

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

Towards a Global IR Research Agenda?

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Several immediate conclusions emerge from this analysis.

First, over the last 30 years, there has been a dramatic expansion of Russian international studies – both qualitatively and quantitatively. In qualitative terms, Russian IR became much more mature in the sense that it managed to shift from the Marxist-Leninist uniformity of the Soviet era to a theoretical pluralism that is favorable for a flourishing and creative intellectual atmosphere. The Russian IR was able to overcome the Cold War-era isolation and start a fruitful dialogue with the world IR community. Moreover, the quality of Russian international studies was significantly improved also due to the fact that in the post-Soviet era, Russian scholars can travel abroad to collect empirical data and discuss with their foreign partners issues of common interest. They also can invite their foreign colleagues to teach IR in Russian universities, or perform joint research, or arrange joint conferences. Opening up Russian IR to a dynamic dialogue with international academic community was really enriching and inspiring for both those researchers who make empirical studies and theory building. Needless to say, in the Cold War era, most Soviet IR specialists had never been abroad or in the countries that were the subjects of their studies. They were also deprived of communication with their foreign colleagues and had no opportunity to discuss anything in person or even via correspondence.

Russian international studies expanded in quantitative terms as well. As demonstrated in one of the chapters, in contrast to the Soviet time, when IR research was done mostly in Moscow and a very limited number of large cities, now international studies prosper in numerous Russian regional centers, trying to effectively compete with the Moscow-based academic institutions. The volume of IR scholarly production (articles, books) has increased several times over that of the Soviet time. Moreover, Russian IR specialists now are being published extensively by prestigious international journals and publishing houses, which was simply impossible in the recent past.

There have also been significant changes in Russian international studies' institutional/organizational structure. Now, Russian universities play a leading role in IR research, although the Russian Academy of Sciences still retains strong positions in some fields: for instance, area studies. The so-called ministerial and other government-directed research centers became more active in international studies, although they prefer to focus on empirical/applied research. Finally, new actors such as independent think tanks and public policy centers emerged in the post-Soviet era. Some of them (e.g., Valdai Club) even managed to influence the governmental decision-making process.

One of the most fundamental questions this handbook has tried to address, which is a serious challenge for the present-day Russia's IR community, is whether or not a specific Russian IR school exists. More specifically, the question is whether it is necessary to create a Russian theory of IR at all, or we can limit ourselves to borrowing Western and non-Western theories?

On the one hand, there is a group of scholars (for example, Andrei Makarychev, Vyacheslav Morozov,¹ Maria Omelicheva, and Lidiya Zubyt'ska) who have some doubts about the existence of a Russian school of IR: "[T]here is still not a Russian national school of IR with a distinct set of concepts and theories, research methods, and meta-theoretical standards for assessing legitimate contribution to the IR knowledge."² They believe that Russian international studies have not gone beyond Western paradigms. Besides that, this group of scholars points out that "it retains a highly ideological and relativist character that limits its global appeal," and "Russia's theoretical perspective have been shaped, by and large, by political rather than academic considerations."³ All this creates serious obstacles to the formation of a Russian school of IR and limits possible contribution of Russian international studies to global IR.

In our opinion, such a skeptical attitude towards Russian international studies is due to a number of specific circumstances in the development of IR in modern Russia. One of them is the problem of so-called "Moscow-centrism," which is mainly a legacy of the Soviet past, when Moscow institutes were the de facto only center of Soviet/Russian IR: first of all, Russia's oldest IR institutes – IMEMO and MGIMO. Despite the emergence of both new Moscow and regional centers for the study of IR in the post-Soviet period, Moscow, in many respects, continues to maintain a certain expert monopoly in the field of IR (including financial). This largely explains the strong influence of the official position of the Russian leadership on the development of Russia's international studies. Nevertheless, regional centers of international studies (in St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok, etc.) have formed in Russia, whose representatives adhere to a more academic approach in their research. However, the limited institutional and often financial capabilities of the regions lead to the fact that the results of research by representatives of "regional schools" are not in wide demand, either in Russia or abroad.

On the other hand, there is a group of Russian researchers who believe that it is possible to say that the Russian school of IR has been formed (among them Andrei P. Tsygankov, Pavel A. Tsygankov, Marina Lebedeva, Alexander Sergunin, etc.). They suppose that, for 30 years, Russian IR scholars not only accommodated Western theories to the needs of Russian academic and political circles but have also proposed and developed a number of original approaches and concepts in understanding Russia's foreign policy and world politics (see, Part Two and Part Three of this volume). They point out that Russia has a rich historical heritage of theoretical knowledge (Russian political thought and philosophy),⁴ which can form the basis for the modern Russian school of IR. The current stage of Russian IR studies development could be described as a synthesis of the so-called "paradigmatic pluralism" and attempts to outline the specifics of Russian IR theory. The current research agenda of Russia's international studies is pretty wide and includes different aspects of global development, as presented in Part Four.

Probably a compromise between these two extreme approaches can be reached by not focusing on the "either/or" principle (either special/original Russian IR school or copying foreign IR theories); instead, the emphasis can be placed on the integration of Russian international studies into the global intellectual process.

Today, we are witnessing a new great theoretical debate in international studies: a debate between supporters of Western centrism in the theory of IR and its critics, who advocate overcoming Western dominance in modern international studies. We are talking about the idea of global international relations (global IR), the purpose of which is to overcome "the divide

between the West and the Rest.”⁵ The idea was proposed by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan.⁶ This approach proposes rethinking the world experience from the standpoint of world history and regional and civilizational diversity. Acharya points out six main dimensions of global IR:

[C]ommitment to pluralistic universalism, grounding in world history, redefining existing IR theories and methods and building new ones from societies hitherto ignored as sources of IR knowledge, integrating the study of regions and regionalisms into the central concerns of IR, avoiding ethnocentrism and exceptionalism irrespective of source and form, and recognizing a broader conception of agency with material and ideational elements that includes resistance, normative action, and local constructions of global order.⁷

In other words, the idea is that a modern theory of IR should take into account the experience of the development of both the Western and non-Western worlds and consider the approaches of representatives of different national schools of international studies. The idea of global IR caused serious discussions in the international scientific community and put on the agenda a number of important conceptual and theoretical issues,⁸ but a more important consequence is the intensification of the efforts of representatives of different countries and regions to create their own “national schools” of international studies. In this context, the discussions about the Russian school of international studies have been updated.

At this stage, there are no active discussions in the Russian academic community about global IR itself; Russian experts rarely use this term in academic publications in Russian. “Global IR theory” as a term is used in the English-language scientific discourse published by Russian scholars.⁹ However, today in Russia, there is a high degree of interest in non-Western IR theory,¹⁰ including in the context of discussions about the “identity” of the Russian IR school itself (Western or non-Western). It is obvious that the Russian school of IR can develop fruitfully only in the process of active dialogue with Western and non-Western colleagues. Russia, as a country at the crossroads of West and East, global North and global South, still has special opportunities for an academic dialogue. Russia is able to speak on behalf of both the center and peripheral parts of the world, thereby becoming an important voice in the global discussion.

The Routledge Handbook of Russian International Relations Studies tried to provide a contribution to the discussion of non-Western IR theory and global IR by offering an overview of various intellectual traditions in Russia’s international studies and key IR paradigms in the post-Soviet era. Besides a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of Russian international studies, the contributors to this handbook try to identify the place and role of Russian international studies in global IR.

Notes

- 1 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 Maria Y. Omelicheva and Lidiya Zubitska, “An Unending Quest for Russia’s Place in the World: The Discursive Co-evolution of the Study and Practice of International Relations in Russia,” *New Perspectives* 24, no. 1 (2016): 41.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 20–21.
- 4 Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, “Russian IR Theory: The Crisis of a Globally Pluralist Discipline,” *ERIS* 1, no. 2 (2014): 9–17.

- 5 Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12171>.
- 6 See, e.g., *ibid.*, 647–659; A. Acharya, "Advancing Global IR: Challenges, Contentions, and Contributions," *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 4–15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viv016>; A. Acharya and B. Buzan, "Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory? Ten Years On," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 17, no. 3 (2017): 341–370, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/ix006>; A. Acharya and B. Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations. Origins and Evolution of IR at Its Centenary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108647670>.
- 7 Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12171>.
- 8 Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, "The Global and the Nationally Distinctive in IR Theory," *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2022): 9.
- 9 В основном это работы Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov: Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, "Russian IR Theory: The Crisis of a Globally-Pluralist Discipline," *ERIS* 1, no. 2 (2014): 9–17; Andrei P. Tsygankov and Pavel A. Tsygankov, "The Global and the Nationally Distinctive in IR Theory," *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2022): 7–16.
- 10 A. D. Voskressenski, *Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Conceptualizing World Regional Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); T. A. Alekseeva, "'The West' and 'Non-West' in the Space of International Relations Theory," *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2017): 217–232; M. M. Lebedeva, "Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Myth or Reality?" *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2017): 246–256; D. A. Degterev, "Non-Western Theories of Development in the Global Capitalism Era," *Mirovaya Ekonomika I Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya* 65, no. 4 (2021): 113–122; M. M. Lebedeva, "Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Myth or Reality?" *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2017): 246–256.

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