

INTRODUCTION

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The past decade has seen a rise of interest in international studies in Russia and a broader academic public in non-Western theories of international relations (IR). Against the changing international landscape and appearance of emerging or re-emerging great and middle powers in the world arena, the West-centric theoretical framework that has traditionally dominated political and academic IR discourse and has been applied to explaining IR fell short in explaining some new trends in IR and the behavior of emerging powers or the developing world. A number of rising powers or developing regions, including but not limited to China, India, Russia, Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, have started to articulate their specific visions and approaches to IR more pronouncedly.

Moreover, a number of leading scholars (among the pioneers were A. Acharya and B. Buzan) initiated a discussion on the issue of whether there are non-Western theories of IR and, if so, what characteristics they have. It has led to a surge in publication on the issue. Scholars from different parts of the world started to conceptualize their national IR thinking and understanding of IR theory. The most vocal has been the global South scholarship on IR while comparatively less attention has been paid to the development of Russian IR theory.

This handbook aims to provide a contribution to the discussion of non-Western IR theory by offering an overview of various intellectual traditions in Russia's international studies and key IR paradigms in the post-Soviet era. There is a widespread, inaccurate belief that Russian IR theory is non-existent. Such a belief can be traced to the Soviet period experience, when, in the Soviet Union, international studies were highly politicized and mainly centered on political and ideological issues rather than theoretical ones. Moreover, at that time, they were dominated by the only paradigm – Marxist-Leninist – that did not allow other IR schools to exist and challenge its dominance. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened new horizons and created the conditions for Russian IR to develop, although at a slow pace.

International Studies: Russia's Case

According to many scholars,¹ the Russian international studies case is rather controversial. Indeed, Russia has quite a problematic experience of Russian international studies in historical retrospective: during the Soviet period, international studies were highly politicized and mainly centred on political and ideological issues rather than theoretical ones. Moreover,

they were dominated by the only paradigm – Marxist-Leninist – that did not allow other schools to exist and challenge its dominance. At the same time, the theories of international relations being developed in Western science were practically unknown in the USSR. The exceptions were the works carried out at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR under the leadership of V. I. Gantman and the problem laboratory of MGIMO Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the USSR, as well as individual studies on certain countries where foreign theoretical studies were analyzed. Works of Western scholars on theory of international relations, as a rule, were in the funds of special storage of the central Soviet libraries and were available to a limited circle of Soviet social scholars. At best, these works were viewed from the critical point of view. As a result, during the Soviet period, studies on international relations in the country were isolated from theoretical work carried out abroad, so the early period of the Russian post-Soviet theory of international relations was characterized, firstly, by the study of foreign theoretical material (and here the pioneer was Pavel A. Tsygankov) and secondly, by the predominance of imitative tendencies, when Russian scientists simply tried to transfer Western theories of geopolitics, realism/neorealism, liberalism/neoliberalism, etc. to the Russian ground.

Perhaps the only attempt to create something of their own was neo-Eurasianism. Moreover, the range of ideas and authors writing in this area was quite wide: from fairly odious works to moderate ones. To the latter, we can attribute, for example, the research of V. Tsymbursky. However, the attempt to build theoretical models on the basis of neo-Eurasianism was not successful, and the school itself had practically ceased to exist by the mid-1990s. By the turn of the 1990s–2000s, the Russian theory of international relations, as well as the global one, were in crisis.

In the early post-Soviet period (the first half of the 1990s), Russian international studies mostly aimed to acquaint itself with Western theories and concepts and try to accommodate them to the Russian needs. Under these circumstances, Russian international studies, on the one hand, developed in line with the Western IR paradigms. For a while in the early 1990s, the so-called Atlanticist school prevailed in Russian foreign policy thinking. On the other hand, there was a trend among the Russian policy thinkers towards developing IR theories of their own based on national ideas and traditions. This trend was exemplified, for instance, by the school of neo-Eurasianism that was theoretically based on the idea of Russian exceptionalism, including the need for a “special path” for Russia in terms of socio-economic and political models as well as international course.

Since then, Russian international studies have gradually moved from the Atlanticist-Eurasianist dichotomy to a less polarized and more academic-type discourse. On the one hand, Russian international studies scholarship feels itself an integral part of the world international studies community, rather than an isolated school, as was the case in the Cold War era. However, on the other hand, Russia’s international studies thinkers understand that the country’s new role in the present-day world should be better explained by the home-born theories, and its foreign policy should be supported by Russia’s own concepts and doctrines.

Moreover, in addition to the rise of Russia’s authentic theoretical approaches, international studies’ geographical landscape became much more diverse. Along with the traditional centers of IR theory production, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, new regional centers have emerged: Kaliningrad, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Volgograd, Yekaterinburg, Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Vladivostok, etc. This made Russian international studies even more diverse and interesting.

Current Debates on International Studies in Russia

Until recently, Russian IR theory had not attracted much attention from either Russian academic society or international audience. The very existence of Russian IR theory as a national indigenous set of paradigms and concepts on IR, distinct from the Western ones, was disputable. However, there were multiple calls coming from leading Russian academics and scholars for developing a Russian IR theory.

The process of the development of a Russian IR theory commenced with the translation of foreign literature on the main paradigms of Western IR theory and its re-interpretation by Russian scholars. Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov – two well-known Russian IR theorists – labeled this initial period in Russian IRT development as the time of mastering the world's intellectual experience by Russian international scientists. These two scholars have undertaken one of the first efforts to explore Russian IRT and identify different domestic and foreign theoretical and methodological traditions of Russian IR theory. They managed to trace the two main trends in Russian international studies of the 1990s: Westernization and isolationism. Another renowned Russian IR theorist, A. D. Bogaturov, outlined two foundations that laid the basis for Russian IR theory development: the politico-sociological (world-political) one, which was represented by philosophers and sociologists, and the historic-international one, which was mainly used by scientists and historians. One more IR scholar – M. M. Lebedeva – analyzed the origins of the development of Russian IR theories and the directions of theoretical research in Russia. She also came to the conclusion that Russian IR theories are organically part of the global IRT (although with their own specifics), and other national IRTs cannot act as an alternative to global ones. In the works of Alexander Sergunin, the development of Russian IR theory is also linked to the paradigms and schools of IR theory that have developed in the West. A different point of view is expressed in the works of Pavel A. Tsygankov, Andrei P. Tsygankov, A. D. Voskresenski, and a number of other scholars who believe that, having passed the imitative/replication stage, Russian IR theory has been gradually developing its own theories and concepts. It should be noted that despite some quite rare manifestations of nationalistic/isolationist/exceptionalist ideas in Russia's foreign policy discourse, the present-day Russian international studies mainstream is generally non-xenophobic, rather tolerant, and open to a dialogue with foreign IR schools.

The purpose of this handbook is to examine the current state of affairs of Russian international studies. Particularly, the handbook will produce a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of the Russian international studies: historical, theoretical-conceptual, geographical, institutional, etc. It is also important to identify the place and role of Russia in the global IR (A. Acharya and B. Buzan).² It is no less important to understand what factors facilitate and impede Russian IR studies' development. Equally, it is vital for the future of Russian international studies to figure out whether it is unique, original, or just a copy of what has already been done by foreign international studies. More generally, is Russian international studies able to contribute to the global IR, or is it doomed to remain a marginal school that has no impact on world scholarship?

The handbook also aims to fill the vacuum in the international understanding of the Russian perspective on pivotal international issues. In the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, many international players found themselves puzzled by the sources and reasons of Russia's foreign policy behavior, both in East Europe and on the world stage. Numerous inaccurate stereotypes and theories of Moscow's contemporary foreign policies are being circulated in world international studies scholarship. The authors of this handbook want to demonstrate the continuity

and change in Russia's international policy course over the past three decades. What foreign analysts sometimes perceived as Moscow's unpredictable, improvised, and chaotic foreign policy moves in reality turned out to be a logical end product of a rather lengthy process influenced by both domestic and international dynamics. The authors also aim to explain how different foreign policy schools and concepts affected Russian foreign policy making and to what extent they were influential in the decision-making process.

The Structure of the Handbook

The handbook consists of five parts, each covering: 1) the historical and ideological foundations of Russian international studies; 2) Russia's main IR paradigms, including the philosophy of IR, geopolitics, the international political economy, etc.; 3) area studies; and 4) the current research agenda in Russia's IR and its reflection in Russia's foreign policy.

In this handbook project, we have invited leading scholars and experts on Russia's IR to create a comprehensive picture of contemporary Russia's IR theory and practice. As we approached individual contributors, we asked them 1) to assess the current state of research in their field/topic/issue in Russia by identifying its most important representatives and research centers; 2) to identify the specifics and traditions of Russian studies in their field and the level of their development and constrains in that field; 3) to examine whether there is some influence of the research results on their field/topic/issue in Russia's foreign policy; and 4) to provide concluding remarks: future developments, new research avenues, and policy consequences.

Part One of the handbook analyzes the historical and intellectual foundations of Russian international studies and the evolution of Soviet/Russian IR theory from Soviet ideology to the first steps of creating the Russian theoretical approaches to international studies. The study of historical background is an important prerequisite to understanding the political culture of contemporary Russia with all its specific features. Professor Valery Mikhaylenko and Professor Elena Khakhalkina argue in their chapter that the history of international studies in Russia was highly influenced by the political situation in the country and international context. At the current stage, international studies in Russia has lost its Marxist-Leninism ideological basis but still preserves a specific research agenda determined by Russia's national interests and practical preferences. Professor Andrei P. Tsygankov and Professor Pavel A. Tsygankov agree that the Russian theory of IR is nationally specific and discuss three main intellectual traditions – Westernism, statism, and civilizationism – as a basis of contemporary Russian international studies. Professor Alexander Sergunin pays attention to IR intellectual debates in modern Russia and identifies Russia's major producers of international studies in institutional terms.

Part Two shows the reflection of Russia's IR studies in Western IR theories and concepts and key difficulties of its adaptation to Russian intellectual traditions in Russia's international studies. Special attention is paid to the topics that are developed mainly within the framework of the Russian school: philosophy of international relations and world politics, linguistic dimension of IR, Russian geopolitics, etc. According to Professor N. Vasilyeva, such new fields of research as philosophy of IR and world politics allow the worldview to rise above the pragmatism of classical IR theories and find a functional approach to harmonization of the relations between different civilizations and the relations between technosphere and biosphere, as well as the relations within the global society, etc. In her chapter, Professor Irina Zeleneva analyzes the genesis of geopolitical ideas in Russia and notes that it is inextricably linked with the process of the formation and development of Russian statehood itself. The origins of Russian geopolitics are rooted in a historical dispute about the origin and character of the Russian nation. Professor

N. Eremina points out that the Russian civilization's approach allows explaining the continuity of different periods in the history of Russia, calling them manifestations of the Russian civilization, and is able to advance understanding of Russia's positions on key issues of international relations. Professor Valery Konyshov and Professor Alexander Sergunin provide a comprehensive analysis of three classical Russian IR paradigms – neorealism, neoliberalism, and globalism – and conclude that they complement rather than contradicting or excluding each other, making the Russian IR landscape more diverse and richer. Professor Ekaterina B. Mikhaylenko and Professor Maria Lagutina discuss in their chapter the Russian IR school's contribution to regional studies and try to identify the main trends and niches in the development of regional studies in Russia.

Part Three presents a spectrum of most popular area studies in Russia – European studies, American studies, Asia Pacific studies, Middle Eastern studies, Latin American studies, etc. – and underlines their specific characteristics. This part of the handbook highlights issues and aspects that are prioritized in the respective Russian area studies, demonstrates accomplishments made by Russian scholars in the respective area studies, traces the evolution of area studies in Russia, and identifies major Russian think tanks and leading experts and their input into the fields. Of specific interest for the foreign audience might be chapters on Russia's Arctic studies and Eurasian studies as scholarly fields in which Russia has unique, quiet expertise.

Part Four examines Russia's international studies research agenda, including Russia's vision of the current world order, new trends and traditions of Russian diplomacy, Russia's approach to "soft power," and different issues of modern world politics. The first chapter of this part analyzes the evolution of Russia's views of world order since the beginning of the 1990s, on both the official and expert levels. The chapter by Professor Stanislav L. Tkachenko deals with the process of the establishment in the Russian Federation of a discipline, International Political Economy, as a segment of the emerging Russian school of the theory of IR. Following the topic of Russia's approaches to the world order, Professor Yana Leksyutina, in her chapter, seeks to conceptualize Russia's so-called "Turn to the East," to trace and reveal driving forces behind Moscow's elevated focus on the Asia-Pacific region, and to identify major accomplishments of and challenges to Russia's engagement with this region. Dr. Denis S. Golubev addresses conceptual, methodological, and institutional aspects of how conflict studies have evolved in Russia since early 1990s, as well as its reflection on how Russia positions itself in today's both globalized and fragmented world. Professor Tatiana Zonova presents the historical overview of the general development of Russia's diplomacy and tries to identify its traditions and new trends. The chapter by Professor Natalia Tsvetkova and Grigory Yarygin is devoted to the concept of "soft power" and its interpretation in Russia. The authors discuss different theoretical approaches to the concept of "soft power" developed by Russian experts in the field of the international studies. N. Tsvetkova believes that the Russian community of scholars draws on multiple interpretations of the concept, based on both Western and non-Western approaches. While Dr. N. Bogolubova and Dr. Yulia Nikolaeva explore the specific features of Russia's sports diplomacy and define it as an integral part of the wider "soft power" paradigm utilized by countries to promote their own appeal. Dr. Elena A. Maslova discusses a climate agenda in IR studies, and Professor Tatiana Zonova shows how the role of the Orthodox Church has changed since Soviet times and how it influences current Russian policy. Dr. Elena V. Stetsko pays attention to the role and activity of non-state actors in modern Russia, indicating the main problems and limits of influence in the foreign policy sphere of each group of interest. Finally, Z. Bakhturidze represents Russia's policy towards the unrecognized/partially recognized states, taking into consideration the case of post-Soviet states.

Notes

- 1 See Andrey Makarychev and Viatcheslav Morozov, “Is ‘Non-Western Theory’ Possible? The Idea of Multipolarity and the Trap of Epistemological Relativism in Russian IR,” *International Studies Review* 15, no. 3 (September 2013): 328–350.
- 2 A. Acharya and B. Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

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