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‘A Lot of Devil in This’: Russians Use Tarot Cards to Predict Peace in Ukraine

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Alina Vilchenko / pexels

“The King of Wands often represents our president, Vladimir Vladimirovich,” says Ksenia, a Russian tarot reader, as she points to the last card in her spread.

She is interpreting the outcome of potential peace talks between the Kremlin and Washington over the war in Ukraine. Thirteen cards lie before her, each telling part of the story.

The King of Wands is a card of leadership and confidence — but in this reading, Ksenia has also drawn a card with the opposite meaning: the Devil card.

“There will be a lot of manipulation on both sides in this matter,” she warns, pointing to the Devil card. “There’s a lot of devilish energy in this. I’m just telling it like it is.”

Since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who vows to broker a deal to end the war in Ukraine, videos with tarot predictions have proliferated on Russian social media.

Tarot readers speculate on when the war will end, the future of Ukraine and Russia after a ceasefire, and even President Vladimir Putin's mental state.

"You're right. America will never accept Ukraine's defeat. And it will always seek to gain an advantage," writes Lyudmila, one of Ksenia's followers, in the comments.

Ksenia links the warnings in her reading to Trump's duplicitous nature.

"He can show us one thing, but in fact, something completely different is happening. There's a reason the Moon and the Devil come up for me," Ksenia explains. In tarot, the Moon is a card of illusion and ambiguity.

Another type of tarot reading focuses on Ukraine's territorial integrity, as well as the political fate of Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

Tarot reader Yekaterina holds cards symbolizing death and concessions. She asks whether Russia's borders will change as a result of a peace agreement.

"Russia will potentially step away from the territories it's currently holding," she explains as she examines the cards. A bit later, she adds: "But everything that's already part of Russia legally — that will stay."

Yekaterina has been reading tarot for over three years. When she first started, she posted videos about psychology and relationships. But since early 2022, she has turned to asking the cards about Russia's fate, Putin's future and the end of the war in Ukraine.

In her most popular video, Yekaterina asks whether the Ukrainian city of Dnipro will become part of Russia.

Looking at cards depicting a wasp's nest and the ancient Greek goddess Demeter, she concludes: "The city has strong protection. Even getting close to it will be difficult."

Yekaterina declined to speak to The Moscow Times.

"The questions are too provocative given the current political climate and restrictions on freedom of speech," she said in a voice message on Telegram.

Psychologist Veronika Neifakh said that the popularity of practices like tarot is connected to the broader human need to regain a sense of control in times of uncertainty and crises.

"Uncertainty can be even more frightening than knowing something bad has already happened," Neifakh told The Moscow Times.

"When trying to cope with the unknown, we seek any form of certainty — that's when magical thinking kicks in. We start believing in things that once seemed completely impossible. This is often seen in people who are in despair, especially those who have lost loved ones," she said.

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During the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, demand for online tarot and magic schools grew nearly twentyfold.

Amid this surge in interest, one Russian esoteric practitioner launched an online course titled "Wartime Tarot Reader," which promises to teach participants how to answer questions about mobilization, war and emigration using tarot cards.

"Unfortunately, in 2022, tarot readers have to respond to their clients' panic and fears almost daily," the course founder wrote.

Sales of tarot cards in Russia have increased sevenfold in the past four years.

By 2023, the market for esoteric services reached nearly 2 trillion rubles (approximately $24.8 million).

Fortune-tellers are consulted for more than just political predictions; the wives of missing soldiers often contact them when searching for their husbands.

"My friend suggested I go to a psychic. I was desperate, so I did. I'm clinging to any chance I have. For me, it's important to keep searching and to believe — because I won't get any real answers from anyone," wrote Lyudmila, the wife of a Russian soldier, in a social media post.

Around 80% of tarot card buyers in Russia are women, but men also turn to the cards with questions about the war and negotiations.

One male tarot card reader, Dementiy, asks about a phone call between Putin and Trump. He wants to uncover the two leaders' hidden motives.

"Putin is looking to the future, trying to lay out a strategic course, to impose his own rules of the game," he says, pointing to the Chariot and Knight of Swords — both considered positive cards in tarot.

The U.S. position, by contrast, evokes skepticism.

"There's deception here, cunning moves, manipulation," he said, pointing to the reversed Five of Pentacles, a card often associated with rejection or negative change.

At the end of his reading, Dementiy concludes: "There was a chance for an agreement, but it was either missed or ignored. In reality, they were secretly negotiating about money and the global order." Before asking viewers to subscribe to his channel, he adds that the current talks are "just a formality for the media."

Dementiy, who discovered tarot after receiving a tarot deck as a gift, is not interested in personal questions.

"I used to be into marketing and had a bunch of different businesses. Then I realized you can gain followers quickly with this," he told The Moscow Times.

Today, Dementiy has 17,000 subscribers on YouTube.

"My geopolitical readings come true because I understand how politics works," he said. "The

cards often surprise me — their answers don't always match my own opinions."

Still, not everything has been revealed. The cards have never shown him the exact date of when Russia's "special military operation" will end, he said.

"At first, I thought it could be calculated. But with time, I realized that dates can't be predicted. The war could end in 30 minutes, or it could go on for another 20 years," he said.

Dementiy's most popular video, recorded two years ago, predicted peace in July 2023. It now has nearly 500,000 views.

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