

# **International Activities of Russian Museums as a Tool for Justifying Aggressive War**

**(February 2022 - August 2024)**

## **General Situation**

The Russian Federation positions its culture as an "export" and "offensive" sector designed to promote Russia's interests in international interactions.

Museum institutions occupy a prominent place in Moscow's cultural activities abroad. For a long time, the Western vector was the main focus. After 1991, Russian museums consistently developed their presence in Europe and America, creating branches and "friends" societies. There was active exchange of exhibitions and intensive contacts at the level of museum professionals.

In 2014, following the armed intervention and occupation of Crimea, Sevastopol, and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, the situation did not change significantly, except for the deterioration of museum relations between Russia and the United States.

Europe remained generally open to the Russian Federation, and Moscow actively used cultural instruments to distort the picture, positioning its act of aggression as a "conflict" on "historical" Russian lands, where there is no aggressor and victim of attack, but rather "parties to the conflict."

At the same time, as Russia's foreign policy vector was adjusted toward an "eastward turn," Russian museums began to develop more active contacts with Asian and African countries.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, qualitative changes took place. Russia shifted the emphasis of cultural interaction to countries of the so-called "world majority" ("Global South") in order to prevent isolation, destroy the international sanctions regime, and justify its aggressive war.

Russian museums and their leaders act clearly within the framework of the Putin regime's general policy. In 2014, a number of museum professionals, including those who held leadership positions in ICOM international committees, expressed public support for the occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Since 2022, Russian museums have supported the war through their actions and provided cover for war crimes. They also fully support the "eastward turn" in Russian policy.

Russia's public platform includes, among other things, strengthening the concept of "sovereign cultures" and their protection from "[attempts to impose](#) pseudo-humanistic and other neoliberal ideological attitudes that lead to humanity's loss of traditional spiritual and moral guidelines and moral principles."

At the tactical level, in interactions with ICOM national committees, Russians argue that "conflicts" should not interfere with professional contacts, while remaining silent about the criminal nature of the war and their role in appropriating Ukraine's museum heritage.

The quintessence of this approach is reflected in statements by Mikhail Piotrovsky, President of the Union of Museums of Russia and Director of the State Hermitage:

- In an [interview with "Rossiyskaya Gazeta"](#) on June 22, 2022: "...And our recent exhibitions abroad are simply a powerful cultural offensive. If you like, a kind of 'special operation.' Which many people don't like. But we are advancing. And no one should be allowed to interfere with our advance... This is our long-standing choice, we are inseparable from European culture and from Europe itself. The special military operation in Ukraine changes nothing here. Within Europe, there have been more than enough disagreements and wars - from the Thirty Years' War to the First World War."
- In an [interview with "Rossiyskaya Gazeta"](#) on January 10, 2024: "...In Donbas, we need to do roughly the same as we do throughout Russia when we hold Hermitage Days. Such inclusion will make them part of the same space as us. Yes, it is burning in flames, but it is part of our space. And we shouldn't do everything as if there is no special operation. There is a special operation. But the situation requires from us all kinds of non-military work as well. And the SVO [special military operation] will only be victorious if behind those who forge shells, there will also stand those who are ready for the day after Victory..."

Vasyl Pankratov, President of the Russian ICOM National Committee and Director of the "Gatchina" Museum-Reserve, declared at the "Intermuseum" festival in May 2024 the usual mode of work within ICOM at the level of international committees and frictions with certain national committees, and expressed intention to actively participate in the ICOM-2025 General Conference in Dubai.

Such activities of Russian museums violate the principles of the ICOM Code of Museum Ethics, which should be taken into account by colleagues during contacts.

## Changes in Fundamental Russian Documents Regarding International Interaction

The Russian Federation has a thorough regulatory framework on foreign policy issues, which also regulates matters of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Key and most current documents include:

- Constitution of the Russian Federation;
- National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (dated July 2, 2021);
- Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by Presidential Decree on March 31, 2023);
- Concept of Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad (approved by Presidential Decree on September 5, 2022), etc.

These documents contain blatantly false statements, such as that "Russia's foreign policy is [peace-loving](#), open, predictable, consistent, pragmatic in nature, based on respect for universally recognized principles and norms of international law and a desire for equal international cooperation to solve common tasks and promote common interests." The attack on Ukraine is hidden behind the euphemism "measures to protect vital interests in the Ukrainian direction."

One of the principles of Russian cultural policy abroad proclaimed in September 2022 (!) was [non-interference](#) in the internal affairs of other states.

In development of the provisions of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by the President of Russia on July 12, 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in 2010 developed "Main Directions of the Russian Federation's Policy in the Field of International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation." Against the background of this document, changes in approaches can be traced best.

For instance, in 2010, regional priorities for cultural interaction at the bilateral level were arranged as follows:

- CIS countries;
- G8 countries;
- USA;
- Europe, in particular, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and other Western European countries were emphasized;
- Slavic countries;
- Baltic countries - taking into account attitudes toward the Russian-speaking population;
- Asia-Pacific countries, particularly China, India, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, and other countries whose natives received education in the USSR/Russia;
- Middle East, Africa, Latin America.

In 2022, priorities at the bilateral level changed as follows:

- G20 countries (as Russia was excluded from the G8);
- CIS countries, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, "DNR," "LNR" (which Russia had "recognized" at that time but had not yet "included" into its territory);
- Baltic countries, Moldova, and Georgia - taking into account attitudes toward the Russian-speaking population;
- Slavic countries;
- "Preserving Russia in European cultural interaction" (without mentioning countries);
- Russian diaspora;
- Asia-Pacific countries, with special emphasis on China and India, as well as Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos;
- Detailed emphasis on the need to develop relations with countries of the Middle and Near East, Africa, Latin America. While in 2010 it referred to the Palestinian National Authority, in 2022 it referred to the State of Palestine.

Thus, the status of the Western vector significantly decreased. This was even more evident in the foreign policy concept approved in 2023. The USA and Anglo-Saxon countries are portrayed as the main enemy, the European direction is treated according to the residual principle, while among the main priorities are China and India, the Islamic world, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Museum activities since 2022 fully reflect this change in priorities.

## **Main International Formats of Russian Museums' Work**

Russian cultural diplomacy is built on the use of several established templates, some of which are also present in the practices of other countries.

In particular, the starting point for interaction is often **official and state visits at high level**, following which framework documents are concluded at the level of heads of state or government.

Subsequently, these agreements are deepened and detailed at the level of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, including through the approval of bilateral **cultural cooperation programs and plans for 3 years**.

Russia applies the following main forms of cultural cooperation:

- **"Cross-year of history/culture/tourism..."**, within which dozens of exchange events take place in Russia and another country. This is the highest form of interaction. Usually, a "year" is announced in honor of a notable date - an anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations or the conclusion of an important bilateral agreement;
- **"Days of Culture"** - most often last up to a week and are used with countries where interaction is just being established;
- **"Days of Russian Spiritual Culture"** - a program involving thematic events with the support of the Russian Orthodox Church, or concerning spiritual monuments.
- **"Russian Seasons"** - touring events of Russian theaters and musical groups, accompanied by museum events.

Russia often combines formats depending on needs. For example, **"Days of Russian Spiritual Culture" in South Africa** are planned for September 5-9, 2024. The program of the "days" includes tours of "Russian Seasons," as well as an exhibition of the State Historical Museum of the Russian Federation "Novodevichy Monastery. On the 500th Anniversary of its Founding."

Since 2021, an integral part of preparing "years" and "days" has been conducting **museum road-shows** abroad, which involve the heads of leading Russian museums demonstrating the capabilities of their institutions for further exchange of exhibitions and other events.

An important element of bilateral cooperation is **"museum forums/summits,"** which are most often included in the program of "years" or "days." They are designed to ensure direct horizontal contacts and intensify cooperation.

With some countries, Russia had/has established **bilateral cultural forums** with a museum component. For example, Russian-Finnish Cultural Forums were held annually from 2000 to 2022.

A separate form of promoting the Russian agenda through museum means is **"anniversary years"** of prominent figures in science, culture, statesmen, etc. Events in different countries are created within the program of "years."

After aggravating relations with the "collective West" and activating the theme of "sovereign culture," Russia, in addition to traditional cultural exchange, began to intensively invest in the development of existing and creation of new **international cultural cooperation platforms on its territory**.

The main, **"umbrella" platform** is the annual international cultural forum in St. Petersburg, which was resumed in 2023 after a break with a change in concept - as the **Forum of United Cultures**. Among the guests, it was attended by about 30 ministers of culture from Asian and African countries, with whom Russians consolidated relations. The 10th Forum will take place in September 2024.

The main Russian industry event is the international festival **"Intermuseum,"** which from 2024 was decided to be divided into 2 parts: a spring forum and an autumn expo. This is a traditional and well-known event, which is also now focused on the "world majority."

In 2022, the Russian authorities established an international **Children's Cultural Forum** (held for the third time in August 2024), and in 2023 - the **World Youth Festival** (the first was held in 2024 in the federal territory "Sirius," Sochi).

These events are designed to expand Russia's influence on new audiences. Each event contains a museum component (visits, special events, etc.). For example, in March 2024, participants of the youth festival were shown an extremely tendentious exhibition by the Museum of Contemporary History of Russia "[NATO: History of Deception](#)," which was planned and consciously prepared since autumn 2023.

Russia is trying to create international products for all major genres of culture and art. In particular, in recent years, Russia has actively promoted the Russian Films Festival abroad, and in 2024 initiated the creation of the **Eurasian Film Academy** to award the Eurasian Film Prize from 2025 (as an alternative to the "Oscar" and leading European film festivals). The international song contest "Intervision," which during Soviet times was an analogue of "Eurovision" for the countries of the "socialist camp," has been revived. Sports tournaments are being duplicated.

This is a way to "find keys" to countries with different interests. In fact, Russia already has a universal set that allows the Kremlin to "enter" any country of the "world majority." Especially those that have limited contacts with Europe and America.

Museums are closely integrated into this process both as creators of self-sufficient products and as auxiliary players.

For example, in July 2023, the Second "Russia-Africa" Summit was held in St. Petersburg. The aforementioned M. Piotrovsky [noted museum events](#) that created a hospitable background: *"...An exhibition of contemporary African art 'Inverted Safari' is being held in the 'Manezh.' The Russian Museum has an exhibition 'Africa in Russian Art.' The Hermitage is opening an exhibition of African sculpture for the summit."*

In development of the African vector, the head of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, instructed the creation of a Museum of Africa from the collections of Russian museums.

The danger is that Russian authorities at the level of strategic planning documents for international interaction place special emphasis on public accompaniment of events using traditional and new media. It is particularly emphasized that support should be provided before, during, and after events.

In the free world, it is already known that Russian or Russian-loyal media are sources of disinformation, propaganda, and fake news. Given the scale of Russian pressure, audiences in "Global South" countries will be vulnerable to this kind of influence.

Another means of scaling Russian cultural influence is the activity of the network of "**Russian Houses**" (or Russian cultural centers), which are part of diplomatic institutions and work under the auspices of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (**Rossotrudnichestvo**). Since 2022, museum events in European cities have been taking place on the basis of these institutions.

Also, a network of "virtual branches" of the Russian Museum has been deployed on the basis of the media libraries of "Russian houses" (171 branches in Russia and abroad are declared).

Rossotrudnichestvo is decisively influenced by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation; representatives of Rossotrudnichestvo have repeatedly been exposed for activities that contradict the mission of diplomats.

In addition, partner "Russian houses," public organizations, and interest-based institutions work in Russia's interests. These entities are very often directed, financed, or have other connections with structures that are closely linked to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service.

Thus, the Russian Federation possesses a diverse cultural toolkit for influencing international audiences to achieve foreign policy goals. Museums are integrated into this work at a systemic level. The result is the use of museums as a screen to mask war crimes, as well as a kind of "keys" to "unlock" countries where Russian authorities have interests to ensure war.

De facto, museums are part of Russia's policy of deploying a global confrontation between autocracies and democracies.

This contradicts the mission of the museum and distorts it in the interests of international criminals.

## Activities and Plans on the Eve of the Full-Scale Invasion

2021, the year preceding Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, was special due to the fact that it was a period of partial recovery and return to offline formats after the strict restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, "Russian Seasons" were planned for 2020-21 in France, Belgium, Luxembourg. As a result, they were partially held in France at the beginning of 2020, and resumed in Belgium in mid-2021. Also, at the end of 2021, "Russian Seasons" took place in South Korea.

In 2020, a "cross-year" between Russia and **Kyrgyzstan** was announced, but it was suspended and resumed in July 2021, ending in December 2022.

In 2021, the Year of Humanitarian Cooperation between Russia and **Egypt** began, during which a Russian museum road-show took place in June 2021, and the "year" ended in July 2022 with a cultural forum in Cairo.

2021 was declared the "Year of **SCO** Culture," in which context the first museum summit of SCO countries took place in Tula.

The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation also proposed to hold a road-show and museum summit in Qatar.

In the fall of 2021, there was a large-scale return of Russian museum formats to Europe.

The key professional event was the announcement in 2021 of the "cross" **Year of Museums between Russia and Italy**, within which a Russian-Italian museum summit was held on September 30, 2021, with the participation of the ministers of culture of both countries. Representatives of leading museums participated, a number of large-scale exhibition projects were opened, and 60 events were planned for 2022.

Also in 2021, the "Year of History" between **Russia and Greece** began, accompanied by a series of exhibitions, most of which were planned for 2022.

In September 2021, a number of powerful exhibitions opened in **France**. In particular, French President E. Macron opened an exhibition of paintings from the collections of leading Russian museums (State Hermitage, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, etc.) at the Louis Vuitton Foundation. Macron publicly thanked the head of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, personally for his contribution to organizing this exhibition.

In October 2021, the Tretyakov Gallery presented the exhibition "Ilya Repin" at the Petit Palais art museum in Paris.

Also in September 2021, the **Russian-Serbian** museum forum and the XXII **Russian-Finnish** cultural forum were held in an online format.

In general, on the eve of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, 27 significant exhibitions of Russian museums were in Europe, containing more than 1,500 items. In addition, branches of the Hermitage operated in Amsterdam (Netherlands) and the Russian Museum in Malaga (Spain).

That is, for more than seven years of Russia's war against Ukraine, Russian museums were one of the tools that allowed the aggressor to mask the essence of its actions, to maintain influence on public opinion in leading countries - Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, etc. This is one of the reasons why European societies were unable to recognize the threat and now retain illusions about the Russian Federation.

Moscow worked to maintain contacts in the West while developing the eastern vector. 2022 was supposed to be very rich in museum and other cultural events in Europe.

For 2022, "Russian Seasons" were planned in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway (canceled).

For 2021, a "cross-year of theater and literature" between Russia and Austria was planned, but meetings of the countries' museum and theater communities and holding a Russian museum road-show in Vienna were postponed to 2022 (canceled).

For several years, Russia had been preparing at the state level to celebrate in 2022 the 350th anniversary of the birth of Emperor Peter I. In 2021, the Assembly of Petrine Museums was created (over 100 participants). The action plan included 157 positions, including 7 exhibitions with museum items and 21 stand exhibitions.

It was planned to create the first European cultural route under the auspices of the Council of Europe in honor of Peter I with headquarters in Russia (the idea was supported by France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria) and to close the anniversary year with the International Petrine Congress in Amsterdam at the Hermitage branch in early 2023.

The full-scale attack on Ukraine crossed out these and other plans.

## **International Activity of Russian Museums Since February 2022**

*List of main international events - in Appendix 1.*

*Activities regarding occupied territories in the period June - August 2024 - in Appendix 2.*

The first half of 2022 was marked by the curtailment of Russian exhibition projects in Europe and the return of items, which lasted until the beginning of July 2022.

In particular, the Russian Museum exported its entire collection and de facto closed its branch in Spain, the Moscow Kremlin Museums returned Fabergé eggs and other exhibits (including the largest known egg "Moscow Kremlin") from the exhibition "Fabergé in London: From Romance to Revolution," which was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. There was a public distancing of the Hermitage branch in Amsterdam from the Russian museum (however, there are assumptions about the preservation of non-public contacts and readiness for public restoration of interaction).

Other planned events were canceled (exhibition of the Moscow Kremlin Museums in the Vatican, exhibition of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in the London Art Gallery, projects in France, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, etc.).

On March 3, 2022, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation non-publicly imposed a "temporary" ban on the export of museum items abroad due to fears of seizure as a result of sanctions (this restriction became known only in July 2022). The restriction is still in effect, with only two exceptions made - for events in China and the Sultanate of Oman.

On March 10, 2022, Russian museums were excluded from the "Bizot group" - an informal association of the world's most influential museums that promoted a common agenda for protecting collections, coordinating museum policies, etc.

The Russian authorities acted for some time in conditions of uncertainty because no one could predict the duration of the war, which did not go according to the Kremlin's plan. Even in July 2022, at a meeting with an Indian delegation, representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation invited them to the international cultural forum in St. Petersburg, which was planned for September. In September, it was first postponed to October 2022, and then canceled due to "inadequacy to the situation."

The participation of foreign representatives in the expert councils of Russian museums and other formats was "suspended."

Gradually, a framework of actions was formed, which included the following main elements:

- Increasing activity and inter-museum contacts within the Russian Federation;
- Integration of occupied territories through museum means (begun in the summer of 2022 with the "Our Traditions" project in the captured Luhansk region),
- Integration of Ukraine's captured museum heritage in temporarily occupied territories into the Russian Federation's museum space;
- Preservation and building up of contacts with loyal countries (Belarus, Armenia, Serbia, Central Asian countries, etc.);
- "Turn to the East," forced development of contacts with countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America;
- Maintaining a formal presence in Western countries (by organizing exhibitions in "Russian houses" and other controlled venues);
- Creation in the Russian Federation of "mirror" projects to large museum events in Europe in order to emphasize the incompleteness of European heritage and cultural losses due to Russia's exclusion.

Since 2022, Russia has been developing the most active museum partnership with Belarus and China, among other priority areas - the countries of Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. Serbia remains a center of Russian presence in Europe, contacts with Hungary are maintained (but this is more related to music). In May 2022, a memorandum on cooperation in the field of museum affairs of the SCO countries was concluded.

Gradually, efforts to change the geography of events bore fruit.

In 2022, Russian "days" (of culture, spirituality, etc.) took place in Belarus, Armenia, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania. In 2023, in Africa, the Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and South Africa were added, as well as Cuba, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, Serbia, and Iran.

In September 2022, a museum road-show was held in Kazakhstan within the framework of the meeting of the Council on Cultural Cooperation of the CIS States, in October - in Armenia, and in November 2022, the first Russia-Uzbekistan museum conference was organized.

In December - the first Russian-Bahraini Cultural Forum and the first Russian-Bahraini Museum Dialogue with a road-show of leading museums. In 2023, as part of the "Days of Russia," a Russian-Tajik museum forum was held.



Geography of "Russian Seasons": 2023 - Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan; 2024 - Brazil, South Africa; 2025 (plan) - Oman and Bahrain.

In May 2023, the first Russian-Belarusian museum forum took place.

In 2023, days of Russian culture were held in Vietnam (in particular, an agreement on cooperation between the State Museum of Political History of Russia and the Ho Chi Minh Museum was signed), and in July 2024 - mirror days of Vietnam in Russia.

Russia also organizes events based on the collections of its museums, which serve as a background for developing relations with target countries. In addition to the already mentioned exhibitions on African themes, in 2023 there were exhibitions concerning the heritage and traditions of India, Cambodia, Indonesia, etc.

In the European direction, events were structured through the platforms of "Russian houses" in Paris, Rome, Berlin, Luxembourg, Vienna, Sofia, Belgrade, etc.

Based on agreements with Rossotrudnichestvo, events dedicated to M. Glinka, S. Rachmaninoff, F. Chaliapin, G. Ulanova, M. Plisetskaya, and other cultural figures were held mainly by two museums - the State Central Theater Museum named after A.A. Bakhrushin (Bakhrushin Museum) and the Russian National Museum of Music.

Some regional museums of federal significance are also represented, in particular, the State Museum "Smolensk Fortress." This institution is one of the basic ones in relations with Belarus.

Among the most illustrative examples: In June 2023, the museum "Smolensk Fortress" presented the event "Fortress of the Slavic Word" in Slovenia (Bogenšperk Castle). The peculiarity is that in 2019, the Russian-Slovenian Center named after Davorin Hostnik was opened in this castle. According to the established template, which is reproduced in different countries, the activities of the institution are accompanied by the Russian Historical Society, headed by the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, Sergei Naryshkin.

Individual regional museums are also involved in international activities. For example, the Orenburg Museum of Fine Arts has repeatedly presented its signature exhibition - downy shawls ("cobwebs"). In September 2023, a shawl depicting former Chilean President Salvador Allende was exhibited by the "Russian House" in Santiago. In February 2024, an exhibition of shawls was presented at the Russian House of Science and Culture in Luxembourg. In July 2024, in the context of the "Russian Seasons" in Brazil, a shawl was exhibited in Rio de Janeiro at an exhibition of traditional Russian crafts.

In April 2024, the "cross" Year of Cultural Exchanges and Tourism between Russia and Thailand was opened, expanding the geography of the Russian presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Special attention should be paid to the systematic work of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, which is part of the general policy of the Russian authorities, carried out in a coordinated manner by various bodies.

In particular, the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, Olga Lyubimova (under international sanctions), not only represents Russia at international meetings in a multilateral format (SCO, CIS, BRICS, "Russia-Africa" forum, etc.), but is also constantly involved in international visits of the Russian leadership and personally visits target countries.

In December 2022, Lyubimova participated in the Asian Cultural Cooperation Forum (Hong Kong, China). She also visited Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Brazil. In

total, she held meetings with dozens of ministers of culture who visited the Russian Federation, in particular, within the framework of the Forum of United Cultures in St. Petersburg.

At the level of deputy ministers, Russia was represented in a wide range of countries - from North Korea to Egypt. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has signed cooperation programs for 3-4 years with Algeria, Abkhazia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, and other countries.

Currently, Russian officials have developed a standard museum offer for counterparts:

- invitation to participate in events on the territory of the Russian Federation (Forum in St. Petersburg, festival "Intermuseum," children's and youth events, etc.),
- arrange "days"/"year"/thematic events for the anniversary of a prominent figure, other exchange events;
- as preparation, conduct a museum road-show, and in development - a museum summit;
- agree on a cooperation program for 3-4 years.

The offer is strengthened by events from other art genres (music, cinema, theater, etc.).

Among special projects, the establishment of permanent mirror platforms (halls) in the State Hermitage and the National Museum of Oman should be noted, which is the result of many years of cooperation.

Cultural exchange between Russia and **China** is taking on an unprecedented character.

Since mid-2022, the museum "Gorki Leninskie" has been chosen as an object of constant attention from China in Moscow. China provides technical assistance, and this museum is regularly visited by official delegations from China and Chinese citizens during visits.

In 2023, there was an intensive process of concluding bilateral agreements on cooperation between Russian and Chinese museums.

The culmination was the announcement during the state visit to China by the head of the Russian Federation, V. Putin, in May 2024, of the "cross" year of cultures between Russia and China 2024-2025.

More than 230 events are planned in 51 cities in China and 38 cities in Russia. This includes 30 museum exhibitions, which will involve the Hermitage, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Moscow Kremlin Museums, the State Historical Museum, etc.

Chinese museums are developing contacts with museums in the Russian Far East, specialists from China are involved in restoration projects, etc. That is, this is about intensive bilateral cooperation, which until 2014 Russia tried to build with European countries.

There is now a certain specialization of museum events.

Events of historical and ideological orientation are intensively held in the regions of the Russian Federation and in the occupied territories of Ukraine. For presence in Europe, musical, theatrical, and literary heritage is used more, as it is sufficiently well-known, universal, and suitable for presentation in the form of photo and stand exhibitions. Items of decorative and applied arts are also demonstrated. Valuable items, paintings - China, Oman.

Of particular importance for the development of international museum contacts of the Russian Federation are the Forum of United Cultures in St. Petersburg and the festival "Intermuseum." At these venues, the Russian Federation acts as a moderator and donor of knowledge, trying to be a center of gravity for those states that are unable or for other reasons not involved in partnership interaction with leading European countries and the USA.

De facto, museums are part of Russia's policy of deploying a global confrontation between autocracies and democracies.

This contradicts the mission of the museum and distorts it in the interests of international criminals.

Given the danger created by the masking of aggressive war by museum means, it is advisable to consider options for limiting cooperation with Russian museums. For example, through limiting the interaction of Western countries with those states/museums that accept Russian products. This will be particularly relevant for the Gulf states, to some extent - for China. As well as imposing personal sanctions on individuals who most actively defend aggression, violate Ukraine's borders, and support the occupying army.

The absence of a reaction will lead to museums ceasing to unite people at the global level.