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MAPPING RUSSIAN
IR SCHOOLS

The Post-Soviet Era

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It took a while for the Russian post-Soviet IR to move from a paradigmatic uniformity, Marxist-Leninist concepts, and self-isolation to ideological pluralism and joining the world IR discourse. Several factors have impeded this process.

First, after the collapse of Marxism, which had served as an official theoretical basis for the social sciences, a sort of theoretical vacuum emerged. For some time, Russian academics simply did not dare to touch on theoretical problems because they were too sensitive for them. They were unable or did not want to fill this vacuum with some new theories of their own or theories borrowed from abroad. Because of a long-term isolation from world social sciences, many Russian IR specialists were simply unfamiliar with Western theories or treated them as a hostile/unacceptable political philosophy.

Second, there was a sort of institutional inertia in the post-Soviet academia because most of the professors who taught IR or related disciplines were trained in the Soviet period and in a pro-Marxist spirit. This generation of Russian scholars was simply unable or did not want to grasp new theoretical approaches, research methods, and problematique. At the same time, these professors were assigned the task of establishing IR and political science departments in the Russian universities in the early 1990s. In many universities (especially on the periphery, departments of international relations and political science were mainly formed on the basis of the former departments of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, scientific communism, and the Communist Party history.

Third, one more institutional aspect of the problem was that before the collapse of the USSR, IR was taught only in the two elite Soviet universities that trained future diplomats – Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and the Institute of International Relations (Kiev State University, Ukraine). IR itself was seen as an empirical/historical rather than theoretical discipline. University curricula were full of empirical/applied disciplines such as IR history, area studies, diplomatic and consular services, diplomatic protocol, foreign languages, etc., which were seen as integral components of diplomats' professional training. That's why, when a new federal educational standard for the IR training program was approved by the Russian Ministry of Education in 1994 (similar to the Western universities, it was designed in a way to train not only diplomats but also specialists in IR in a broader sense), and several

Russian universities (St. Petersburg State University, Nizhny Novgorod State University, Kazan State University, Urals State University, Tomsk State University, Far Eastern University, etc.) decided to introduce this program, they faced a problem of qualified teachers' staff. The faculty had to develop both courses and curricula almost from the scratch, and this, of course, affected the quality of training in a negative way. The institutional/curriculum change lasted until the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Fourth, in the 1990s, Russian scholars had to respond to the real challenges posed by the post-Cold War international environment and meet the immediate needs that confronted the newly born Russian diplomacy. This environment was more favorable to applied studies than to theoretical ones.

Fifth, the development of the Russian post-communist IR theory in the 1990s was hindered not only by the prevalence of applied research but also by the inclination of the world politics discourse towards ideological rather than academic/theoretical approaches. Various political parties and groupings pressed Russian foreign policy experts to produce policy-oriented rather than objective/independent research. For this reason, both Russian academia and the expert community were highly politicized and deeply involved in power struggle of the 1990s.

Sixth, with the rise of numerous "think tanks" and a more or less independent mass media, the demand for foreign policy experts in these spheres has dramatically increased. Many gifted scholars have moved from the academia over to analytical centers, newspapers/journals, and TV channels or tried to combine these new jobs with their old ones. This has made international studies more popular, but their quality and standards of expertise have become worse.¹ Again, theoretical issues remained ignored.

Finally, the chronic economic crisis and changes in public attitudes towards science have had a negative impact on the state of the field in Russia. The state and society as a whole have lost interest in science and higher education (at least for a while), and the prestige of these fields has declined accordingly. Salaries have fallen dramatically, and the social security system has almost been destroyed. Scholars have migrated from academia either abroad or to other sectors (private business, politics, think tanks, mass media). According to then-Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Bulgak, from 1991 to 1997, 15,200 Russian scientists took up foreign citizenship and another 5,000 worked in foreign countries on a contractual basis. (These figures include specialists in natural sciences.)² The situation started to slowly change in a positive direction about ten years ago when universities managed to attract more students on a commercial basis, and the government decided to channel a part of Russia's income from oil and gas exports to the higher education system. Still, the Russian higher education system is less attractive than other sectors (private business, public service, mass media, etc.) in terms of salary, opportunities for professional career, and prestige. It continues to experience a lack of finance, skilled personnel, and the government's attention and care.

Theoretical pluralism in post-communist Russian scholarship has been accompanied by the quantitative growth of research and training centers dealing with IR. Four main categories of centers can be identified: university departments and centers, the Russian Academy of Sciences, ministerial institutes and research centers, and independent think tanks.

Universities

Compared to other sectors of the IR community, the Russian higher education system found itself in a better situation. Despite the lack of finance and governmental support, Russia's leading universities, such as, for example, the MGIMO, Moscow State University, St. Petersburg

University, etc., not only survived but also broadened their scope of research and improved curricula and training programs. There can be at least three explanations of this phenomenon.

First, professors and researchers became free to choose theoretical approaches and teaching methods. This created a fruitful atmosphere for developing IR in terms of both research and teaching.

Second, universities quickly learned how to fund raise and earn money. University administrators succeeded in searching Russian and foreign grants, establishing good contacts with wealthy sponsors and attracting promising candidates for undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate programs who are ready to pay for training. As mentioned, some prominent Western foundations and donors have initiated sponsorship programs to assist Russian international studies. Many of them established offices in Moscow and some regional centers.

Third, in the 1990s, Moscow allowed peripheral universities to establish IR training programs of their own. This, in turn, has resulted in mushrooming training centers around Russia. More than 50 universities have now IR and area studies training programs. The whole Russian higher education system (including international studies) has been radically changed. Several “generations” of the IR federal educational standard have been developed by the Ministry of Education over the last 25 years. In contrast with the Soviet-era curricula, new training programs include more theoretical disciplines. Along with historical, diplomatic, and linguistic components, new curricula now have political science, economic, legal, and cultural studies disciplines and are closer to international standards.

Since 2003, when Russia pledged to join the Bologna process, a new round of reforms started in the higher education system (including the IR programs). This reform aimed at harmonizing the European and Russian university systems by introducing in Russia a two-level system (bachelor and master's degrees), the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), more variable curricula, a less centralized quality-assurance system, diploma supplement in English, and so on.

As mentioned, the geography of the Russian IR has become more diverse over the last 25 years. However, most of the university centers of international studies are still based in Moscow. For example, in the post-Soviet period, the MGIMO focused its research on the following topics: IR theory;³ national, regional and global security;⁴ globalization/regionalization dichotomy;⁵ conflict resolution;⁶ foreign services of different countries;⁷ diplomatic history;⁸ international law;⁹ international economy, eco-diplomacy, and techno-diplomacy;¹⁰ and international information.¹¹

Along with departments (diplomacy, international relations and foreign policy, political science, European and American history, Oriental studies, global economics, international economic relations and foreign economic operations, international information and journalism, international law, constitutional law, and so on) the Center for International Studies (established in 1974) conducts interdisciplinary studies of world politics with special emphasis on international relations systems, regional stability and security, conflict resolution, and Russian policy towards specific regions.¹²

Moscow State University aims at examining international relations history (the Department of Modern and Current History), IR theory (Department of Sociology of International Relations, Department of Comparative Politics), international law and constitutional law of foreign countries (Faculty of Law), global economy (Economic Faculty), and international information and mass media (Faculty of Journalism).¹³ Some other Moscow-based universities also run research projects on IR history and theory, international law, world economy and integration, and area studies (including Europe): Russian University of Peoples' Friendship,¹⁴ Moscow State

Pedagogic University, Russian State University of Humanities,¹⁵ the Russian Academy of Public Service,¹⁶ the Higher School of Economics, Moscow State University of Commerce, and the Russian Academy of Economics.

Among the non-Moscow-based universities, St. Petersburg State University should be mentioned first and foremost. The Department of Modern and Current History is traditionally involved in studies of diplomatic history. The International Relations Faculty (established in 1994) targets examining not only IR history but also IR theory, political thought history, international security, public diplomacy, area studies, and Russian foreign policies.¹⁷ A number of units of the Political Science Faculty (Departments of Political Theory and International Politics)¹⁸ and the Faculty of Economics (e.g., the Department of World Economics)¹⁹ study international relations system and international organization.

A number of other St. Petersburg-based universities, such as St. Petersburg Pedagogical University, European University, St. Petersburg University of Economics and Finance, St. Petersburg University of Technology, North-West Public Service Academy, etc., deal with international relations and world economy.

Many other peripheral universities are also quite active in international studies. Diplomatic history studies are strong in universities such as Ivanovo State University, Nizhny Novgorod State University,²⁰ and Urals State University. IR theory is represented by centers such as Nizhny Novgorod State University,²¹ Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University,²² Ural Federal University,²³ and Irkutsk State University.²⁴

Security studies and conflict resolution are well established in Nizhny Novgorod State University, Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University, and Voronezh State University. The globalization/regionalization processes are thoroughly discussed at Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University, Ural Federal University, and Volgograd State University.

Area studies (especially European, Arctic, American, Middle Eastern and Asia-Pacific) are developed by many peripheral universities, including the Baltic Federal University, the Far Eastern Federal University, Ivanovo State University, the Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Mari State University, Nizhny Novgorod State University, Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University, Voronezh State University, Ural Federal University, and so on.

It should be noted that rapid growth of peripheral centers not only brought to an end Moscow's monopoly on international studies but also provided Russian IR scholarship with regional perspectives and added theoretical polyphony. Moreover, this process has contributed to training personnel for the local diplomatic and international business structures, which were developed rather dynamically in the regions in the 1990s and 2000s. Inter alia, it provided regional political, security, and economic elites with expertise in world politics and made them more independent (from the federal center) in the foreign policy sphere. Therefore, peripheral IR has implicitly facilitated the process of democratization and decentralization of Russia's foreign and security policies in the post-communist era.

The Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)

Compared to universities, the RAS was less successful in adapting its research, financial, and administrative structures to the post-Soviet realities. There are several factors that impeded IR development in the RAS system.

First, the Academy is more dependent on the government in terms of finances. It has fewer opportunities for launching commercial projects. Low salaries and a lack of resources and opportunities for professional careers provoked a real "exodus" of foreign policy experts from the RAS in the 1990s.

Second, foreign foundations and private sponsors are less generous to academic institutions; they prefer to deal with higher education institutes, independent think tanks, and NGOs because they are less conservative, more dynamic, and more influential in terms of affecting society and foreign policy making.

Third, similar to academia in general, the RAS has experienced competition from other segments of the expert community – universities, consulting firms, NGOs, mass media, and especially public service. The RAS lost many talented scholars even before the economic decline caused by the market reforms of the early 1990s. Under late Gorbachev and early Yeltsin, many leading researchers left the RAS for high-ranking positions in the government, politics, higher education system, and mass media.

Nonetheless, the RAS managed to keep some skilled personnel to develop international studies. The RAS institutes – the Institute of Europe, the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), the Institute for USA and Canada Studies (ISKRAN), the Institute for Far Eastern Studies, the Institute of Oriental Studies, and the Institute for Slavic Studies – are particularly good in area studies because many of them are organized in accordance with geographic principle. The Institute of General History and the Institute of Russian History are traditionally good in diplomatic history studies. IMEMO, the Institute of Sociology, the Institute of Government and Law, and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology develop conflict prevention and resolution studies.

Unfortunately, the RAS pays little attention to IR theory as such. A few RAS scholars from ISKRAN²⁵ and IMEMO²⁶ published some theoretical works. However, universities still retain their priority in this particular field.

Ministerial and Presidential Centers and Institutes

Since the Soviet time, many Russian foreign policy, economic, security, and defense ministries/agencies have got think tanks and training institutions of their own. For example, MGIMO has “dual loyalty,” being subordinate to both the Ministry of Higher Education and the Foreign Ministry. In addition to MGIMO, which trains students for the Russian foreign service, there is a Diplomatic Academy that trains or re-trains mid-career diplomats. Along with departments (for instance, the Department of Foreign Policy Studies), there are several purely research units, such as the Center for Methodology of International Studies and the Center for Global Problems, that are involved in international studies as well.

The Foreign Ministry itself has a Department of Historical and Archival Studies, which is in charge of handling the ministry’s archives and publication of documents. Similar to the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry (MoD), Federal Security Service (FSS), and Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) have both educational and research institutes, such as the General Staff Academy, the Military University, and FSS and FIS Academies. These institutions mainly focus on studying national and international security policies. They are also rather active in examining the role of the military and intelligence agencies in shaping and implementing world politics. In addition, they take part in debates on Russian national security doctrine and organization. Prior to its merger with the General Staff Academy, the Institute of Military History focused on studying and publishing archival documents.

The Presidential Administration and the Cabinet of Ministers run a number of specialized higher education institutions that basically train personnel for the federal and regional public services. Some of them, such as the Russian Academy of Public Service (merged with the National Economy Academy) and its regional branches and the Academy of Finance conduct research projects on international relations, world economy, and international law.

The Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) is the most authoritative organization among the state-run research institutes dealing with international studies. In accordance with the 1992 presidential decree, the RISS is a state research organization that provides governmental bodies with analytical information and recommendations related to national security. The RISS was established by Yevgeny M. Kozhokin, a former member of the Supreme Soviet and chairman of the sub-committee on defense and security. Initially, the Institute operated under the FIS auspices, but in 2009, it was subordinated to the Presidential Administration. The Institute maintains close relationships not only with the Presidential Administration but also with the Foreign and Defense Ministries, security services, and the Parliament (State Duma and Council of Federation).

The priority areas of research for the RISS include national security and Russia's strategic interests in different regions of the world, developments in the CIS countries, the European security system, Russia-NATO and Russia-EU relations, disarmament and global stability, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and peacekeeping operations.²⁷ The RISS produces an academic journal (*Problems of National Strategy*), books, reports, analytical reviews, expert evaluations, analytical memoranda, and papers. The Institute periodically holds international conferences on national and global security, arms control, and disarmament.

Because of their official status and proximity to governmental agencies, these institutes have a unique opportunity to influence Russian foreign policy decision making. Some of them (e.g., the Diplomatic Academy, the General Staff Academy and the RISS) are really influential. This, however, makes them more policy oriented and less academic. Obviously, to contribute to the Russian IR debate in a positive way, these institutions need more coordination and cooperation with the university and RAS centers.

Independent Research Centers

The rise of public policy centers is an important characteristic of the Russian political and intellectual life in the post-communist era. Most of them were created for purely political purposes, such as monitoring, providing expertise and prognoses, servicing election campaigns, human rights protection, and so on. For this reason, few of them have been oriented to fundamental research. Some of these centers aim to affect foreign policy making.

The Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP), which was established by Sergei Karaganov (then deputy director of the Institute of Europe), is one of the most influential among such centers. The Council was established in February 1992 as an independent non-governmental organization. The Council is directed by an assembly of some 50 prominent figures in government, business, academia, and the mass media. For example, retired top-ranking governmental officials, businessmen, and journalists, such as former Foreign Minister and Secretary of the Security Council Igor S. Ivanov, First Deputy Defence Minister N. V. Mikhailov, Secretary of the Security Council Yuri Baturin, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Valery L. Manilov, Deputy Director of the FIS G.A. Rapota, Deputy Director of the FSS A. E. Safonov, President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Arkady I. Volsky, President of the Russian Bank Association S.E. Yegorov, Director of RISS Kozhokin, Deputy Chairman of the Duma Defense Committee Alexei Arbatov, former Chairman of the Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Vladimir Lukin, editor in chief of the newspaper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* Vitaly T. Tretyakov', president of the NTV Company Igor E. Malashenko, etc., were among them. The Council has a small permanent staff of some ten and a number of part-time staff for specific projects. The CFDP is led now by famous Russian journalist Fyodor Lukyanov.

The Council's activities include publication of occasional reports and policy papers; regular meetings and informal discussions among policy analysts and decision makers; conferences, seminars, and discussion groups; research projects; educational campaigns in mass media; and consulting and training for technical and social assistance programs.²⁸ According to the Council's charter, the CFDP does not conduct projects at the request of the government structures but chooses topics of research on its own initiative and based on the decisions of the assembly and the board. Although the Council claims that it is not an analytical think tank, it unites the leading Russian specialists in foreign and defense policies and aims to provide decision makers with recommendations on the following topics: Russian national interests, threat assessment, developing and evaluating new strategic concepts, regional and global security, ethnic and religious conflicts, arms control, conversion, and so on.

The CFDP assisted in establishing the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2004. According to the club's website, its goal is to promote dialogue between the Russian and international intellectual elite and to make an independent, unbiased scientific analysis of political, economic, and social events in Russia and the rest of the world. Over 900 representatives of the international scholarly community from 62 countries have taken part in the club's work. The club runs several research projects on international politics and regularly publishes policy papers and reports. The Valdai's research programs include security and war studies, the contemporary state, changing institutions and leadership, globalization and regionalization, the general state of the world economy and global governance, global alternatives to the liberal model of social and political development, and Eurasia.²⁹

The Russian Foreign Policy Foundation (RFPF) is another influential non-governmental actor in the decision-making process. The Foundation was established in 1992 on the initiative of the Foreign Ministry by the Diplomatic Academy, *International Affairs* magazine, and several powerful Russian banks (Incombank, AvtoVazbank, Menatep) and companies (KAMAZ, LUKoil, and others). From the very beginning, the RFPF was designed to bring together the Russian foreign policy and business communities as well as harmonizing their interests.³⁰ For this reason, it paid more attention to practical than research activities. However, its research program is also quite impressive. The Foundation holds several conferences a year and publishes their proceedings. The RFPF was very active in establishing contacts with Russian regions, such as Kaliningrad, Karelia, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, the Russian Far East, and other members of the Russian Federation that conduct intensive foreign policies. The RFPF even established regional offices in Krasnodar and Novosibirsk.

Among other policy-oriented independent centers, the foundation Political Studies, the foundation Politics, the Russian Public Policy Center, the Russian-American University (RAU) Corporation, the Center for Ethno-political and Regional Studies, the Center for National Security and International Relations, the Institute for Defense Studies, and others should be mentioned.

The second group of think tanks tries to combine both applied and fundamental research. Over the last 25 years, it has included various organizations that ranged from representative offices of foreign think tanks (the Moscow Carnegie Center, the East-West Institute), expert institutions (the Moscow Public Research Foundation, which incorporated the Center for Strategic Assessments; the Center for Russian Political Research (PIR-Center); the Center for International Research and Programs, the Baltic Research Center (both from St. Petersburg); the Nizhny Novgorod Center for Socio-Economic Expertise; etc.) to public policy centers (the Gorbachev Foundation, the Strategy Foundation [St. Petersburg], etc.).

It should be noted that, in contrast with well-established democracies, in Russia, think tanks and public policy centers are relatively few in number, centrally located (mostly in Moscow and

St. Petersburg), and less influential (in terms of decision making). It is still a weaker element of the foreign policy-making community.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, over the past 25 to 30 years, Russia has managed to develop a full-fledged academic community engaged in international studies. In contrast with the Soviet period, when most research on international politics was concentrated in Moscow and few other large cities, in the post-Soviet period, the geography of international studies has expanded due to the emergence of new regional educational and research centers. There are new actors involved in the study of international relations (for example, independent think tanks and public policy centers). The degree of integration of Russian international studies into the world academic community has increased, although in light of recent international events that have led to an aggravation of relations between Russia and the West, Russian scientists have to search for new partners in other regions of the world.

Notes

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- 2 *Roisiyikaya gazeta*, January 10, 1998, 2.
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- 5 *Antiglobalizm i Global'noe Upravlenie* [Anti-Globalism and Global Governance] (Moscow: MGIMO Press, 2006) (in Russian); Alexei Bogaturov (ed.), *Sovremennye Global'nye Problemy* [Contemporary Global Problems] (Moscow: Aspect Press, 2010) (in Russian); Irina Busygina, *Politicheskaya Regionalistika* [Area Political Studies] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006) (in Russian); Andrei Melville (ed.), *Global'nye Sotsial'nye i Politicheskie Peremeny v Mire* [Global Social and Political Changes in the World] (Moscow: Polis, 1997)

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