight is simple: if the Kremlin establishes loyalty bonds in these transit countries before relocators reach the EU, the risk decreases that they become permanently West-oriented. Programs in Armenia and Georgia include not only economic incentives but also cultural infrastructure—"Russian Houses," family-oriented events, and educational opportunities anchoring the diaspora to Russian narratives even far from Moscow's geographic control.

IFRI's strategy presupposes that the diaspora reaches Europe primarily. Kozhokin's strategy aims to capture them during their journey.

Cultural Identity Struggle: European Values versus Soviet Nostalgia

Both strategies acknowledge that the question of identity is decisive. But they offer diametrically opposite answers to what it means to be Russian abroad.

IFRI proposes that the relocators' strength lies in their ability to become "Russian Europeans"—people who share European values, can integrate into Western society, and thereby break the image Putin has created of Russia as a monolithic enemy. The authors emphasize that the new diaspora is much less religious, more tolerant, more willing to learn languages in their new home countries, and more critical toward the regime than earlier emigrant waves. Integration is both means and goal.

Kozhokin responds with another offer: *"a Soviet Union they know nothing about—a Soviet Union of flourishing creative thinking."* Instead of European values, he advocates a reconnection to an idealized Soviet cultural heritage that can function as emotional attachment to the homeland without requiring political loyalty. By using "Russian Houses" as platforms for family-oriented culture and cultural programs, he targets specifically the younger generation that did not experience the Soviet Union themselves.

This is a deep strategic choice. By offering Soviet nostalgia instead of European integration, the Kremlin creates a cultural counterweight that does not require political conformity yet maintains cultural ties. It is subtler than direct propaganda—culture operates at a level where the individual does not perceive themselves as influenced. Music, language, family traditions, nostalgia—they filter in through everyday life and feel like one's own choice. Belonging is harder to question than a

political opinion. When identity is shaped, politics often follows as a natural consequence, not as a requirement. Therefore, culture is a deeper and more enduring instrument than propaganda.

To understand the depth of differences requires a systematic comparison of the two strategies' overall orientations:

Aspect	IFRI Position	Kozhokin Position
1. Nature of Migration	"Relocation"—temporary, systemic, many plan to return	Diaspora is permanent and should be stabilized as loyal resource for Russia
2. Target Group Profile	Highly educated, young, European values, critical of Putin	Divided into three groups: loyalists, pragmatists, oppositionists—focus on winning/keeping the first
3. Economic Role	Capital and competence should aid Western Europe's economy	Capital and competence should strengthen Russia's influence in the near abroad (South Caucasus, Central Asia)
4. Integration vs. Loyalty	Integrate into the Western world—become "Russian Europeans"	Confirm Russian identity—"Russian Houses," family-oriented programs, Soviet creative nostalgia
5. Geographic Priority	EU (Germany, France, Cyprus, Poland)	South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) + Africa and Asia
6. Strategic Purpose	Weaken Russia through "brain drain"	Strengthen Russia through mobilizing diaspora as soft power tool

The Fundamental Contradiction: IFRI's vision builds on the idea that Russians *can* become something other than what the Kremlin prescribes—that identity is fluid, that values can be swapped. Kozhokin sees identity as something stable that must be *controlled*, not transformed. This contradiction is not merely cultural—it is existential. If IFRI is right, then the diaspora is a resource Europe can capture through the right institutions. If Kozhokin is right, then the diaspora is a resource Russia must retain through the right narrative. And it is precisely this struggle that will define which path millions of relocators choose before the EU has even begun discussing common rules.

Time and Speed: The Decisive Variable

One of the most critical differences between the two strategies is tactical speed. The IFRI report was published in June 2024, and its recommendations require long-term EU political consensus to implement. Between decision and enforcement lie months or years of member-state negotiations, legislative processes, and administrative implementation.

Kozhokin's document, however, came in December 2025 after the Kremlin already had 18 months to study IFRI's arguments and formulate a counter-strategy. Moreover, Kozhokin's programs are already active in transit countries, where they can act quickly, flexibly, and without democratic procedural hurdles.

This creates an asymmetry that could prove decisive. Kozhokin does not need to wait for political decisions—he already has operational structures in place, each adapted to one of his three groups and directed toward the European arena:

Group 1 Loyalists: The Institute for Internet Development (IRI) produces and distributes state-funded multimedia content—series, games, youth material—actively reaching Russian-speaking diaspora groups in the EU.

Group 2 Pragmatists: Rybar LLC, with over 1.5 million subscribers on Telegram and sanctioned by the United Kingdom for electoral interference.

Group 3 Oppositionists: The Expert Institute for Social Research (EISI), a Kremlin-affiliated think tank sanctioned by the United Kingdom, maps diaspora political attitudes and emigration patterns.

While the EU discusses simplified residence permits and common guidelines, Kozhokin already has culture, information, and repression in place. By the time the EU finally decides to act, it may already be too late—the diaspora will have already chosen direction.

Kozhokin's Footprints in the EU: Evidence of Ongoing Influence 2026

That Kozhokin's strategy is not theoretical is demonstrated by concrete information operations already affecting the EU's media ecosystem. The following examples, all documented during 2026, show how the Kremlin's three-group model operationally penetrates European institutions, media platforms, and even AI systems:

1. Doppelgänger Clones. Fake websites imitating *Le Monde*, *Bild*, and *The Guardian* spread pro-Russian articles with falsified registries, fake fiscal policy, and "official" announcements. The campaign, first identified by EU DisinfoLab and still active through 2026, uses typosquatting domains and AI-generated content to create an illusion of established journalism. The U.S. Department of Justice seized 32 domains in September 2024, but the operation has resurfaced under new names—a proof that the Kremlin considers this channel strategically worth investing in. *This is Group 1 in practice: culture and information activating loyalty through appearing as established authority.*

2. Chatbots Citing RT. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) documented in June 2026 that ChatGPT cited RT articles in responses to questions about Ukrainian war crimes in several cases alongside verified Western sources like the UN and Reuters. The RT article was retrieved from an Azerbaijani reposting with limited visibility in the studied countries. The AI system thus inserted Russian state media into an information space where human fact-checking does not reach. *This is Group 2 in practice: the Kremlin narrative reaches pragmatists' information consumption via algorithms that format-wash the source.*

3. RT Accounts Circumvent EU Blockades. NewsGuard reported in July 2026 that RT, despite EU sanctions, has resurfaced on X under new accounts that quickly accumulated millions of views. Meanwhile, individual RT journalists drive personal Telegram channels republishing RT material in Arabic and English—a tactic exploiting decentralized platforms where EU blocking is difficult to enforce. The EU Court has confirmed that even free-financed websites are covered by sanctions, but enforcement lags behind. *This is Group 2's infrastructure: channels delivering "utility content" (news, analysis) with embedded narrative, beyond EU's reach.*

4. EEAS FIMI Report. The EEAS report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) documented in March 2026 how RT and other Russian state media systematically discredit Ukraine and reformulate EU support as profiteering. Through selective quoting from Western

reporting, a narrative is created where Europe acts in selfish interests rather than defense of sovereignty. The report notes that more than one hundred countries were attacked by FIMI operations during the past year. *This is Group 3 in practice: narrative falsification directed at groups IFRI report's authors themselves belong to—oppositionists and European decision-makers supporting sanctions.*

5. AI-Generated Content Cloning. U.S. Cyber Command confirmed in August 2026 that Russian actors use generative AI to create fake articles on cloned media platforms with automated bot networks amplifying content and bypassing platform moderation. The campaign is linked to Social Design Agency and Structura National Technologies, the same network driving the Doppelgänger operation. Generative AI lowers the cost per fake article nearly to zero and enables volumes overwhelming fact-checking. *This is tomorrow's infrastructure for all three groups: scalable, cheap, and self-reinforcing influence operating below traditional media radar.*

What These Examples Show

Together the five cases illustrate operationality matching Kozhokin's model point for point:

Group	Operational Manifestation	Description
Group 1 Loyalists	Doppelgänger clones	Culture and fake authority activating belonging
Group 2 Pragmatists	Chatbots citing RT; RT accounts circumventing blockades	Narrative injected into daily consumption via AI and social media
Group 3 Oppositionists	EEAS FIMI report on RT framing of EU support	Selective quote usage discrediting EU support for Ukraine
All Groups	AI-generated content cloning	Scalable infrastructure lowering influence cost to near zero

These are not future scenarios. This is documented, ongoing activity from 2026. While the EU discusses simplified residence permits for Russian relocators, the Kremlin has already established an information infrastructure reaching European citizens directly through their news feeds, search engines, and AI assistants.

Risk Analysis: Five Critical Points

Based on the analysis of the two strategies and the operational structures already existing, we can identify five risk levels where Kozhokin poses a direct threat to IFRI's vision. Each point below is written to show why an updated version of the IFRI report needs to include concrete organization names and operational mechanisms—not just strategic principles.

Critical Risk Point 4: Europe Is Wasting an Opportunity. Kozhokin's focus on South Caucasus gives the Kremlin a physical platform for influence exactly where relocators find themselves before reaching the EU. Europe's bureaucratic slowness meets the Kremlin's faster influence. The window to capture the diaspora may close before the EU manages to act.

Why the update is needed: Without specific examples like **IRI's multimedia production** and **Venice Biennale 2026** as operational nodes for loyalty binding, the risk remains abstract. With names in the text, it becomes clear the Kremlin does not *plan* its cultural infrastructure—it *already*

exists, with competitors able to measure budget, audience, and geographic spread. European decision-makers need to see the competitor's tools to understand tempo and resource competition.

Critical Risk Point 6: Active Brain Drain Policy. Kozhokin proposes categorization and "counter-influence strategies" against oppositionists. He works actively to limit brain drain through loyalty programs, cultural initiatives, and economic incentives. If the Kremlin wins this struggle, IFRI's entire strategic argumentation collapses.

Why the update is needed: When the text mentions **Rybar LLC** (1.5 million Telegram subscribers, sanctioned by the UK for election interference in Moldova and Armenia) and **EISI's mapping of diaspora political attitudes**, readers understand the opponent does not merely have rhetoric—it has measurable reach and operational intelligence. An updated report must be able to point to specific actors the EU can track, sanction, or counter. Abstract terms like "counter-influence" are no longer sufficient.

High Risk Point 1: Relocation as a Temporary Process. Many relocators see themselves as temporary and consider returning. Kozhokin categorizes the diaspora and works actively to win loyalty, especially among those undecided. By offering cultural anchorage, he reduces the threshold for returning or staying in Russia's near abroad.

Why the update is needed: **IRI's children and youth programs** and the Venice Biennale as a platform for family-oriented cultural events show how one works with identity rather than politics. When Kozhokin's target group is precisely "pragmatists who have not taken a stand," the IFRI report must be able to point to which exact cultural channels the Kremlin uses—otherwise the counter-argument becomes general and inadequate.

High Risk Point 2: Highly Skilled Workforce. Russian competence is a resource Europe should capture. Kozhokin identifies the same competence as a strategic asset Russia must retain or regain. By offering career opportunities in South Caucasus and border countries, he creates alternative destination choices.

Why the update is needed: Without concrete examples of **Rybar's professional content** (maps, analysis, data cited by CNN and Bloomberg), EU leaders do not understand that the Kremlin's message reaches precisely the target group they seek to attract. An updated report must show which information channels the diaspora actually consumes and that the counter-strategy has already established credibility.

Medium-High Risk Point 3: Economic Power Against Russia. Capital and competence from relocators should weaken Putin's economic structure by flowing to the West. Kozhokin proposes economic incentives binding diaspora entrepreneurs to Russian interests in South Caucasus. Capital flow can go in the wrong direction—toward the Kremlin's near abroad instead of the EU.

Why the update is needed: Here the connection is needed between **EISI's research work** and the July 2026 "treason law" which strips property rights and bank accounts. This shows the risk is not merely that capital flows incorrectly—it is that capital can be *frozen* if the diaspora does not join the Kremlin's narrative framework. An updated report must include the legal toolbox the Kremlin uses, so the EU can build counter-protection.

Summary: The Utility of an Updated IFRI Report

In summary, the deepening concerns moving from *what* should be done (IFRI's original text) to *how* the opponent actually acts (your analysis with concrete organizations). An updated report gives European decision-makers three concrete advantages:

1. **Measurability** Named actors can be tracked, their activities quantified, and success/failure measured over time.
2. **Time Consciousness** When readers see that IRI, Rybar, EISI, and the Venice Biennale are already operational, they understand the EU cannot afford slow decision-making.
3. **Counter-Tools** Knowing what the opponent uses allows the EU to choose corresponding channels (cultural funds, media investments, legal protection) instead of merely declaring principled positions.

Without these three dimensions, the IFRI report risks becoming an academic exercise published and forgotten, replaced by the Kremlin's actual strategy before the EU has managed to respond.

The Paradox: Freedom Cannot Be Imposed, Simone Weil and Cultural Identity

Philosopher Simone Weil formulated a fundamental insight in *The Need for Roots*: "To have roots is perhaps humanity's most important need, but also the most neglected." She argued that freedom is not abstraction—it must be grounded in a sense of belonging. Without roots, freedom becomes empty; without freedom, roots become a cage.

Both strategies face the same paradox: freedom cannot be imposed from outside. One cannot force a nation into moral change—it must be chosen internally.

IFRI's answer: The new diaspora's strength lies in the ability to become "Russian Europeans"—people who share European values, can integrate into Western society, and thereby break the image of Russia as a monolithic enemy. The integration process should not only grant residence permits and bank accounts; it must create cultural roots. As Weil hints: without roots, relocators remain temporary guests, never full members.

Kozhokin's answer: Instead of European values, he advocates reconnection to an idealized Soviet cultural heritage—a "Soviet Union of flourishing creative thinking"—which can serve as emotional attachment without requiring political loyalty. Through "Russian Houses," family-oriented programs, and nostalgic culture, he targets younger generations who never experienced the Soviet Union.

The Strategic Choice: By offering Soviet nostalgia instead of European integration, the Kremlin creates a cultural counterweight that does not require political conformity yet maintains cultural ties. It is subtler than direct propaganda—culture operates at a level where the individual does not perceive themselves as influenced. Music, language, family traditions, nostalgia—they filter through everyday life and feel like one's own choice. Belonging is harder to question than a political opinion.

Why the IFRI Report Needs This Dimension: If IFRI wishes to win this struggle, it must not only offer political protection or economic incentives—it must offer roots. An updated version needs to show how:

- **Venice Biennale 2026** Russia's return after four years of absence is not merely art. It is the Kremlin's claim that "we own culture, we define what it means to be Russian." Europe needs to match this with its own cultural presence, not merely diplomatic protests.
- **IRI's Multimedia Production** Children and youth content, series, games—reaches exactly the generations Kozhokin targets. IFRI's report must identify these channels and propose corresponding investments: not state propaganda, but support for independent Russian-speaking creators offering alternative narratives.
- **Identity Struggle** Is not abstract. It plays out in living rooms in Berlin, Paris, Warsaw where relocators ask: "Who am I now? Am I still Russian? Can I become something else?" IFRI's report needs to answer these questions, not merely legal or economic ones.

The Update's Value: A report weaving in cultural and identity-creating value gives the EU three concrete advantages:

1. **Target Group Precision** Reaching pragmatists who have not taken political stands but seek cultural belonging.
2. **Speed Advantage** Culture can be built faster than legislation. The means already exist—they simply need mobilization.
3. **Endurance** Political opinions can change. Identity and belonging live on.

Without this dimension, IFRI risks offering freedom as a cage—legal rights and bank accounts without roots. Kozhokin offers roots without freedom—nostalgia without independence. The choice between them becomes the choice between two types of captivity.

The question is whether there exists a third way—a Russian identity requiring neither European assimilation nor Soviet nostalgia. But that question can only be answered by the diaspora itself. Europe's task is to offer the alternative—not dictate the answer.

Conclusion: A Time-Critical Struggle

Kozhokin and IFRI represent two parallel strategies for the same challenge—the struggle over the Russian diaspora's future. IFRI describes how Europe ought to act to maximize its opportunities. Kozhokin shows how the Kremlin actually acts to minimize these opportunities.

Timing is decisive. Kozhokin already has an 18-month head start and active programs in transit countries. IFRI's recommendations require long-term political consensus taking time to build. While the EU discusses, the Kremlin has already begun working.

Europe cannot merely "offer" integration—they must actively create incentives matching or exceeding the Kremlin's loyalty programs. And they must do so quickly. Otherwise, they risk losing the struggle over the diaspora before it has even landed in the EU.

"We are defending not only people from influence—we must also defend the very infrastructures (including AI) that we all use."

This is not a technical question about immigration policy. It is an existential struggle over which worldview the Russian diaspora will adopt—European integration or Russian cultural reconnection. The outcome will define the relationship between Russia and Europe for decades to come.

But the question is whether these two alternatives are truly the only ones—or whether there exists a third Russian identity that both strategies miss.

"Neither addresses the deeper question: what is a Russian identity requiring neither European integration nor Soviet nostalgia?"