

Russia Direct

| #8 | APRIL 2015

Про
тиво
речивость и
сложность рус-

ской души, может

быть, связана с тем,

что в России сталкиваются

и приходят во взаимодействие

два потока мировой истории -

Восток и Запад. Русский народ есть не

чисто европейский и не чисто азиатский

народ. Россия есть целая часть света, огромный

Востоко-Запад, она соединяет два мира. И всегда в русской душе

боролись два начала, восточное и западное. Есть соответствие между

необъятностью, безгранностью, бесконечностью русской земли и русской души,

между географией физической и географией душевной. В душе русского народа есть

такая же необъятность, безгранность,
устремленность в бес конечность как и в
русской равнине. Поэтому русскому народу
трудно было овладеть этими огромными

проспектами и оправдить их. У русского на

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BEST RUSSIAN

STUDIES

PROGRAMS

2015

чино. Не так у русского народа, как менее
детерминированного, как более обращенного
к бесконечности и не желающего знать
распределения по категориям. В России не
было резких социальных граней, не было
выраженных классов. Россия никогда не

была в, западном смысле страной аристократической, как не стала буржуазной.

Два противоположных начала легли в основу формаций
русской души: природная, языческая дионисическая

стихия и аскетически-монашеское православие. Можно открыть

противоположные свойства в русском народе: деспотизм,

гипертрофия государства и анархизм; вольность; жестокость;

склонность к насилию и доброта, человечность, мягкость; обрядование

и искание правды; индивидуализм, обостренное сознание личности и

безличный коллективизм; национализм, самохвальство и универсализм,

всечеловечность; эсхатологически-мессианская религиозность и

внешнее благочестие; искание Бога и воинствующее безбожие; смиление

и наглость; рабство и бунт. Но никогда русское царство не было буржуазным,

и определении характера русского народа и его призвания необходимо делать

выбор, который я назову выбором эсхатологическим по конечной цели. Поэтому

неизбежен также выбор века, как наиболее характеризующего русскую идею и

русское призвание. Таким веком я буду считать XIX в., век мысли и слова и, вместе с

тем, век острого раскола, столь для России, характерного, как внутреннего освобождения

и напряжённых духовных и социальных исканий.

FREE ISSUE

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THE FUTURE OF RUSSIAN STUDIES IN THE USA

27th OF APRIL 2015

RUSSIA DIRECT INVITES YOU

TO SUPPORT THE DISCUSSION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF
RUSSIAN AND POST-SOVIET STUDIES IN THE US, THE MAIN
PROBLEMS OF THE FIELD AND ITS DEVELOPMENT.

The address: 11 Dupont Circle NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036

To register, email us at contact@russia-direct.org

The amount of guests is limited.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Ekaterina Zabrovskaya

Editor-in-Chief

This month's report is a special one in many aspects. First, the core of this issue is the Russia Direct Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies Programs in the U.S. When developing this Ranking, we were driven by the idea of increasing the interest of Americans in studying Russia and the post-Soviet space. Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian studies have been receiving less funding and attention from prospective students. The Russia Direct editorial team developed the original methodology, and it took us about five months to work on the Ranking in order to arrive at a fair analysis of schools and programs.

In addition to the Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies Programs in the U.S., this report contains insights from those who have directly been involved in Russian studies. The contributors to this report are: Alexandra Vacroux of Harvard, Angela Stent of Georgetown, Jeffrey Mankoff of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Anna Vassilieva of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Alexander Abashkin of the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, and Nicolai Petro of the University of Rhode Island. Some of the topics that we cover in this report are: How to get from Soviet studies to Russian studies? How deep is the Russian studies bench? And how to improve the field of Russian studies?

Second, those of you who have seen previous Russia Direct reports will notice a new design of this month's issue. It has become more modern and graphically appealing. This new design will allow us to include additional elements to our texts, and we expect our reports will become easier to read.

Last but not least, this issue of Russia Direct Report is the last one that will be available to our subscribers for free. In May, we are launching paid subscriptions to our reports. Our new subscription model will help us continue to produce high-quality, balanced content that is both useful and enjoyable. Please go to our website to find more about this initiative and how you can support Russia Direct.

As always, we welcome your feedback.

Please do not hesitate to email me directly at

e.zabrovskaya@russia-direct.org.

*Ekaterina
Zabrovskaya*

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On the cover: An extract from Nicolas Berdyaev's The Russian Idea

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AUTHORS



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Alexandra Vacroux is the executive director of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard. She was a senior scholar at the Kennan Institute in Washington, D.C. She lived in Russia for a dozen years and worked in both private and public sectors. Her experience also includes tenures at the Social Science Research Council and the Center for Financial and Economic Research (Moscow).



Angela Stent is the director of Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies. She is also a senior fellow (non-resident) at the Brookings Institution. From 2004-2006 she served as national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council. From 1999 to 2001, she served in the Office of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State.



Jeffrey Mankoff is deputy director and fellow with the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), Russia and Eurasia Program. Before coming to CSIS, he served as an adviser on U.S.-Russia relations at the U.S. Department of State as a Council on Foreign Relations international affairs fellow. From 2008 to 2010, he was associate director of International Security Studies at Yale University.



Alexander Abashkin is the vice-rector of the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka). He is a former director of international programs at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy (RANEPA), and currently the head of a similar department at RANEPA's School of Public Policy. He was the head of Stanford University Center in Moscow from 1994 to 2004.



Anna Vassilieva is the founder and director of the Graduate Initiative in Russian Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, a program focused on study of contemporary Russian politics and society through the lens of Russian political scientists, historians and economists. The program is funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Russian studies programs in the United States have suffered from not really being about Russia. Americans first began to study Russia as their Cold War nemesis, the U.S.S.R., and after the Soviet Union's collapse they continued to do so through the same institutions, albeit on a leaner budget. Today, we are seeing the end of major state funding for Russian studies in the United States. At the same time, we are witnessing the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the U.S., meaning that interest in Russia is more likely to grow in coming years at the exact moment when funding is on the decline.

In order to make sense of these developments and attract more attention to Russian studies, this report presents the Russia Direct Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies Programs in the U.S. The report explores the current state of the field examining various aspects of the problem: the so-called “identity crisis” for Russia scholars, funding challenges, the falling number of students and academics, the public debate on Russia’s foreign policy as it plays out in government and academia, ways of how to modernize the field, and finally, an assessment of Russia as a Master’s degree destination for U.S. students.

What is evident, then, is that studying Russia properly requires a greater focus on interdisciplinary area studies, more professional and cultural exchanges with Russia, a re-examination of U.S. media and cultural stereotypes, as well as a desire to reintegrate Russia back into Europe. There are still many Russia scholars in the U.S., but if government and academia fail to re-think the state of the field and learn from the lessons of the past, this might carry risks for the future Russia-U.S. relationship.

Introducing the Russian Studies Ranking



ARTOMGEODAYAN/TASS

Why we decided to analyze and rate the U.S. universities that offer advanced degrees in Russian studies.

We were driven to create the Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies Programs in the U.S. in response to growing animosity between Moscow and Washington which we believe stems from misunderstanding. We think now more than ever prospective students should consider future academic and career opportunities in what will likely be a hot field in a decade to come.

More specifically, we were looking for an area of U.S.-Russia cooperation that had been politicized less than others. Education is one of the spheres of life that is affected by politics to a lesser extent. Students are genuinely driven by pure human interest in a subject that they study.

Part of the inspiration came from our own experience with international student exchange programs in the West. Each of the members of the editorial team at Russia Direct have at some point participated in foreign exchange programs. This gave us a special appreciation for intercultural communication through education. We believe that better understanding of other peoples' motivations could result in more informed decision-making and diplomacy.

Keeping that in mind, and also taking into account the rapidly deteriorating relations between Russia and the West – and especially between Russia and the U.S. – we decided to turn our attention to Russian

studies in the U.S. at the graduate level since these are the students most likely to wind up influencing decision makers. That is why, starting in late 2014, we started to develop the Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies programs.

In December, we worked on the methodology of the ranking, consulting with experts and professors both in the U.S. and Russia. We studied the most acknowledged educational ranking methodologies to come up with our own. While our methodology for this ranking may not be perfect, we are convinced that this is the first step on the long journey to perfecting and advancing this Ranking.

We selected 32 Master's degree programs in Russian and post-Soviet studies in the U.S. and started to gather data from the schools. January, February and the greater part of March were devoted to the process of gathering the data. During the second half of March, we processed the received data and started to compile the Ranking. Four schools refused to participate in our research and several others only gave us limited information. Therefore, for these schools we had to search for data through secondary sources, and this factored into the Ranking results.

We hope this new Ranking will raise interest in Russian and post-Soviet studies in the U.S. and we will receive enough feedback to advance and update our methodology accordingly. The more attention this Ranking receives, the better it will be, not just for prospective students in Russian and post-Soviet studies, but also for the future of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

Russian Studies RANKING

Russia Direct presents its Ranking of the best Master's level programs in the field of Russian and post-Soviet studies.



SHUTTERSTOCK/LEGION-MEDIA

TOP 5 PROGRAMS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



DAVIS CENTER FOR RUSSIAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES, M.A. in Regional Studies: Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia (REECA) - **88.43***

Harvard's two-year program offers advanced training in the history, politics, culture, society and languages of the region. As the overall leader in the number of languages taught (seven overall), Davis Center actively collaborates with universities, museums, think tanks and NGOs in Russia and in the post-Soviet space. Although only 35 percent of REECA M.A. students travelled to the region in 2013/14 (ranking 8th among all programs), the Davis Center earned very positive feedback from employers.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



CENTER FOR RUSSIA, EAST EUROPE, AND CENTRAL ASIA (CREECA), M.A. in Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies - **63.76***

CREECA received high scores in the peer-review reputation survey (named among the top 5) and the number of peer-reviewed publications (83) in 2013/14. During this period almost half of the program's graduates gained experience in travelling to the region, either for an internship or an education exchange. Overall, CREECA performed extremely well in all of the evaluation parameters, which ensured its 2nd place in the Ranking.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



HARRIMAN INSTITUTE, M.A. in Regional Studies – Russia, Eurasia and Eastern Europe - **62.07***

Since its foundation in 1946, the Harriman Institute has been the alma mater to many outstanding public figures in the U.S. The Institute secured the 3rd position in the Ranking due to its high average world ranking positions, high scores in the reputation peer-review survey (1st place) and recognition among employers (2nd place). However, only a small number of the program's students pursued further engagement with the region (under 10 percent of students travelled to Russia or the post-Soviet space).

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN, AND EURASIAN CENTER (REEEC), M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies - **57.13***

One of the oldest center for Russian studies, REEEC was also the first home of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. In our Ranking, the REEEC secured the 4th position thanks to its high number of students travelling to the region (7 out of 8 in 2013/14) and the largest number of regional exchange collaborations. In addition, the program had the 2nd highest student-faculty ratio. What put the program behind its closest competitors were the average scores in peer-review and employers' surveys.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY



CENTER FOR RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES (CREEES), M.A. in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies - **55.96***

Stanford's hub for the interdisciplinary study of Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, CREEES offers one of the most selective programs. Securing the 2nd position in the world rankings, Stanford's M.A. program in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies is also financially supported both by the government and private donors. Gaining above average results in reputation surveys among employers and peers, however, was not enough for the program to outpace its closest competitors.

*Overall score

FULL RANKING

For a detailed distribution of scores, visit our website: www.russia-direct.org

#	Institution	Department and program names	Overall score
6	University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies	53.46
7	Indiana University - Bloomington	Russian and East European Institute, M.A. in Russian and East European Studies	50.72
8	University of California - Berkeley	Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Berkeley Program in Eurasian and East European Studies	47.58
9	Georgetown University	Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies, M.A. in Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies	45.94
10	University of Washington - Seattle	Ellison Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies	41.21
11	Yale University	European Studies Council, M.A. in European and Russian Studies	40.23
12	Ohio State University	Center for Slavic and East European Studies, M.A. in Slavic and East European Studies	39.22
13	New York University	Department of Russian and Slavic Studies, M.A. in Russian and Slavic Studies	38.71
14	Miami University of Ohio	Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies, Graduate Certificate in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies	36.66
15	Johns Hopkins University	School of Advanced International Studies, M.A. in European and Eurasian Studies	34.01
16	University of Chicago	Center for East European and Russian/Eurasian Studies (CEERES), M.A. with concentrations in a CEERES language and area studies	33.36
17	University of Texas at Austin	Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies	33.11
18	University of Pittsburgh	Center for Russian and East European Studies, Graduate Certificate in Russian, Soviet, or East European Studies	31.87
19	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies	27.17
20	Brown University	Department of Slavic Studies, M.A. in Slavic Studies	25.54
21	University of Virginia	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, M.A. in Contemporary Russian Studies	23.20
22	University of Arizona	Department of Russian and Slavic Studies, M.A. in Russian	22.57
23	Northwestern University	Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literature	22.10
24	Middlebury College	Monterey Institute of International Studies, Graduate Initiative in Russian Studies	21.33
25	The George Washington University	Elliott School of International Affairs, M.A. in European and Eurasian Studies	20.10
26	University of Kansas	Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies	20.06
27	Duke University	Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, M.A. in Russian Culture, M.A. in Slavic and Eurasian Cultures	17.89
28	Pennsylvania State University	Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, M.A. in Russian and Comparative Literature	16.67
29	University of Oregon	Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, M.A. in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies	14.91
30	Florida State University	College of Social Sciences, M.A. in Russian and East European Studies	13.56
31	University of Missouri - Columbia	Department of German and Russian Studies, M.A. in Russian and Slavonic Studies	10.03
32	Boston College	Department of Slavic, Eastern Languages and Literatures, M.A. in Slavic Studies	7.11



Russia Direct's rankings provide a useful service to young scholars who are considering pursuing graduate work in the field of Russian studies...Hopefully the rankings will help shine a light on the important, challenging and rewarding subject that is Russia."

JAMES CARDEN,

Contributing editor and columnist, *The National Interest* magazine, former advisor to the U.S.-Russia Presidential Commission at the U.S. State Department

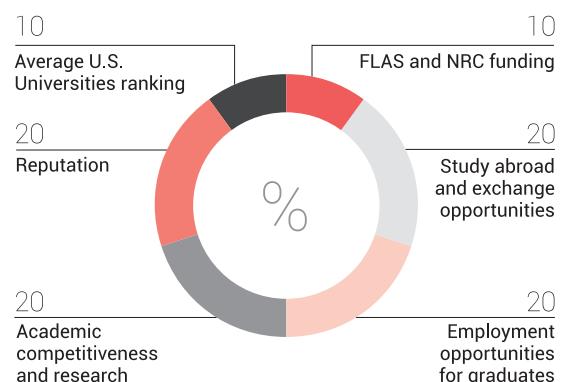
HOW THE RANKING WAS COMPILED

The Russia Direct Ranking of Russian and Post-Soviet Studies Programs is an attempt to analyze and rate the U.S. universities that offer advanced degrees in Russian studies, including languages, history, political science, and international relations.

At this time we are focusing only on Master's level degrees as these programs provide an advanced professional training and prepare students for work in government, business and international organizations. We've selected 32 such universities that have centers or departments that offer Master's programs in Russian and post-Soviet studies. The Russia Direct editorial team has developed a methodology for the Ranking with close cooperation and help from four international experts in Russian studies.



Value of each parameter of the Ranking



With this Ranking, Russia Direct hopes to increase the interest of Americans in studying Russia and the post-Soviet space. We believe that this is very timely as the relations on the political level between the U.S. and Russia deteriorated significantly in the course of the last year.

First, we've developed six parameters (see the above) for the evaluation of Russian and post-Soviet studies programs. We then sent a survey to educators at the 32 selected universities with a request to evaluate which of these parameters were most important from their point of view. It should be pointed out that the sixth parameter (Title VII center status) was not included in the original survey, but it was added later after consultation with Dan Davidson, professor of Russian and Second Language Acquisition, president and co-founder of the American Councils for International Education. We believe that introducing this parameter added a certain objectivity because it is based on the U.S. federal government's estimation of the quality of Russian studies programs in the country. For this reason, we assigned a 10 percent value to this parameter.

EXPERT COMMENT



**Professor,
St. Petersburg
State University,
President, Post-
Communist
Systems in Inter-
national Relations,
ISA**

Stanislav
Tkachenko

My first and lasting impression of the Ranking is the obvious care and meticulous attention that was taken in devising it. I concur with the assessment methodology it uses. It takes into account the rating of the entire university, the international dimension of the program, expert reviews, graduates' employment prospects, as well as other factors.

The key point is that its application and results are fully consistent with my own insights and assessments of the particular Master's programs in Russian studies in the U.S. with which I am well acquainted from my research and teaching activities and in my capacity as president of the Post-Communist Systems in International Relations at the International Studies Association.

I believe that its findings should be taken seriously and analyzed thoroughly, leaving aside the question of which programs were not included in the first list. Above all, it is hoped that the Ranking will become one of Russia Direct's long-term projects with regular publications, and a salient feature of the skyline of the crisis-hit field of Russian studies in the United States.

"The Ranking is quite timely considering the current turbulence in U.S.-Russian relations."

MICHAEL KOFMAN,
Public policy scholar at the Kennan Institute, Wilson Center



AVERAGE U.S. UNIVERSITIES RANKING

We use the Shanghai, QS and Times Higher Education rankings, both because they are quite different in their methodology of evaluation and are some of the most acknowledged. We take these three and use four criteria that are in at least two of them. We value them according to the weight they have in the respective rankings. However, we count an institution's placement in each of the rankings while only considering U.S. universities.

	Shanghai	QS	THE
1. Academic reputation	No	40%	21.1%
2. Academic staff to students ratio	No	20%	3.3%
3. Citation	25%	20%	25%
4. Ratio of international students and staff to domestic	No	10%	5%
	25	90	54.4

Further calculating the weight of each in 100% scale. The sum is 169.4 (100%)
The result for each is:

Weight in average ranking	15% (0.15) or 0.2	53% (0.53) or 0.5	32% (0.32) or 0.3
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As a result, the QS and Times Higher Education rankings have more weight in calculating the average ranking of an institution when using all three rankings.

STUDY ABROAD AND EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES

Exchange programs are crucially important during graduate study, especially when the concentration is in regional studies and languages. An opportunity to travel to Russia and the post-Soviet space to study a semester abroad or to have an internship there is invaluable. Under this parameter we consider three subcategories:

1. Total number of exchange programs and agreements with regional universities and institutions.
2. Ratio of number of students travelling to the region to the overall number of enrolled students in the academic year.
3. Linguistic opportunities, including number of regional languages available to study (except the languages of the Baltic states).

ACADEMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND RESEARCH

This component is considered because it shows how deeply the faculty is devoted to research and impacts the entire academic community of the related field; it demonstrates the quality of the academic environment and how hard it is to get into a program. This component consists of three sub-categories:

1. Number of peer-reviewed publications by faculty members and students;
2. Ratio of academic staff to students;
3. Acceptance rate.

REPUTATION

This part consists of two surveys: One was distributed among international experts and potential employers to value the reputation of a program under consideration; and the second peer-review survey was sent to educators.

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

This component estimates the employment opportunities for recent graduates in terms of the graduates' ability to pursue specific job prospects linked to Russian studies based on the potential employers' survey. The prospect of future employment is quite important, because the graduates of Russian and post-Soviet studies programs might become decision-makers or professionals who deal directly with Russia or the post-Soviet space and, thus, would utilize their knowledge and skills acquired during graduate studies.

TITLE VI CENTER STATUS

The U.S. Department of Education each year awards grants to institutions of higher education to strengthen the capacity and performance of American education in foreign languages, international and area studies, teacher preparation, and international business education. If a university under our consideration is awarded with the federal grant through these two programs (authorized by Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965), National Resource Centers (NRCs) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships, in Russian area studies it receives additional points. Receiving this federal grant is very prestigious and enhances an institution's leadership role in advancing area studies.

IS OUR METHODOLOGY PERFECT?

We treat this Ranking as the first attempt in conveying a comprehensive analysis of Russian studies programs in the U.S. We clearly realize that it is just the first step towards designing a more advanced ranking which will take time and ultimately take into account the peculiarities of each and every program. We've already received recommendations from the universities themselves on how to advance our methodology. To integrate these recommendations in the future is a challenge that we are excited to take on.

EXPERT COMMENT



**Professor,
Russian State
University
for the Humanities**

Victoria I. Zhuravleva

The Russia Direct Ranking is a very timely project for two reasons: First, the decline in expertise on Russia in the United States; second, the current crisis in Russian-U.S. relations has revived and underscored the need for multifaceted research into post-Soviet Russia.

An advantage of the Ranking is its international look which is partly due to the project goals, aimed at reviving interest in Russian studies in the U.S. and establishing a dialogue between the two countries' expert and academic communities.

The selected parameters present a clear view of the dynamics of Russia-related academic study in U.S. universities. The representativeness of the data is still a lingering issue, since the Ranking includes universities assessed through public sources and even ones that refused to take part in the project.

It would be interesting to compare Master's level Russian Studies in U.S. universities by two additional criteria: number of visiting Russian scholars teaching within Russian studies programs and their interdisciplinary level. In addition, to better understand the structure of expert knowledge on Russia in the U.S. and its influence on the "Russian vector" of U.S. foreign policy, it would be useful to supplement the Ranking of academic centers with one of U.S. think tanks on Russia.

How to get from Soviet studies to Russian studies

The end of major government funding for Russian studies offers a chance to start studying Russia properly.

BY NICOLAI N. PETRO

Back in 1999, professor Stephen F. Cohen accused Russian studies of having forgotten about Russia.¹ In its haste to abandon the intellectual ghetto of Sovietology, it had embraced what he called “transitionology” — the notion that universal concepts, methods and theories, rather than area studies rooted in history and culture, were the best way to understand post-Soviet Russia.

The result, said Cohen, had been an unmitigated disaster. Scholars, journalists and politicians were getting a fundamentally distorted picture of Russia, one that ignored the human suffering being caused in the name of political and economic transition and therefore dramatically underestimated the impact that Russian First President Boris Yeltsin’s shock therapy would have on future Russian politics.



Cohen's critique focused on the methodological divide that had emerged in political science between those who advocated more quantitative and comparative approaches, and those who preferred what American anthropologist Clifford Geertz called 'local knowledge'. But the problem at the heart of this dispute goes much deeper than methodology. It is a problem that most scholars are loathe to address, for it requires them to take a stand on which image of Russia they chose to believe is the "real" one.

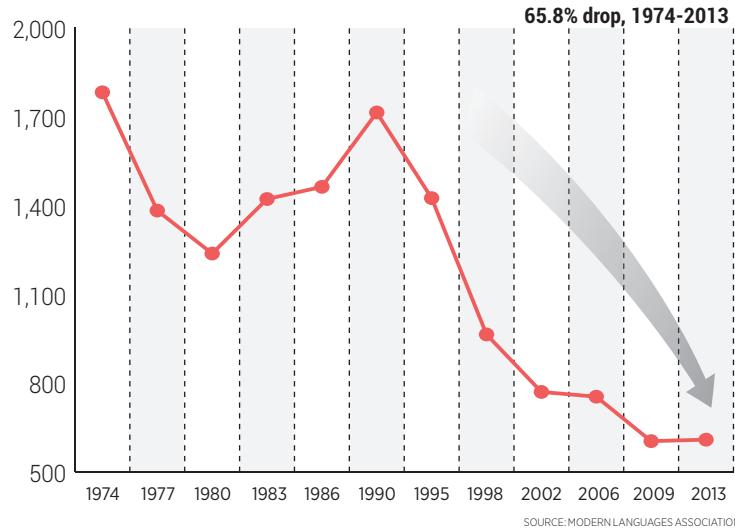
For one school of thought, the real Russia is, and probably always will be, the Oriental despotism described by the German-American historian Karl Wittfogel, a profoundly reactionary society, hopelessly mired in anti-Western and anti-modern values.² These entrenched values explain Putin's enduring popularity, as well as the need for the West to put some sort of *cordon sanitaire* around Russia to restrain its expansion. For others, however, the real Russia is a "normal" country that is responding rationally to the challenges of transition from an autarkic and ideologically driven Soviet empire, to a contemporary national democracy integrated into the global economy. This sharp divide among Russian specialists goes back decades and continues today because Americans have never really taken the time to learn about Russia proper.

For the first century and a half of its existence, America was blissfully ignorant of Russia, so much so that on the eve of the First World War, the Russian language was taught at only three American universities (Columbia, Harvard and the University of California at Berkeley), and Russian history was offered only at the last two.³

By the time Americans began to take notice of Russia, it no longer existed. It had been replaced by a new country – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – conceived in the name of an ideology that Western policy makers struggled for decades to comprehend, before finally deciding that it didn't really matter for how the Soviet Union was ruled.⁴ When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 very few felt any need to draw a distinction between Soviet patriotism and Russian nationalism.

The collapse of communism, therefore, did not en-

Graduate language course enrollments in Russian



64

Russia
specialists
worked in the U.S.
at the start of the
Cold War

gender much effort to understand the emergence of Russia as a new nation. Unlike the other nations that emerged from the collapse of the U.S.S.R., almost no one asked what values and social expectations might emerge in a post-Communist Russia. Would it seek to establish a new identity, or to reconnect with a prior identity? More importantly, was training as a "Soviet specialist" adequate to the task?

Unfortunately, it is not. Furthermore, the study of Russia proper has yet to really begin in the U.S. Before we can appreciate what can be done to change this, however, we need to look at the essential role that governmental sponsorship played in the development of Soviet studies in the United States.

HOW SOVIET STUDIES ROSE TO NATIONAL PROMINENCE DURING THE COLD WAR

Soviet studies is entirely a product of the Cold War. Had the U.S. not been drawn into that conflict, it is quite likely that the benign neglect that characterized America's relationship with Russia from its founding well into the 20th century would have continued.

On the very eve of America's entry into World War

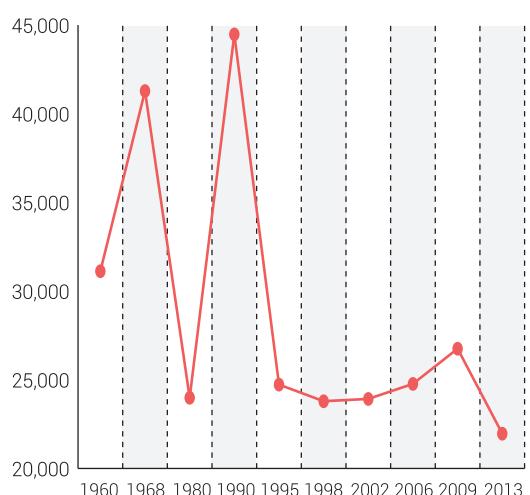
¹ Stephen F. Cohen, "Russian Studies Without Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 15:1, 1999, pp. 37-55.

² Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999, p. 6.

³ Dorothy Atkinson, "Prospects for Faculty in Soviet & East European Studies," *A Report prepared for the National Council of Area Studies Associations by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies*, Re-published from *Prospects for Faculty in Area Studies* (1991), p. 19. <https://www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/AtkinsonHistoryNCASAReport1991.pdf>.

⁴ Illustrated in the shift in perspective from Merle Fainsod in *How Russia is Ruled*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953, to his student Jerry Hough in *How the Soviet Union is Governed*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Enrollments in Russian in the U.S.



In 1941, there were still fewer than 20 people specializing in the Soviet Union within the U.S. government. That included support staff. Training options within the U.S. were so few that the State Department sent future diplomats like George F. Kennan and Charles "Chip" Bohlen abroad to learn about Russia.⁵

In 1943 the U.S.S.R. Division of the Office of Strategic Services was set up and staffed with 60 social scientists.⁶ Still, it is stunning to realize that at the time the defining strategies of the Cold War were being devised, the actual number of bona fide Russian specialists nationwide was just 64 persons.⁷

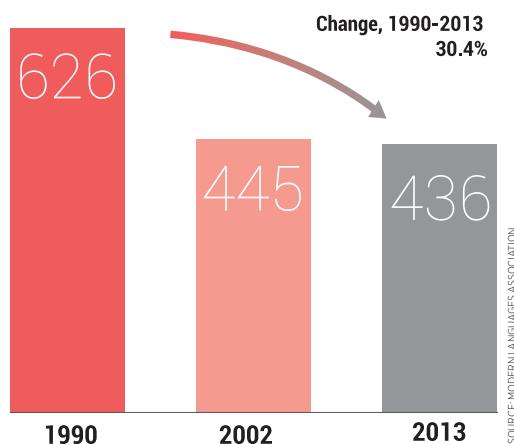
The first real impetus to expand study of the U.S.S.R. was the launching of Sputnik in 1957. This was quickly followed by a series of Soviet "firsts" in space explora-

During the early 1970s there were 58 centers of Soviet and East European studies in the U.S. and 83 degree-granting programs in the field.



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Number of institutions reporting enrollments in Russian



tion. It was America's apparent technology gap with the Soviets that in 1958 led to the National Defense Education Act, the first large-scale federal government initiative to promote national security through education.

Ever since then, the research agenda of Soviet studies has been driven by U.S. military and intelligence needs. All major Soviet studies centers developed ties of one sort or another with relevant government agencies, the best-known example being the Refugee Interview Project carried out by the U.S. Air Force and Harvard's Russian Research Center.⁸ These interviews eventually led to the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System.

⁵ Dorothy Atkinson, "Prospects for Faculty in Soviet & East European Studies," A Report prepared for the National Council of Area Studies Associations by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Re-published from Prospects for Faculty in Area Studies (1991), p. 19. <https://www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/AtkinsonHistoryNCASAReport1991.pdf>.

⁶ Victoria Bonnell and George Breslauer, "Soviet and Post-Soviet Area Studies," Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, 1998, p. 3. iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/1998_03-bonn.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

The main finding of the Harvard Project was that the typical Soviet citizen's attachment to the values of Soviet society was comparable to the attachment of a U.S. citizen to the values of American society. Despite being more than 50 years old, it remained the single most influential study of Soviet mass values until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As scholars from the University of California, Berkeley Victoria Bonnell and George Breslauer note, the basic institutional infrastructure put in place during the 1950s "has remained essentially intact ever since."⁹ At its heyday, during the early 1970s, there were 58 centers of Soviet and East European studies in the U.S. and 83 degree-granting programs in the field. 40,000 students were enrolled in Russian language classes, a figure unmatched until very recently.¹⁰

But while funding during the Cold War was at times ample, it was far from constant. The first area studies programs at premier institutions were supported by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, but the passage of the International Education Act in 1966 led them to end their domestic support.

The prolonged period of stagnation during the Leonid Brezhnev years (leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 until 1982), combined with a shift away from area studies generally, led to a loss of interest in Soviet studies. Concern about the aggressive tone being taken by the first Reagan administration (1981-1989), however, led both private foundations and Congress to provide supplemental funding for the study of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet and Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, commonly referred to as "Title VIII," became a critical factor in arresting the erosion of U.S. expertise on the Soviet Union. Title VIII prepared the generation of scholars that came of age right at the time of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Soon thereafter, however, the field began to see declines in undergraduate enrollments in Russian language, politics and history courses.

Observers attribute these declines to Russia's loss of superpower status, as well as to the incessant

"We must recognize ... that ... we head the two most powerful nations and, while we will naturally in negotiations have some differences, it is essential that those two nations ... work together," Nixon told Brezhnev in 1973. The secret recordings of the conversation were released in 2013 by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.



drumbeat of negative reporting that depicted Russia as "a space of incompetence... not yet ready to take care of its people or to join the ranks of the 'civilized' world."¹¹

Already in 1991, Russianist Dorothy Atkinson from the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies had warned that Soviet and East European studies would lose a quarter of its faculty between 1990 and 1995. As a result, she said, the capacity of the academy to provide expertise to the American public was likely to be "strained."¹²

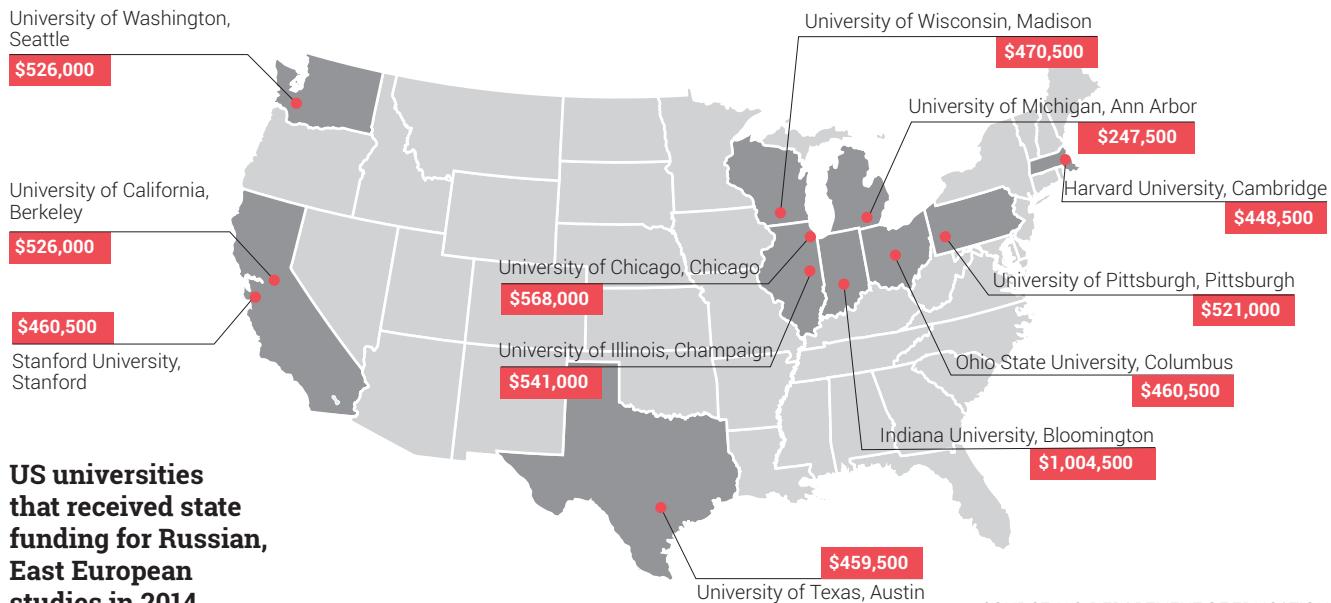
Despite such dire predictions, however, Congress cut Title VIII funding by more than 40 percent between 2002 and 2012 in constant dollars, Title VI funding for area studies dropped by 47 percent in 2011, and support for doctoral dissertations to Rus-

⁹ Victoria Bonnell and George Breslauer, "Soviet and Post-Soviet Area Studies," *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series*, 1998, p. 3. iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/1998_03-bonn.pdf.

¹⁰ Pavel Koshkin, "Forget the Cold War: Millennials Embrace Exchange Programs," *Russia Direct*, July 22, 2013. <http://www.russia-direct.org/qz/forget-cold-war-millennials-embrace-exchange-programs>.

¹¹ Nina Renata Aron, "Fashioning Russia: The Production of a New Russian 'Other,'" *Newsletter of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, University of California, Berkeley*, 27:1, Spring 2010. http://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/u4/ISEEES_NL_Spring%202010.pdf.

¹² Atkinson, "Prospects for Faculty."



SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

US universities that received state funding for Russian, East European studies in 2014

sia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia in 2013 was cancelled. That same year, fiscal uncertainty in the U.S. government and the loss of a small handful of prominent private donors and political patrons in Congress combined to eliminate Title VIII funding entirely.¹³

The Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies still keeps a list of major programs affected by the end of Title VIII on its website.¹⁴ They include:

- The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), which suspended all competitions in its East Europe Studies Program for 2013-14.
- The Arizona State University Critical Languages Institute, which suspended competition for its Title VIII fellowships for domestic or overseas summer language study.
- Indiana University, which suspended competitions for Title VIII fellowships for domestic and portable intensive summer language study.
- The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), which suspended all new Title VIII programming for 2013.
- The Social Science Research Council's Eurasia

Program, which suspended the competitions for its Title VIII fellowships in 2013-2014.

- The Woodrow Wilson Center's Kennan Institute, which suspended competition for its Title VIII Research Scholarship grants for 2013-14.

RUSSIAN STUDIES BEYOND SOVIETOLOGY

The end of government support for Soviet studies does not strike everyone as a tragedy. Some have caustically observed that, for all that investment, Sovietology's ability to predict the rise of the eighth and last leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev or the collapse of the U.S.S.R. was exceptionally low.

This is not entirely fair. There were studies that highlighted how contradictions within the Soviet system might someday cause significant disruption, and some even raised about the possibility of full systemic collapse.¹⁵ Still, it is fair to say that these were marginal voices, outside the mainstream of funded research.

As the former Director of Central Intelligence, Stansfield Turner, notes, "I never heard a suggestion from the CIA, or the intelligence arms of the departments of

TITLE VIII SUPPORTERS

Bob Huber of NCEEER worked with Congressman David R. Obey of Wisconsin to ensure the Title VIII budget was allocated each year. Shortly after Huber passed away in 2011, both Obey and Title VI supporter Senator Christopher Dodd retired, leaving no one to champion Title VIII. (Adams, "The Crisis of US Funding.")

¹³ Laura L. Adams, "The Crisis of US Funding for Area Studies," *Newsnet*, 53:2, March 2013. <http://www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/2013-03.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Title VIII Funding Cut," ASEES. <http://www.aseees.org/advocacy/title-viii-funding-cut>.

¹⁵ Laqueur, *The Dream that Failed: USA*: Oxford University Press, 1996. pp. 187-191.

¹⁶ Stansfield Turner, "Intelligence for a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/47148/stansfield-turner/intelligence-for-a-new-world-order>.

Defense or State... [of] a growing, systemic economic problem... On this one the corporate view missed by a mile."¹⁶ Against this backdrop, the very few prescient voices that urged scholars to think proactively about alternative policies that might be implemented after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. were all but lost.

Paradoxically, the importance of government support actually increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to the loss of public interest and shrinking enrollments. It can even be argued that pressure to be "policy relevant" has increased, as the broad training and support offered by area studies is being replaced by more targeted government funded programs like Minerva and the Human Terrain System.

The combination of dwindling public interest, shrinking funding, fewer graduate students, fewer jobs for those that did graduate, and fewer foreign correspondents reporting from Russia, thus created a situation in which the story of Russia's emergence from within the U.S.S.R. has been overshadowed by the familiar and well established Cold War narratives of the past.

Small wonder then that the debate over Russia today looks a lot like it did 60 years ago. As if Putin's Russia, in which three former Soviet republics are members of NATO, where the Internet has become the preferred news source of anyone under thirty, where Russians travel abroad freely and account for the fifth largest number of global tourists, and whose economy is more open to foreign trade than that of the United States, were the same as Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union (1922-1953).¹⁷

Is it any surprise that the current crisis in Ukraine is frequently labeled a "new Cold War?" Perhaps a better question would be why anyone would think this is a "new" Cold War, when the intellectual assumptions underlying the "old" Cold War have scarcely been challenged.

At the heart of the new Cold War, as former U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock notes, lies the facile triumphalism adopted by the U.S. toward Russia after the collapse of the U.S.S.R.¹⁸ But such triumphalism should not have surprised anyone. It flows logically from the decades spent confusing Russia with the former Soviet Union. Indeed, it is only now, with the end of the institutional focus on America's Cold War alter ego, the



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**The story
of Russia's
emergence
from
within the
U.S.S.R.
has been
over-
shadowed
by the
familiar
Cold War
narratives
of the past.**

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¹⁷ Mark Adomanis, "7 Reasons That Russia is Not the Soviet Union," *Forbes*, December 31, 2013.

¹⁸ Jack F. Matlock Jr., *Superpower Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray – And How to Return to Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

“ [The] standard portrait [of Putin] is so wrong that it's hard to keep one's balance taking swings at such a straw man.”

CHRISTOPHER WESTDAL,
Canada's former ambassador to Russia

Soviet Union, that there is an opportunity to discover Russia proper, and to create a field of truly Russian studies in the United States.

WHAT MIGHT A RENEWAL OF RUSSIAN STUDIES LOOK LIKE?

An expansion of educational and professional exchanges is needed to help break down stereotypes. The MIT-Skolko Foundation project to build a science and technology oriented graduate school (“Skoltech”), which is still apparently unaffected by sanctions, is a good model.

With Russia now more open to foreign students and intellectual collaboration than ever before, this is the ideal time to establish long term partnerships on the basis of mutual respect, unlike the efforts undertaken a decade ago by a handful of American foundations, led by the Ford Foundation, to promote large-scale societal changes by transforming the state educational system.

What about funding? Clearly, Russian studies can no longer afford to rely on haphazard government funding, yet the pool of those whose professional interest in Russia is matched by financial resources is still very small. The logical alternative is to seek funding from wealthy private donors in Russia who have an interest in improving understanding of their country overseas. Yale University has recently taken a step in this direction by accepting funding from the Renova group, headed by “Kremlin ally” and oligarch Viktor F. Vekselberg, for its new interdisciplinary Russian Studies Project.¹⁹

Some will object that such money is tainted. Some of it may be, but the vast majority is surely not, or at least not enough to have prevented massive Russian investments from being welcome in com-



SKOLTECH AND MIT

According to the contract signed in 2011, MIT acts as an advisor on programs, structure, and curriculum, while researchers at both Skoltech and MIT benefit from new opportunities for intellectual exchange, network building, and shared research.



mercial real estate and business. Why should an exception be made for academia? In any case, such assessment should be made on a case-by-case basis and not on the basis of crude stereotypes.

And, speaking of stereotypes, a serious discussion of the image of Russia in mainstream Western media is long overdue. This image, lampooned by media critics, diplomats, and scholars alike, has become so obviously biased that it has spawned a veritable online rebellion.²⁰ The meteoric rise of RT (formerly Russia Today) from a novelty news outlet to a global network with an audience of 700 million people can hardly be attributed solely to Kremlin funding, not when the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors spends more than three times RT’s annual budget, and the BBC World Service nearly twice as much.²¹

The current focus of Western governments on more effective counter-propaganda measures is thus unlikely to work because it fundamentally misreads why so many people are looking for alternative sources of information about Russia — much of mainstream Western media coverage of Russia no longer makes

¹⁹ “Interdisciplinary Russian Studies Project launched at the MacMillan Center at Yale,” Yale.edu January 30, 2015. <http://news.yale.edu/2015/01/30/interdisciplinary-russian-studies-project-launched-macmillan-center-yale#>.

²⁰ Anton Troianovski, “Broadcaster’s Russia Coverage Under Fire as Germany Debates Ukraine Crisis,” Wall Street Journal, November 21, 2014. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/broadcasters-russia-coverage-under-fire-as-germany-debates-ukraine-crisis-1416606433>.

²¹ “Foreign Losses,” The Economist, March 29, 2014. <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21599833-sweeping-cuts-have-not-killed-bbc-world-service-steady-neglect-might-foreign-losses>.



sense. One of the most urgent tasks of Russian studies should be to repair the credibility gap that has emerged in the West with respect to media portrayals of Russia.

A deep understanding of Russia requires a synthesis of political science, history, anthropology, religious and cultural studies — in sum, more area studies rather than less. A good place to begin is by restoring the academic linkages between Russia studies and European studies that have frayed since the end of the Cold War. Restoring Russia to European studies will help the rediscovery our common cultural and religious heritage, so that the definition of Western identity can be broadened to include Russia.

It was widely assumed after the fall of the Berlin Wall that Russia would re-join Europe. A decade before the collapse, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt argued

that, "Our concept of Europe will one day have to once again encompass the whole intellectual and artistic life of our Eastern European neighbors if we do not wish to become impoverished."²²

Unfortunately, precisely the opposite happened. As NATO expanded eastward, Russia was pushed away from Europe both conceptually and practically, thus fulfilling émigré Russian cultural historian Vladimir Weidlé warning of more than half a century ago, that failure to see Russian culture as part of Western civilization would lie at the heart of both the West's persistent inability to overcome the legacy of the Cold War, and Russia's inability to overcome the legacy of the Soviet era.²³ But if treating Russia as an integral part of Europe holds out the prospect, as former German President Roman Herzog once put it, of healing of Europe's soul, her continued ostracism is likely to have dire consequences, some of which are already being foreshadowed by the bitter struggle over Ukraine.²⁴

To avoid such a tragedy, we would do well to heed the warning of America's most venerated living specialist on Russia, the Librarian of Congress James H. Billington: "Bridges to other cultures will not be solid unless they begin with casements that are sunk deep in one's own native ground. And all branches of learning die if cut off from the roots that lie within that ground..." If Americans cannot penetrate into the interior spiritual dialogue of other peoples, they will never be able to understand, let alone anticipate or affect, the discontinuous major changes which are the driving forces in history and which will probably continue to spring unexpected traps in the years ahead.²⁵

THE EXCHANGE

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²² Helmut Schmidt, "Byzantium and the East Is Part of Europe and It Should Be," *European Prospect*, 1979. http://www.ellopos.net/politics/eu_schmidt.html.

²³ Vladimir Weidlé, *Russia: Absent and Present* (translated by A. Gordon Smith), New York: J. Day, 1952.

²⁴ Alexander Ivashchenko, "Roman Herzog: 'Europe Needs Russian Soul,'" *RIA Novosti*, September 2, 199[7].

²⁵ James H. Billington, "Religion and Russia's Future," *Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs*, FPRI Wire, October 1997. <http://www.fpri.org/articles/1997/10/religion-and-russias-future>.

In March 2014, as the Crimean crisis was unfolding, the New York Times published an article in which Russia experts figuratively wrung their hands over the dearth of Russian experts in the United States. Has Russian studies really been so decimated over the past 15 years?

There is little doubt that attention and funding has flowed to study of other parts of the world since the dawn of this century. Countries that were rapidly rising powers (China), rapidly developing stories (Afri-

focusing on the region in the past decade has slowed the pace of Russia specialists getting PhDs.

But this phenomenon is part of the larger shift away from area studies (particularly in political science and economics, where there are fewer and fewer "Russia jobs"), and it has only been felt in the past years. The "missing" younger scholars will affect the "bench" of Russia scholars in the future, but does not explain why the media, think tanks, and the policy community tend to rely on a small number of voices



Where did all the Russia experts go?

A shift away from area studies in the past decade might affect the "bench" of Russia scholars in the future.

BY ALEXANDRA VACROUX

ca), or rapidly deteriorating regions (the greater Middle East) attracted media coverage, students, grants and academic attention.

At the same time, there has been growing interest in subjects not defined by national borders. Transnational threats, the increasingly globalized economy, and the cross-border movement of people and ideas have received increasing attention across the social sciences, history and the humanities. In this academic context, it is true that the amount of money available for traditional "Russian Studies" has diminished relative to funding for other subjects.

THE "BENCH" OF RUSSIA EXPERTS EXTENDS WELL BEYOND THE BELTWAY

However, few scholars who chose the U.S.S.R. as their area of expertise in the 1990s or before abandoned the field. They continued to teach classes, train students and publish research. Fewer of their undergraduates chose to take Russian language courses and major in Russian studies as the country stabilized in the 2000s, and it is true that the drop in undergraduate students

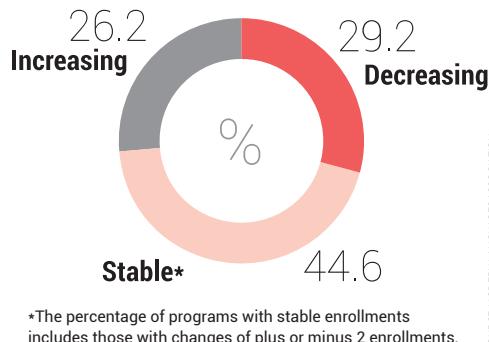
to explain the enormity of the changes we have been seeing in Russia for the past few years.

There isn't a "single bench" of Russia experts. There are the usual suspects to whom the media easily turns for comments — this has always been the case, and has always represented a small proportion of those who have dedicated their lives to studying the region. The fact is that there are lots of different teams of experts focusing on different aspects of Russia, and they each have their own bench. Those who focus on policy and enjoy being inside the Beltway work in Washington, DC and make themselves readily available for comment.

However, there are also professors and researchers who work on international relations, on comparative politics, on Soviet and post-Soviet history, on Central Asia and on the Caucasus at universities large and small across the country. Some have exclusively academic interests, but many think constantly about how their area of expertise relates to current developments. Many travel to the region, and regularly invite people from the region to speak at their departments and centers.

These experts are not entered into journalists'

Percentage of graduate programs with decreasing, stable, or increasing enrollments in Russian between 2009 and 2013



SOURCE: MODERN LANGUAGES ASSOCIATION

A legacy of the Soviet Union, however, has been to continue grouping and studying these countries together. Although the perpetual inclusion of Central Asia and the Caucasus (and to a lesser extent, the Baltics) with Russian studies may raise hackles, grouping those parts of the world within Eurasian “regional studies” has ensured they would continue to be the object of attention of the still larger number of students looking directly at Russia and Ukraine.



REUTERS

speed-dial settings and are unfortunately rarely engaged to help us make sense of what we see and hear. It is always helpful to bring new perspectives and ideas to bear on critical topics, especially in periods of great instability.

AN IDENTITY CRISIS FOR RUSSIAN STUDIES

There is confusion about what to call the region, but this coincides with — rather than reflects — uncertainty that may plague U.S. policy. In fact, there is no longer a single policy to cover Russia and Central Asia (though there may be some overlap).

The naming conundrum actually started during the Cold War, when programs would more accurately have been called Soviet Studies, as they did not focus exclusively on Russia. Now we have centers that cover the post-Soviet space but are euphemistically named to avoid having a backwards-facing, rather than future-focused title. Russia dominates this part of the world geographically and often politically, but Central Asia and the Caucasus are seen as increasingly critical world regions, and ones that must be studied in depth.

Russia has once again commandeered the world stage, and those of us who study it, teach it, and research it find ourselves once more in demand.

From the perspective of the Eurasian Centers, maintaining expertise in the Central Asia and the Caucasus is another way to stay relevant when interest in energy politics, Islam, post-2014 Afghanistan, the narcotics trade and terrorism temporarily eclipses interest in Russia.

Russia has once again commandeered the world stage, and those of us who study it, teach it, and research it find ourselves once more in demand. The clear benefit of having Russian studies centers is that the search for knowledge and understanding of Russia continues, even when others shift their attention elsewhere. This continuity is what ensures and explains why there are still many Russia scholars and experts across the United States.

The Russia debate, from ivory tower to the White House



OFFICIAL WHITEHOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

The chasm between the ivory tower and the White House is narrower than sometimes recognized.

BY JEFFREY MANKOFF

Henry Kissinger, an American diplomat and political scientist, reportedly once remarked that academic politics are vicious precisely because the stakes are so small. Kissinger's dictum — otherwise known as Sayre's Law, in honor of the Columbia political scientist Wallace Sayre, who also may have originated it — is often invoked in political circles to downplay the importance of the tempests that take place behind ivy covered walls far from Pennsylvania Avenue.

Yet, a recent academic dustup that has roiled the Russian studies community in the United States has implications that reach beyond the halls of academia, reflecting increasingly polarized discussions of Russia and Russia policy in Washington as well.

THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING STEPHEN COHEN AND ASEEES

The academic controversy in question grew out of an effort by the scholar of Russian studies at Princeton University and New York University Stephen F. Cohen

and his wife Katrina vanden Heuvel, publisher of *The Nation*, to endow a graduate fellowship in Russian studies named for Cohen and his mentor, the late Harvard Russianist Robert C. Tucker through the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies' (ASEEES). Though vanden Heuvel's foundation had already signed a contract with ASEEES for the bequest, when several members of the ASEEES board objected to having Cohen's name on the fellowship, the foundation withdrew its offer.

During the back-and-forth that followed, it became clear that a majority of the ASEEES board objected to having Cohen's name on the fellowship because of his generally pro-Putin views and role as a lightning rod in debates about the crisis in Ukraine. In his writings and media appearances, Cohen has emerged as perhaps the most prominent American apologist for the Putin government's actions in Ukraine.

For his efforts, Cohen has been tarred by critics as a "useful idiot," "fellow traveler," and perhaps even a foreign agent. Defenders, including those like myself who disagree with Cohen's politics, nevertheless support his right to express contrarian views, while criticizing ASEEES for what appeared to be an act of censorship in seeking to remove Cohen's name from the proposed fellowship.

In a long letter to the ASEEES president, executive committee, and board of directors, Cohen expressed

For much of the past two decades, Russia was considered a backwater in both academic and policy circles in the U.S. Today, Russia is back with a vengeance.

his disappointment with the board's "political intolerance" and "self-censorship" in requesting the removal of his name, while pointing out that ASEEES has had no problem accepting advertising dollars from companies linked to Russian oligarchs.

THE WASHINGTON DEBATE MIRRORS THE ONE WITHIN ACADEMIA

What does all of this have to do with the debate over how Washington should respond to the crisis in Ukraine? As it turns out, quite a bit. Not only does the narrower policy debate largely follow the contours of Cohen's contretemps, but also given the intersection of academia and policy making in the U.S., this "Cohenchina" is highly relevant in Washington.

While the issue of arming Ukraine has provided a specific policy issue around which to structure the Washington debate, underpinning the arguments playing out in the op-ed pages over the past few months is the same issue that Cohen raises: To what extent is the West responsible for today's crisis?

Proponents of arming Kiev mostly absolve the West of blame, arguing that NATO expansion was a rational response to Russian aggression that did not end with the Soviet collapse. Many opponents of providing arms share Cohen's belief that Western triumphalism that started in the 1990s and continues to this day, laid the groundwork for the current crisis.

That the Washington debate mirrors the one inside ASEEES, is, as they used to say, not accidental. While it has become commonplace to bemoan the growing estrangement between the academy and policy making, the chasm between the ivory tower and the White House — especially this White House — is narrower than sometimes recognized.

FROM IVORY TOWER TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Several of the President's top advisers on Russia, including current National Security Council (NSC) senior director for Russia and Eurasia Celeste Wallander, her predecessor and former ambassador to

Moscow Michael McFaul, and current NSC senior director for Europe Charles Kupchan, are professors by trade. They know the academic literature well and are familiar with ASEEES and other scholarly institutions, especially the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS), which Wallander founded in the 1990s to link academic and policy making circles.

At the same time, many of the policy intellectuals debating the crisis in the op-ed pages themselves have government experience — or aspire to serve in government in the future. This fluid boundary between academia and policy making is a unique feature of the U.S. system, one that helps ensure that academic debates do not remain confined to the ASEEES annual meeting or the pages of obscure journals.

By raising the stakes, crises have a way of bringing latent disagreements to the fore. For much of the past two decades, Russia was considered a backwater in both academic and policy circles in the U.S. Today, Russia is back with a vengeance, as are the old epithets like "fellow traveler" and "warmonger."

THE ROLE OF RUSSIA EXPERTS IN SHAPING THE PUBLIC DEBATE

The return of name-calling is depressing, insofar as it sheds more heat than light on what is now the biggest European security crisis in a generation. Yet it is also forcing a real debate about that crisis and the longer term challenges it embodies. The dispute over Cohen is one manifestation of this duality. Had Cohen and vanden Heuvel's offer arrived in 2012, it would have been relatively uncontroversial despite Cohen's reputation as a Putinversteher (the German word for Putin sympathizer).

Today, it is significant because both academics and policy makers are still trying to make sense of the new era in which we live, one in which the verities of the recent past no longer seem to apply. Cohen's criticisms are directed at his academic colleagues, but more importantly, at the policy makers and pundits who, in his view, have led Washington to drive Russia into a corner.

In making these arguments on cable news shows and in the press, Cohen is seeking to shape a debate far weightier than whether angels can dance on the head of a pin. The parallel debates inside ASEEES and inside the Beltway show precisely why the stakes of this academic conflict are higher than most.



COHEN'S CRITIQUE

In a speech republished in *The Nation* Stephen F. Cohen argued that it was the "velvet aggression" of the West towards Russia that sparked the Ukraine crisis.

How deep is the Russian studies bench?

The U.S. knowledge and depth of expertise on Russia is far greater than in the UK, Germany or France.

BY ANGELA STENT

Since the Soviet collapse, there has been a struggle to maintain federal funding for Russian studies. With the perceived Soviet enemy gone, there were other areas of the world that presented greater challenges — the Middle East and East Asia, for instance. And they began to receive more funding. In the 1990s, there was a general belief that Russia would slowly evolve into a market

Then came the Putin restoration and it began to dawn on academia and the U.S. government that the premises of the 1990s had to be revisited. The idea that Russia was transitioning from Soviet-style socialism to a modern democracy had to be re-examined, and with this re-examination, came a renewed appreciation of the value of understanding Russia's unique history, culture and relations with its neigh-

Unless universities make a major commitment to preserving area studies programs, the Russian studies bench will continue to languish and eventually fade away completely.

economy and become a more pluralistic state with competitive political parties.

As a result, those interested in the country were encouraged to jettison the previous Sovietology approach that taught that Russia is a unique polity only comprehensible in its own terms and to begin to view Russia in a comparative political perspective, where it was likened to a number of countries undergoing transition away from authoritarianism, such as those in Latin America. Specialists on American politics were sent to Russia to explain how competitive elections are run and to encourage Russians to hold multiple elections at national and local levels.

Economists who had devoted their lives to studying socialist economies were made redundant. They were replaced by experts on the capitalist system, who flocked to Russia to advise the new Russian business elite and the liberal reformers in Yeltsin's government. The numbers of students interested in Russian studies dropped and "transitionologists" took over.

bors. The numbers of students interested in Russia has grown in direct proportion to the rise of Vladimir Putin's Russia. But the U.S. government has not followed the academic trend and has instead steadily reduced its support for Russian studies. In 2014, with a war raging in Ukraine, U.S.-Russian relations at their lowest point since before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and talk of a new Cold War, the Department of Education slashed its support for Russian and Eurasian studies by 40 percent.

The Department's Title Six National Resource Center and Foreign Language and Area Studies programs fund both public and private universities and pay students' tuition and living expenses while they take advanced Russian language courses and study the history, culture, politics and economics of Russia and its neighbors. That program was severely cut back, suggesting that the current administration apparently does not believe that supporting Russian studies is particularly important for future U.S. national interests. This is damaging for U.S. foreign policy.





EMPLOYERS STILL VALUE RUSSIAN STUDIES AREA EXPERTISE

Despite this lack of funding, the U.S. still has a number of excellent Russian studies programs. The knowledge and depth of expertise on Russia is far greater than in the UK, Germany or France, for instance. The quantity of students enrolled may have dropped, but the quality of instruction and the knowledge of those who graduate in the field remain strong. The question is who will employ these young experts.

A year ago, my article in *The Washington Post* argued that we were not training enough Russian specialists. I received feedback from people who had recently received M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in Russian Studies or Russian history and politics pointing out that it was very difficult to find employment in their field. In fact, this is a reality that contrasts with surveys of employers indicate that they value area expertise and want to employ people who understand the language and culture of a region. Indeed, graduates of Georgetown's M.A. program in Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies have been very successful in finding employment in the U.S. government, the private sector, consulting and NGOs using the knowledge they have gained from our program. That is perhaps because while studying in Washington they have established the necessary networks to facilitate their post-graduation employment.

The problem of the relative depth of the Russian studies bench lies not in the M.A. programs but much more in the Ph.D. programs, and there is a real issue of whether there will be enough professors to teach the next generation. At Georgetown, we have undertaken a major review of all of our area studies programs. We have found that disciplines such as history and anthropology (and, of course, Slavic languages and literature) still value deep area knowledge and area studies and that these programs will continue to prosper.

The real problem is political science, where area knowledge is no longer valued. Instead of embracing a deep understanding of the culture and history of Russia and its neighbors, the discipline of political science has been taken over by number crunching and abstract models that bear little relationship to real-world politics and foreign policy. Only a very brave or dedicated doctoral student in political science would today become a Russia expert if he or she wants to find academic employment. The discipline of international relations rewards theories that compare mathematically a large number of cases. These

US state funding of Russian and post-Soviet studies in 1997–2014



SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

lines of enquiry do not equip graduate students to understand how the real world works. But current academic approach has deterred would-be experts on Russia from focusing on issues that would make the invaluable contributions to our understanding of Russia that previous generations did.

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN ACADEMIA

Generational change is another problem. Some of the best-known experts on Russia (particularly in political science) will retire over the next decade. Political Science departments will likely not replace them with faculty members who have area expertise, but rather, with comparative politics experts and international relations theorists who will have scant understanding of Russia. Unless universities make a major commitment to preserving area studies programs, the Russian studies bench will continue to languish and eventually fade away completely.

But there is some good news. Unlike in the Soviet days, American students can still freely go to Russia, live, study and work there and master the language and culture. They can participate in joint videoconference classes, as students in my Russian Foreign Policy class do with students from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University). Assuming that the current crisis in U.S.-Russian relations does not further spill over into restricting scholarly exchanges and language programs, the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge about Russia, its rich history and culture and current situation will remain for generations to come. Let us hope that American universities renew their commitment to prioritizing and supporting Russian studies.

How to improve the field of Russian studies

The discourse on Russia has become increasingly sterile and predictable.

BY ANNA VASSILIEVA



In his 1944 essay “Russia – Seven Years Later,” George F. Kennan, an American advisor, diplomat, and historian, observed that Russians were prone to many conflicting tendencies, including attraction to “extreme cold and extreme heat, prolonged sloth and sudden feats of energy, exaggerated cruelty and exaggerated kindness, ostentatious wealth and dismal squalor, violent xenophobia and uncontrollable yearning for contact with the foreign world, vast power and the most abject slavery, simultaneous love and hate for the same objects.”¹ In order to make sense out of this dialectical situation, Kennan believed it was necessary to understand those divergent tendencies.

Unlike the competing realities Kennan attributed to Russians, one is hard pressed to find anything other than a uniform view of Russia on the part of today’s Russia watchers. Whether this conformity is due to “group think,” an inhospitable academic climate, or less variation in the behavior being observed by scholars in the West, discourse on Russia in the U.S. has become increasingly sterile and predictable. Some would characterize most Russian studies programs as echo chambers of prevailing ideological preferences, which do not correspond to realities in the country that they purport to study.

The totalitarianism school of thought that defined Sovietology during the Cold War morphed into Transitionology during the 1990s. According to the totalitarianism school, the defining feature of the Soviet Union was a monolithic state. In contrast, transitionologists put forward a less state-centric view of power politics and conceived of the end state of post-Soviet transition as the civil society.²

¹ As quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life*, New York: Penguin Press, 2011, 186.

² Stephen F. Cohen. “Russian Studies Without Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 15, no.1, 1999, pp.37-55.

If the totalitarianism model oversimplified policy-making in the Soviet period, transitionologists were equally guilty of examining Russia without adequate appreciation of the degree to which centuries of Russian tradition, culture, and history belied any assumed linear progression toward Western-style economics, society and politics.

“Putinology,” the current prevailing school of thought regarding Russian affairs, propagates an alternative view in which the Russian state imposed its will over civil society. Like its predecessors, this “model” also suffers from the absence of a nuanced understanding of Russian history and the complex evolutionary pains experienced by the Russian populace. The dominant American narrative of Russian history is ill-informed about what actually transpired a hundred years ago, twenty years ago, or even ten years ago.

How then, can we enrich contemporary Russian studies and assist current and future students to understand Russia better?

There is no silver bullet or single remedy to ensure that American students are adequately prepared for a professional career in the Russian field, be it business, government service, or academia. At a minimum, however, there is a need for a successful academic enterprise to nurture a deep understanding and appreciation of the experience of Russia and the Russian people. Among the steps necessary to build such an appreciation are:

- Provision of advanced training in Russian in order for students to observe the Russian experience as Russians themselves see it. This is best achieved by means of content-based language instruction, in which courses on Russian politics, security, economics, culture, etc. are taught in Russian. In other words, language is a tool rather than a goal in itself;
- Study of Russian history, society, politics, economy, and culture in an integrated fashion rather than in an ad hoc and compartmentalized manner;
- Acquisition of ability to see Russia and Russia’s relations with other countries in comparative perspective, which would allow students to see parallels as well as unique features of the Russian experience;
- Resurrection of the principle and spirit of academic freedom that respects a diversity of opinions and interpretations of Russian life and politics (the most important criterion for selection of guest instructors from Russia should be their expertise and commitment to intellectual engagement rather than their political orientation);



**percent of U.S.
Millennials hold
more favorable
views of Russia,
compared with 14
percent among
older Americans.
(Pew Research,
2015 data)**

- Expansion of opportunities for long-term stays in Russia and travel throughout Russia;
- Creation of more opportunities for engaging Russian experts and faculty as speakers on U.S. campuses (for example, the long-standing practice of inviting experts as instructors of modularized courses, conducted in Russian, on a variety of topics, such as security, migration, economics, U.S.-Russian relations);
- Increase in joint and dual degree programs and other forms of educational opportunities;
- Establishment of a summer intensive Russian Studies program which combines teaching modules in a variety of subjects in English and Russian as working languages.

The field of Russian studies in the U.S. is in dire need of reinvigoration and the infusion of “new thinking.” But it also might benefit from a closer look at the past and the manner in which George Kennan acquired his profound understanding of Russia and Russians.

From his work in the Baltics, Kennan already knew the language when he began training for his career at the U.S. State Department in the 1920s. But his Bureau Chief, Robert Kelley, saw that as just a beginning, and insisted that Kennan and his cohort of young Soviet specialists master the same fundamentals as would cultured Russians of the prerevolutionary era. That may be too much to ask of today’s graduate students, but it would be a noble goal for the best U.S. Russian studies programs.

INTERNSHIP

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Why Russia could become a place for American students to study

Almost 300,000 U.S. students went to study abroad in 2013, but Russia is still one of the least popular destinations.

BY ALEXANDER ABASHKIN

I wanted to spend a year abroad and improve my Russian language skills," says Jennifer Rolfes, who graduated from Harvard in 2014 and is currently studying in the Change Management master's program at the School of Public Policy of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA).

There are very few young Americans like Jennifer. Although outbound international student mobility is growing and almost 300,000 American students went to study abroad in 2013, Russia is one of the least popular destinations, and worsening U.S.-Russian relations might further impair its attractiveness.

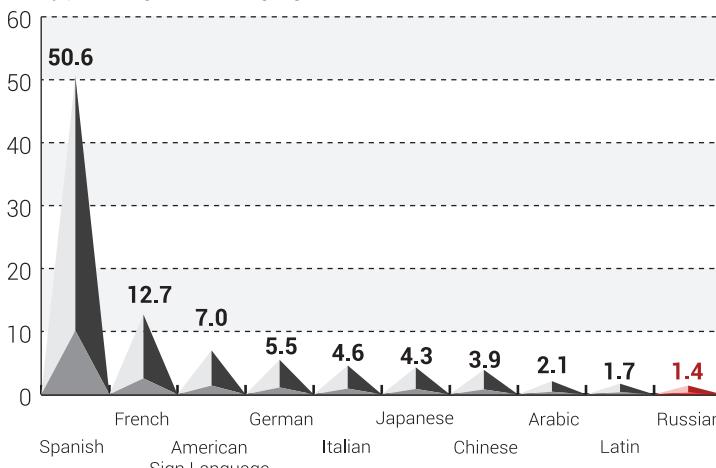
"My family and friends were very concerned about me going to Russia," Jennifer continues. "A lot of that has to do with the fact that Americans do not have a good idea of the geography of this country, and they are concerned about the situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border, but it is hours from here."

"Undoubtedly the coverage of the Ukrainian situation in the American mass media complicates our work," says Alexander Ruchkin, director of Grint, a private educational institution that has been offering Russian language and culture classes to international students since 1996. "Just today, I received a call from a concerned father of a U.S. student who asked me to comment on some footage from Moscow he saw on American TV. He was worried about his daughter's safety."

Grint mostly brings students here from American state universities. In previous years, about 200 students regularly attended its language courses that last from four to 12 weeks from universities such as University of Arizona, University of Virginia, and Truman State Uni-

Russian in Top 10 languages learned in the U.S. in 2013

by percentage of total language course enrollments



SOURCE: MODERN LANGUAGES ASSOCIATION

1,562

**Americans
studied in Russia
in the 2012/13
academic year.
(Institute of
International
Education)**

versity. However, this year their number has decreased to about a 100. But even this is a very impressive number for a Russian educational institution.

And Grint is probably one of the leaders in this respect. Take for example, a much bigger Russian institution, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, which is proud of having 29,000 students from 140 countries. The university offers 20 Master's degree programs in English in disciplines such as Innovation Management, Oil and Gas Management, International Marketing, and International Private Law.

However, according to the deputy director of the Department of Northern and Latin America, Gabrielle Mashlyak, only seven students from the U.S. are currently enrolled at the university. They take courses at the Preparatory department intending to continue studies at the Department of Philology. The University seeks to expand cooperation with U.S. universities through built-in exchange programs, but such programs require a lot of mutual trust, which is often missing these days.

Building mutual trust takes time. "We started sending students to RANEPA in 2007. Only six students came on that first summer program," says Dr. Anthony Brown, associate professor in the Department of German and Russian at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah. "Since that time, the program has ex-

panded to winter, spring-summer, and fall semesters. Our collaboration with this Academy has been one of the finest collaborations that we've had in years."

RANEPA offers American students an interesting combination of language classes and academic internships. They spend mornings in the classroom brushing up on their language skills, and in the afternoon they work as interns in banks, museums, research organizations, law firms and many other types of organizations.

"These days having an internship is increasingly important for American students and having it in one of the world capitals is hugely attractive to our students," Dr. Brown says.

Unfortunately, this kind of an arrangement can hardly be provided by regional Russian universities, which are also trying to lure foreign students to come to study Russian. It is much more difficult to find relevant internships in a town far from Moscow or St. Petersburg. The unemployment rate in many of them is increasing, and the idea of offering a job, even if a temporary one, to U.S. students does not enthuse local employers.

Moreover, the attitude towards American citizens in Russian provinces is more ambiguous than in the capital. Russian mass media contributes to the creation of a negative image of the United States among Russians.

As Rolfes describes, "In Moscow there are a lot of Americans and Europeans. So, I have not actually seen any anti-Americanism in Moscow, but I went out to Rybinsk for a skiing competition, and there I would ask a normally polite question, and the responses from local people were not very polite."

It is true, though, that local universities in Ryazan, Yaroslavl or Samara have one important advantage: They charge U.S. students much lower tuition fees than their competitors in Moscow or St. Petersburg do. St. Petersburg has always been considered the cultural capital of Russia and it attracts multitudes of foreign students, including Americans. The opportunity to study art in the galleries of the Hermitage or the Russian Museum, and to learn about the works of Dostoevsky or Brodsky wandering the streets where they lived cannot fail to fascinate.

A good opportunity for Americans to study in this city is by enrolling at Smolny College (the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences of St. Petersburg State University), which works in close collaboration with Bard College in New York state. According to Marina Kalashnikova, associate professor of the College, each semester, 20 to 30 U.S. students enroll at Smolny through the academic exchange program. They can get up to 18 credits of Russian language and a number of elective courses from a long list that is available for both Russian and



Russia was traditionally viewed as a place to study only such subjects as ballet, theater, literature, but never as a place to go to for regular master's studies.

American students.

Some other prominent Russian higher education institutions, though, do not want to rely on language studies to bring in more foreign students. One of them is the Higher School of Economics (HSE) which offers 17 master's programs in English, in the areas of International Relations, Sociology, International Business, Computer Science, and Big Data Systems. There are 105 students enrolled from countries that are not part of the former Soviet Union, but only 16 of them are Americans.

Prof. Maxim Bratersky of HSE, who for many years has been involved in international education programs says, "So far, relatively few American students have been coming to Russia mostly because they do not know about new opportunities and the low tuition – a change brought about as a result of the ruble devaluation. Russia was traditionally viewed as a place to study only such subjects as ballet, theater, literature, but never as a place to go to for regular master's studies. Now these opportunities are appearing, and U.S. students may very well take advantage of them. Politics is not an issue in this regard," he believes.

Only time will tell if this is true or not. It is impossible to say how the political tensions between Russia and the United States that are reminiscent of the Cold War will affect higher education exchanges. According to Dr. Brown of BYU, he is currently looking at 24 students going to RANEPA this summer, and is also expecting the biggest ever fall group—fourteen students. "I do not think this is directly related to the political situation," Dr. Brown says, "although oftentimes the Cold War rhetoric has increased interest in all things Russian. But I would not say it is solely connected to the political situation, it is probably because our students see the value of going to Russia."

**RECOMMENDED
BOOKS AND ARTICLES
ON RUSSIAN STUDIES**

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TOP 10 TWITTER ACCOUNTS FOR #RUSSIANSTUDIES

@aseestudies

ASEEES is an international scholarly organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Russia, the Caucasus, Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia.

@CESS_news

Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) is a U.S.-based non-profit organization of scholars with a particular interest in the Central Eurasian region.

@JohnsonRussiaList

Johnson's Russia List, the JRL, has been a daily source of diverse Russia-related news and analysis since 1996.

@CGI_DC

The Center on Global Interests is a research organization based in Washington, D.C. focusing on the U.S.-Russia relationship and the post-Soviet space as a whole.

@EurasiaNet

Provides information and analysis about developments in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

@AC_Global

American Councils helps to promote scholarly research and international studies in Russia and the post-Soviet space.

@CarnegieRussia

Carnegie Moscow Center is a global think tank providing expert research and independent analysis of Russian and U.S. foreign policy.

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Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) is a think tank founded by Russia's Foreign Ministry that aims to facilitate Russia's peaceful integration into the global community.

@RusEmbUSA

Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United States.

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Russia's daily newspaper in English has been covering business, politics and culture in Russia and the former Soviet Union since 1992.

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