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Russian Academia in 2022 and Research on Ukraine

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Abstract: In this paper, I offer a critical review of Russophone academic research published in 2022 focusing on the Ukraine-Russia crisis. As part of this study, I have examined a selection of articles that appeared in peer-reviewed journals in March – November 2022. Where appropriate, I pay special attention to the rhetoric and the context of published research, taking into account the personal circumstances of the authors and editors and their communicative actions outside scholarly work. I chose to analyse articles deposited in cyberleninka, a Russian Open Access electronic library. Texts analysed in this paper are freely accessible in Russia, so the Russian audience (academic or not) can read and share them without restrictions, complying with the Russian legal system and the sanctions imposed from outside. Hence, by familiarising themselves with some of the material that Russian academics publish and read, the readers of this article will achieve, to some extent, an insider's view of the Russian academic environment in 2022.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Russian academia, sanctions on Russia, Russian legislation

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Système académique russe en 2022 et la recherche sur l'Ukraine

Résumé : Dans cet article, je propose une critique de la recherche universitaire en langue russe publiée en 2022, axée sur la crise Ukraine-Russie. Dans le cadre de cette étude, j'ai examiné une sélection d'articles de revues à comité de lecture de mars à novembre 2022. J'ai accordé une attention particulière à la rhétorique et au contexte de la recherche publiée, en tenant compte de la situation personnelle des auteurs et de leurs actions communicatives en dehors du travail scientifique. J'ai choisi d'analyser les articles déposés dans cyberleninka, une bibliothèque électronique russe en libre accès. Les textes analysés dans ce document sont librement accessibles en Russie, afin que le public russe (universitaire ou non) puisse les lire et les partager sans restriction, en respectant le système juridique russe et les sanctions imposées de l'extérieur. Ainsi, en se familiarisant avec certains articles que les universitaires russes publient et lisent, les lecteurs de cet article parviendront, dans une certaine mesure, à une vision interne de l'environnement universitaire russe en 2022.

Mots-clés : Ukraine, Russie, système académique russe, sanctions contre la Russie, législation russe

Introduction: the Changing Context of Academic Research

On 4 March 2022, the Russian Rectors Union issued a statement supporting the Russian “President, who made perhaps the most difficult decision in his life” (Rossijskij Soyuz Rektorov, 2022, translation added) to conduct “a special military operation” (President Rossii, 2022a, translation added) in Ukraine. After the rectors’ statement was published, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science appealed to international academic publishers and companies “to deprive Russian institutions access to electronic sources of scientific information (journals, books, databases)” (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022). By then, fifteen publishers, including Elsevier and Springer Nature, had already produced a multi-publisher statement announcing the suspension of “sales and marketing of products and services to research organisations in Russia” (Multi-Publisher Statement, 2022). Also, Clarivate announced “the decision to close its office in Russia effective immediately and ... to cease commercial activity in Russia in the coming weeks” (Clarivate, 2022) blocking Russian institutions from accessing the Web of Science Core Collection as of 4 May 2022.

Simultaneously, in Russia, new legislation made it illegal from 4 March 2022 to engage in

[p]ublic dissemination under the guise of reliable messages of deliberately false information containing data on the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens,

maintaining international peace and security (Oficial'nyj internet-portal pravovoj informacii, 2022, pp. 1-2, translation added).

Since April 2022, is it also illegal in Russia to engage in

[p]ublic actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in order to protect the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, maintaining international peace and security (Oficial'nyj internet-portal pravovoj informacii, 2022, p. 3, translation added).

As lawyers warn,

It is not entirely clear from the norm what will be considered as discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, therefore it can have the broadest possible interpretation, and virtually any disagreement with the actions of the Armed Forces can be pulled under it (Centr zashchity prav SMI, 2022, translation added).¹

As a result of all that, suddenly, Russian academics found themselves restricted both in terms of the research they are able to access regardless of subject matter and in terms of what they can write about Ukraine, i.e., the subject that currently dominates all aspects of the Russian societal sphere.

Given the extent and severity of the restrictions, what academic literature can Russian scholars access now, and what have they published on Ukraine so far?

1. Russophone Academics' Early Response

Despite restrictions, the number of articles in Russian that mention the Ukrainian crisis has been steadily increasing. By the end of November 2022, cyberleninka contained around four hundred publications that mention the keyword “spetsoperatsia na Ukraine” (“special military operation in Ukraine”) (Blokhin, 2022, p. 24). There were also around fifty articles in Ukrainian written by Ukrainian scholars that refer to the conflict as “the full-fledged phase of the Russia-Ukraine war” (Geychenko, 2022, p. 8, translation added). Notably, Russian readers can access Ukrainian texts deposited in cyberleninka, even though in Russia, pro-Ukrainian publications and even the use of the terminology that Ukrainians employ are illegal.

¹Russian authorities declared Centr zashchity prav SMI [Centre for the Protection of Media Rights] as a foreign agent, which means that the Centre's website must display this statement [in Russian]: “This material (information) was produced and (or) distributed by the foreign agent of the Russian Federation ‘Centre for the Protection of Media Rights’ or concerns the activities of the foreign agent of the Russian Federation ‘Centre for the Protection of Media Rights’”. Moreover, only 18+ persons can access their site, and every time this organisation is mentioned, the author must state that this source is recognised as a foreign agent.

Russian academic articles that mention the Ukrainian crisis range from texts intended to validate Russian foreign policy to those that allude to the subject matter in passing. It is possible to group them into the following three categories. First, some authors openly support Russia's military action. Secondly, there is another group of authors whose rhetoric cautiously alludes to their disagreement with the authorities, and there is a third group of authors treating the conflict as an objective factor that they acknowledge when researching their subject. They avoid indicating a political view but acknowledge that this objective factor brings uncertainty into the field that they research.

The contribution of young scholars is particularly noticeable among the second group. Younger academics' publications that appeared immediately in response to the crisis include, for example, a thorough analysis of the usage of the letter Z, where Sergey Panchenkov (postgraduate student, Kuban State University, Krasnodar), explores "[the] superimposing [of] a new meaning on the graphic form of the Latin letter «Z», which has become an unofficial symbol of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation taking part in a special operation in Ukraine" (Panchenkov, 2022, p. 85). Not evading the use of the word "propaganda" in relation to Russia political communications, Panchenkov addresses multiple aspects of the symbol including its potential association with a Nazi symbol due to its "similarity of the "lightning" SS and the letters "Z" (broken white line on dark background)" (Panchenkov, 2022, p. 88, translation added).

Another example is Azamat A. Jumaniyazov's (MA student, Tashkent University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Uzbekistan) article investigating the potential impact of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis on the Middle East and Africa. As Jumaniyazov states,

The fate of Ukraine hangs in the balance. ... If Russia launches a new offensive against Ukraine, the ripple effects on European interests will extend far beyond those two countries, with the Middle East and North Africa particularly affected" (Jumaniyazov, 2022, p. 50, translation added).

Xu Mingluo (Lomonosov Moscow State University) presents an important study investigating Chinese media coverage of events in Ukraine. The author confirms that "[t]he Chinese media downplayed the 'importance' of the events in Ukraine, emphasizing China's declared 'neutral' stance in the conflict and shifting their attention to domestic issues" (Mingluo, 2022, p. 212, translation added).

Whilst young Russophone scholars who disapprove of Russia's actions have published research that tests the boundaries of legally permissible language, established academics who do not support the special military operation have refrained from producing scholarly material about the matter.

For example, Vladimir Mau, Russian economist and Rector of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration did not sign the Russian Rectors Union statement of 4 March 2022 (Sibkrai.ru, 2022). According

to Google Scholar, he authored or co-authored seven publications in 2021, twenty-three in 2020, fifteen in 2019 and none in 2022 (Google Scholar, 2022).

The gap in Mau's publishing activity coincides with the disruptions in the scholar's personal life. Thus, in June 2022, Mau was arrested and charged with participating in "a large-scale fraud" (Gazeta.ru, 2022, translation added), which he denied. On 12 or 13 October, the Russian authorities dropped charges against him (Snob.ru, 2022), but when Canada's government reviewed its sanctions against Russia on 28 October, it included Mau in the list of sanctioned individuals (Radio Svoboda, 2022). In October 2022, Mau left Russia and in November 2022 was in Israel (tass.ru, 2022).

Another prominent academic, Natalia Zubarevich, a Russian economist-geographer specializing in the socio-economic development of Russian regions, remains in Moscow. Since 14 March 2022, Zubarevich has been giving interviews presenting a grim forecast for the Russian economy and making it clear that stopping the Russian military action is the only way to improve the situation (Zubarevich & Martynov, 2022).

In 2022, Zubarevich published one research outcome (Zubarevich 2022), but this publication does not mention the Ukrainian crisis. The absence of research on Ukraine contrasts with Zubarevich previously producing timely publications relating to the covid and other crises in Russia. Moreover, interviews with Zubarevich, regularly streamed or published online, demonstrate that she closely monitors current affairs and has an expert understanding of how western sanctions and Russian policies affect each region of the Russian Federation.

2. Kiknadze: Supporting the Spetsoperatsiya

There is, on the other hand, an abundance of wordy and poignant publications in Russian that defend Russia's stance on the global stage. Typically, V. G. Kiknadze, whose military career in the Arms Forces progressed to a research and editorial position in the field of military history (svu.ru, 2022), explains:

The Maidan usurpers of power, under the control and with the participation of the United States and their NATO satellites, robbed and destroyed Ukraine, turned it into an anti-Russian springboard for the United States, NATO, and together with them crossed the red line in creating a military threat to the Russian Federation and preparing aggression against it (Kiknadze, 2022, p. 17, translation added).

According to Kiknadze, Russia had no choice but to take adequate measures "saving the people of Donbas from genocide and liberating the fraternal people of Ukraine from neo-Nazism" (Kiknadze, 2022, p. 17, translation added).

Kiknadze's text reiterates Russia's official position on Ukraine, whereby Ukraine's claim to independence is linked to ultranationalism, an anti-Russian stance, and an intention to collaborate with foreign powers:

Under the slogans of independence, Ukrainian radical nationalists ... throughout the history of their movement pursued the goal of selling ... mother Ukraine to foreign colonialists in order to become a privileged collaborationist caste of supervisors of their countrymen (Kiknadze, 2022, p. 17, translation added).

Kiknadze draws on Mikhnovsky's Independence Manifesto written in 1900, ("Independent Ukraine" (Mikhnovsky, 1900)), to demonstrate that the Russia-Ukraine problem has a long history. Indeed, Mikhnovsky, advocating the need for Ukraine to assert itself as a sovereign state, cites the Pereiaslav Treaty of 1654 (which legitimised the unification of Russia and Ukraine) and accuses the Russian tsarist government of flouting the arrangements set out in the said treaty. Accepting the idea of fraternity between both peoples, Mikhnovsky nevertheless stresses that "the offended sense of the nation and the wrong of the whole people detest to recognize moral ties with the Russian nation! Because of that, we can discuss only means and methods of struggle!" (Mikhnovskii, 1900, translation added).

Claiming that the Mikhnovsky-inspired ultranationalist views dominate the Ukrainian government agenda today, Kiknadze cites the so-called ten commandments of the Ukrainian People's Party, also authored by Mikhnovsky. Indeed, the third commandment declares: "Ukraine for Ukrainians! Therefore, expel foreigners - oppressors - from everywhere in Ukraine" (Mirchuk, 1999, p. 14, translation added). Also, the fifth commandment demands: "Respect the leaders of your native land, hate its enemies, despise the renegade werewolves, and it will be good for your entire people and you" (Mirchuk, 1999, p. 14, translation added).

A discerning reader would notice that in the original text by Mikhnovsky, the commandments refer to "Muscovites, Lyakhs, Hungarians, Romanians and Jews" as "the enemies of our people as long as they rule over us and extort us" (Mirchuk, 1999, p. 14, translation added). Kiknadze, on the other hand, ignores this and focuses on the Ukrainian ultranationalists' anti-Russian sentiment, creating an impression that an anti-Russian campaign was the sole focus of the former's agenda.

Kiknadze also mentions the Stepan Bandera cult in Ukraine. In Russian historiography, ultranationalist Bandera is known as a WWII Nazi collaborator. In western Ukraine, however, he is revered as a fighter for independent Ukraine (Rossolinski-Liebe, 2014). Kiknadze claims that Bandera followers seized power in Ukraine in 2014 and have been committing systemic crimes against the country's Russophone population ever since.

3. Clash between Generations and "Where Have You Been for the Last Eight Years?"

The authors that endorse Russia's government position as Kiknadze does are old-school academics. Many were educated in the USSR, started their careers before the Soviet system collapsed and now hold senior positions. Their writing style is recognisable by dramatic expressions, authoritative dogmatic assertions, and emotive

oratory. On the other hand, younger post-Soviet scholars who are not enthusiastic about Russia's military action in Ukraine analyse the subject matter in a sober, dispassionate manner, aiming to prove a point by using logic rather than displaying authority or appealing to emotions.

The societal discord between generations apparent in Russophone academic publications relating to Ukraine is the manifestation of the conflict affecting wider society, as old-school academics Kleimenov M.P., Kleimenov I.M., & Sabol (2022) demonstrate.

Their article (Kleimenov et al., 2022) exemplifies the clash between two generations in a unique way. The authors present and evaluate responses to the questionnaire designed to discern young people's attitudes to the Ukraine-Russia crisis. In doing so, Kleimenov et al. apply the old-school approach, so by comparing the raw results of the survey and the authors' interpretation and evaluation, the reader can witness this palpable, unresolvable conflict first-hand.

The first author is Professor Kleimenov Mikhail Petrovich, the head of the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology at Omsk F. M. Dostoevsky State University. His career began in the USSR, and he also "acted as one of the developers of the current Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (the work was carried out on behalf of B.N. Yeltsin)" (OMSU, 2022). He is seventy-four years old.

Four years ago, Kleimenov M.P. wrote a coursebook on criminology for undergraduate law students (Kleimenov, 2018). In this coursebook, Kleimenov M.P. expresses nostalgia for the Soviet ideals that served as moral orientation in society. For example, he says, "labour was recognized as the main means of achieving success and moving up the social ladder. It was labour achievements, and not wealth, that was promoted in the USSR" (Kleimenov 2018, n. page, translation added).

Emphasising that the fall of the USSR and the deterioration of Soviet moral values contributed to crime in post-Soviet Russia, Kleimenov M.P. blames the western influences for the increased crime in Russia and beyond: "The project of liberal modernism is being implemented in the world, the developers of which are foreign globalists" (Kleimenov 2018, n. page, translation added).

According to Kleimenov M. P., the globalist objective is to use soft power ("quiet" genocide" (Kleimenov, 2018, n. page, translation added) to create a "unipolar world" (Kleimenov 2018, n. page, translation added) and control the non-western population of the planet whose worldviews are deemed «inappropriate» from the western perspective. The views and values of non-western people are being regarded with contempt, even though non-western people are the majority of the Earth's population (Kleimenov 2018, n. page, translation added).

Mikhail Kleimenov's second co-author is Kleimenov Ivan Mikhailovich, a Professor at the Higher School of Economics (St Petersburg) since 2009 (HSE (2022)). He has the same surname as the first author, and the patronymic (Mikhailovich) indicates that he is a son of Mikhail. He can be the first author's son. The third co-

author Sabol Yekaterina Mikhailovna works at the same university as the first author. As a senior team member, Mikhail Kleimenov sets the agenda and tone of their co-authored article *Euromaidan: Criminology-Legal Analysis* ((Kleimenov et al.,2022).

In this article, the authors aim to discuss “the Nazification of Ukraine” ((Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 81, translation added), which, they say, began in Ukraine in 2013 as a result of the so-called Euromaidan. Euromaidan was an event where three Ukrainian parties organized “mass riots on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv in response to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to suspend preparations for concluding an association agreement with the European Union and intensify efforts to unite with the Eurasian Economic Union and Russia” ((Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 81, translation added).

Kleimenov et al. plan to offer a criminological and legal analysis of the situation in the sphere of Russian-Ukrainian relations by analysing and evaluating young Russian people’s responses to a series of questions relating to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. (Kleimenov et al. online survey was conducted in March 2022 in Omsk and St. Petersburg. The respondents were 286 young people, possibly the authors’ students.

The survey results were deeply disappointing for the authors.

Insisting on the historical, existential, and spiritual predestination of Russia and Ukraine to continuously form a civilisational unity, the authors display anger at the fact that not only Ukrainian people (as Ukraine’s resistance to Russia’s military action demonstrates) but even some Russian respondents disagree with the necessity to preserve this unity.

The researchers asked young respondents in Russia whether they agreed that Ukrainians form “an independent and self-sufficient nation, closer in its roots and mentality to the West than to Russia” ((Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added) as against belonging to the tripartite Russian people together with Russians and Byelorussians.

The responses, which distressed the authors, were as follows, per cent:

- a) yes - 15.8;
- b) more likely yes than no - 11.1;
- c) I don't know - 10.3;
- d) more likely no than yes – 26.4;
- e) no - 37.4;

(Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added).

Commenting on the above percentages, the authors acknowledge that a sizable proportion of Russian citizens share or are inclined to share pro-Western attitudes and preferences. With unbridled anger, Kleimenov et al. proclaim that for these Russians,

“fast food is more fathomable and more enjoyable than the Gifts of the Magi” (Kleimenov et al., p. 82, translation added).

Religious references look odd here since the leading author Kleimenov M. P is an ardent advocate of the Soviet worldview, which by default entails adherence to scientific atheism. Still, Kleimenov et al. decisively merge the Soviet legacy and the traditions of Orthodoxy in their writing in line with the emerging version of the post-Soviet Russian official ideology.

As part of their evaluation of the 2022 survey, Kleimenov et al. assert that “Russia and fraternal Ukraine cannot belong to Western civilization - they have their own place in this world” (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added). Drawing on Russian historical research, the authors declare, “A different view of this subject does not meet the criterion of being scientific; it is deliberately and exclusively politicized and has the express purpose of breaking the age-old ties between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples”. Regrettably for old-school Russian academics, “the collective West led by the United States” (Razzhivin, 2021, p. 56, translation added) has been successful in spreading its influence in the Slavic world.

To illustrate the western countries’ persistent efforts to undermine Russia-Ukraine relations, Kleimenov et al. draw on Korenke’s account of US financial and political assistance in “democracy promotion in Ukraine during the past two decades” (Korenke, 2017, p. 188). Kleimenov et al. thus claim that “European integration is the choice of Ukraine, which is tragic for its people” (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added) because “‘the entry’ into the Western civilization will require the ultimate breaking of the [Orthodox] ‘spiritual code’ and the transformation of the Orthodox people into a crowd of ex-pats” (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added).

The authors recognise a clash between generations in Russia, with pro-Western moods and preferences spreading among young people (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82). As a result, young people are more concerned about western sanctions than the people of older generations, who are impervious to the temptations of consumerism: “The older generations do not attach much importance to the symbols of the consumer society because they know the price of choosing between freedom and slavery, loyalty to the Fatherland and betrayal” (Kleimenov et al., 2022, p. 86, translation added).

Young people’s sanctions-related responses that further unnerved Kleimenov M.P., Kleimenov I.M. & Sabol, are listed below. When asked, “How do you feel about the imposition of sanctions against Russia by most European countries and the United States?” the respondents answered, per cent:

- a) I feel bewildered - 10.1;
- b) I feel disappointed - 10.1;
- c) I feel anxious and fearful - 10.1;
- d) I have no specific feelings - 22.6;

e) I feel disturbed - 19.6;

f) I feel contempt - 11.8;

g) I feel patriotic - 15.7

(Kleimenov et al., 2022, p. 85, translation added).

Another question was, “Will the sanctions make your life difficult?” and the responses were, per cent:

a) No - 20.1;

b) More likely no than yes - 17.9;

c) I do not know - 10.1;

d) More likely yes than no - 25.9;

e) Yes – 26.0

(Kleimenov et al., 2022, p. 86, translation added).

In the survey, Kleimenov et al. also asked their respondents’ opinions about elite Russian professionals who had left Russia shortly after the beginning of the special military operation:

“How do you feel about elite professionals who left the country?” (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 82, translation added).

The following responses were received, per cent:

a) Positive - 13.0;

b) Neutral - 36.5;

c) Negative - 36.5;

d) Extremely negative - 14

(Kleimenov et al., 2022 pp. 82–83, translation added).

Reacting to these responses, the authors accuse the first two groups of respondents (who feel either positive or neutral about the Russian émigrés) of “the atrophy of conscience” (Kleimenov et al., 2022 p. 83, translation added). The authors continue:

The “migratory elite” are often asked a legitimate question: how did they deal with their conscience when the Armed Forces of Ukraine for eight years shelled the houses of peacefully sleeping citizens of Donetsk and Lugansk using artillery and mortars? Why did they silently look at the genocide against the population of the DPR [Donetsk People’s Republic] and LPR [Luhansk People’s Republic] carried out by the Kyiv authorities? They cannot answer these questions honestly because their pacifism is nothing but the sublimation of the animal need for a comfortable existence (for the servile class of showmen and prostitutes) or the precise

implementation of Western guidelines (for the oligarchy and propagandists) (Kleimenov et al., 2022, p. 83, translation added).

4. “Where Have You Been for the Last Eight Years?” Gorbatova Responds

The question “Where have you been for eight years?” that Kleimenov et al. raise in their article (Kleimenov et al., 2022) is a reference to the claim that Russophone speakers in Eastern Ukraine endured prosecutions on behalf of Ukraine’s authorities since 2014, whilst the world was ignoring them and their suffering. This rhetorical question is so often used in Russian official media that Yulia Gorbatova has replicated it as a title of her article in which she analyses the rhetoric of those who support Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine.

Gorbatova represents the post-Soviet generation of Russian scholars. Her lecturing career began in 2016 (Sinkhronizatsia, 2022). A philosopher and logician, after her employment at the Higher School of Economics was terminated for political reasons (Kass, 2020), in 2020, she co-founded Svobodniy Universitet (Free University, 2022). According to The Free University’s mission statement, this is an online “community of lecturers and students” (Free University, 2022) sharing knowledge “without censorship” (Free University, 2022). Gorbatova teaches logic and critical reasoning as one of the Free University 140 lecturers. She is also an editor of “Vox. Filosofskiy Zhurnal”, in which her article “Where have you been for eight years?” was published (Gorbatova, 2022).

Politically, Gorbatova stands with Ukraine. Whilst displaying her support for the Ukrainian people on social media, in the academic paper, however, rather than examining the legitimacy of Russia’s actions, Gorbatova accesses the topic from the periphery. She analyses and evaluates the logical validity of Russia’s supporters’ arguments.

Gorbatova begins her paper by reassuring the readers that she does not intend to engage with the subject directly: “It is not my job to talk about politics; I am not a political scientist or even a sociologist” (Gorbatova, 2022, p. 169, translation added). Her domain is “logic, argumentation theory and communication” (Gorbatova, 2022, p. 169, translation added), so she can only confidently discuss “how we reason and attempt to convince someone using our arguments” (Gorbatova, 2022, p. 169, translation added).

Having outlined the parameters of the article, Gorbatova states that she will analyse “several arguments that are offered to us, if not by the state itself, then by those who agree with the ‘special operation’ in Ukraine” (Gorbatova 2022 p. 169, translation added). The emphatic question “Where have you been for eight years?” is one of these arguments. Gorbatova explains that this is the fallacious type of argumentum ad hominem, where the validity of the opponents’ reasoning is challenged based on the alleged negative attribute of the opponent as a person. Thus, in the case of Kleimenov et al. (2022), when asking this question, they challenge the

moral validity of the émigrés who left Russia in protest against their country’s military action.

Gorbatova admits that “in some cases, the so-called ad hominem arguments ... are appropriate. If the moral position of the speaker runs counter to his [or her] moral character, it is worth seriously considering whether this person can be trusted” (Gorbatova, 2022, p. 170, translation added). Nevertheless, according to Gorbatova, the “eight years” question is valid only if the person who raises it is impeccable. For instance, this person would have been an active supporter of Donbas and Lugansk residents, providing practical help and demanding reports from Ukraine and Russia on what was happening in the disputed territories. However, if the person asking the “eight years” question did nothing for Donbas and Lugansk during that time, then they “have no moral right to ask this question” (Gorbatova, 2022 p. 170, translation added).

Still, Gorbatova says, let us suppose that the person asking the “eight years” question was doing voluntary work in those territories for eight years while the other person did nothing. The only advantage the first person would have is to demonstrate that they can provide first-hand information about what they did or witnessed. That said, why do the supporters of the special military operation use this question at all? Their aim here is to blur the issue and confuse the other person, and this is “a not-so-worthy goal” (Gorbatova, 2022, p. 170, translation added).

5. Ellen Martin-Ioganson: International Support for Russia’s Military Action?

Russian authorities invest much effort into creating an impression that Russia has supporters in most parts of the world, even in hostile countries. In this context, a scholarly article by a British scholar supporting Russia’s position would add weight to the legitimacy of Russian military action in Ukraine.

Conveniently, the cyberleninka depository contains Ellen Martin-Ioganson’s article “Ukrainian conflict and sanctions of the West. Instrument of global expansion” (Martin-Ioganson, 2022). The author’s bio states that she is a historian and publicist based in London.

In this article, Martin-Ioganson writes (in Russian),

The Kyiv authorities declared a punitive “anti-terrorist” operation launched in 2014 against the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, the Russian-speaking population of which did not accept the nationalist regime of the Kiev authorities after the Maidan. For eight years, the inhabitants of Donbass were subjected to a real genocide. The mass graves in the area are convincing evidence of massive shelling of civilian objects by the Kiev authorities (Martin-Ioganson, 2022, p. 38, translation added).

Furthermore, Martin-Ioganson complains of the West’s lacklustre reaction to atrocities suffered by Russians in Ukraine. In particular, the author refers to events that had been acknowledged elsewhere as “[s]treet battles between armed backers of

the pro-Western government in Kyiv and the Kremlin in the historic Black Sea port [that] killed six people and culminated in a building inferno in which 42 pro-Russians died” (EURACTIV, 2022).

Martin-Ioganson’s article is well-written and engaging. However, I have not found any information about Ellen Martin-Ioganson. There is no internet presence, no publications in English, and no explanation of why someone with this name, supposedly based in the UK, publishes material in Russian but not in English (or any other language). Besides, the author’s writing style does not fit the anglophone academic tradition but reads like the type of material created by Russian publicists in Russian official media.

Ciberleninka contains three more articles in Russian attributed to the same author (Martin-Ioganson, 2021, Martin-Ioganson, 2020 and Martin-Ioganson, 2019). All four articles appear in the journal “Свободная мысль” (Svobodnaya Mysl, “Free Thought”), described as “the oldest international socio-theoretical journal in Russia, specializing in economic, political, and historical research ...[that] focuses on the problems of the transformation of humankind influenced by information technologies, ... globalization, the problems of communism, and those features of the development of various countries of the world that are little-known in Russia” (Cyberleninka, 2022, translation added).

According to the cyberleninka website, hundreds of the e-library users read or downloaded Martin-Ioganson Ellen’s publications. Remarkably, no one raised concerns about the authorship. Ellen Martin-Ioganson’s latest article was even cited in Garnov et al. (2022). The authors who cited Martin-Ioganson’s publication are Andrei P. Garnov, Evgeniy V. Afanasyev (both Professors at the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics) and Nadezhda P. Tishkina (Assistant Professor at Synergy University). They found nothing wrong with this author, as they draw on their research to contextualise a study of western sanctions on Russia:

In late February - early March 2022, the United States, Great Britain, and the countries of the European Union developed new sanctions aimed at causing even more extensive damage to the Russian economy, primarily the defence industry. These new measures are largely ongoing and tighten the sectoral sanctions introduced by the Obama administration (Ellen, 2022, 2 (1692), pp. 35–48. as cited in Garnov et al., 2022, (5), p. 7, translation added).

Moreover, the authors cited Ellen Martin-Ioganson’s name like this: Ellen M.-I., although the intended citation is Martin-Ioganson E., with Martin-Ioganson being the surname and Ellen, first name of the western author (as per original publications).

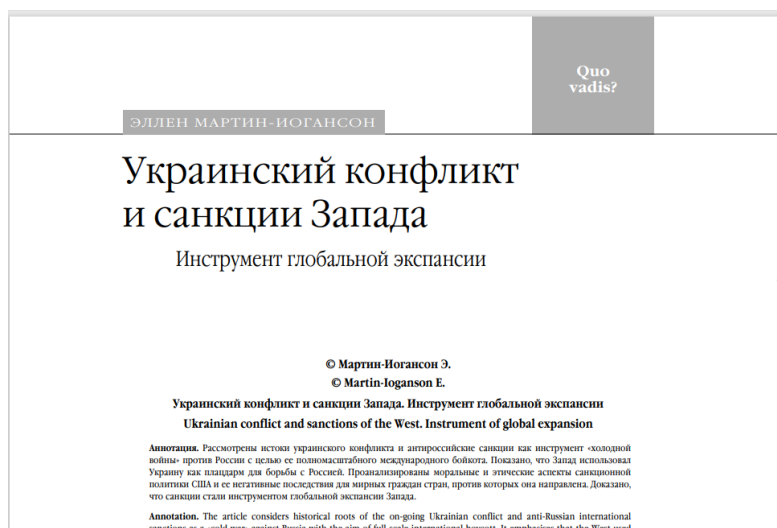


Figure 1. “Ellen Martin-Ioganson”

6. Russian Academia: International Involvement and International Boycott

Russian academics' uncritical reception of “Ellen Martin-Ioganson”'s articles and difficulty identifying the first name and surname of a supposedly western author illustrate a lack of international integration.

If Russian scholars' horizons were broader, they would not take “Ellen Martin-Ioganson”'s publications at face value. Moreover, Russian political scientists would not create a phantom western author to show that Russia has international backing but would engage more effectively with real authors. For example, Russians could draw on John Mearsheimer's latest publication, whereby he articulates Russia's position in a language that is more palatable for western readers than the rhetoric of old-school Russian academics.

Mearsheimer's article on Russia and Ukraine appeared in *The Economist* in March 2022, but despite its Russia-friendly title “John Mearsheimer on why the West is principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis” (Mearsheimer, 2022), I found no indication that Russian authors are aware of it. By contrast, according to Google Scholar, by December 2022, scholars from Turkey, Germany, the Czech Republic, Canada, Italy, the USA, Pakistan, Norway, Serbia, Brazil and South Korea cited Mearsheimer's publication eighteen times.

Does this mean that Russian scholars have not been affected by the international academic boycott since they had not joined the international academic community in the first place? The answer to that is yes, some academics have been affected.

Despite Russia's continued isolation from the international scholarly community, partial international integration, initiated by Dmitriy Medvedev, was achieved in recent years. After assuming the presidency, Medvedev (President of the Russian Federation from 2008 - 2012) signed the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of October 7, 2008, No. 1448, "On the implementation of a pilot project to create national research universities" (President Rossii, 2008, translation added) whereby universities could apply for the status of National Research University. As part of the new scheme, the Russian government allocated substantial funds to assist with international collaboration.

In line with the new initiative, some Russian scholars reached out to the international scholarly community, formed alliances, mastered academic English and applied for research grants in collaboration with international scholars. Some of these international scholars were Russophone academics based outside Russia. Now, they and some Russian academics who recently moved abroad in protest accuse their Russia-based colleagues and long-term friends of supporting the Russian political regime instead of standing up to it. Some even wrote personal letters to Russia-based academics formally revoking long-term friendships and collegial ties.

7. Russian Academia: Now What?

Zubarevich, when asked directly, responded to hypothetical emigres who accuse Russian citizens of passive compliance: "Those who are not in Russia do not have the moral right to appeal to those who stay in Russia for active action, which will certainly be followed by repression" (Investitsii i Treiding. Kurs Valyut: Dollar, Evro, 2022, translation added).

As Russian academics search for ways to balance safety and sincerity, Zubarevich shared her position: "I choose my words very carefully. I don't use prohibited words, but I try to speak in a way that makes it clear what I'm saying" (Investitsii i Treiding. Kurs Valyut: Dollar, Evro, 2022, translation added). In accordance with the same sentiment, Gorbatova appeals to her readers to make an effort to deploy intellect, rationality and logic, no matter how tempting it may be not to (Gorbatova 2022 p. 171) when dealing with official political communications.

At the time of facing practical, emotional and existential challenges, Russian academics found some relief from Aleksei Ivashchenko and Georgii Vasilev's performance of the latter's song "We are no zeros" at the concert in Moscow (26 September 2022) (IvasiRu, 2022):

We are no zeros

Lyrics and music by Georgii Vasilev

Translated by Elena Fell

They pushed us and squashed us,
restricted, brainwashed us,
and forced into cages
to keep us inside.
They silenced our voices
and limited choices.
They wanted - but failed - to have us nullified.
Can't squeeze our will, making it zero!
Can't squeeze our will, making it zero!
Can't squeeze our will, making it zero!
We are no zeros,
We are no zeros,
Muffled and left in inhibiting slumber.
We are no zeros,
We are no zeros,
We are individuals and millions in number (IvasiRu, 2022, translation added).

With 15,000 likes and nearly 1,400 comments, YouTube viewers have supported the artists whose performance vibrates with “the scream of the soul of all reasonable Russian people who understand everything correctly” (IvasiRu, 2022, translation added).

Having said that, Russian liberal academics' scream of the soul is muffled by the loud and clear voice of those who have authority and the backing of the state, such as Kiknadze and Kleimenov et al. Proposing a way forward for Russia and Russian academia, Kleimenov et al. speak for all of them when they stand in favour of “full-scale inclusion of patriotic resources in the system of domestic propaganda, which in many respects remains oriented towards Western settings - liberalism permeates the information space of Russia” (Kleimenov et al., 2022, p. 85, translation added).

Thus, moderate, open-minded and liberal academics are under attack not only from anti-Russian emigres but from Russian militant patriots too, as the latter denounce Russian liberal intelligentsia (including academics) for not being patriotic enough (Glaziev, 2022) and viciously attack liberal views in principle (Zolkin, 2022).

On top of all that, in the new academic year, Russian academia came under more pressure. On 21 September 2022, President Putin signed a “Decree ‘On the announcement of partial mobilization in the Russian Federation’ (President Rossii,

2022b). Since then, there have been reports that some “RSF grant holders who direct research projects” (Zubov, 2022, translation added) were called up. In an “Open letter from representatives of the scientific community of the Russian Federation” (Otkrytoe pismo ot predstavitelei nauchnogo soobshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2022) signed by 796 academics, researchers and lectures express their concern that the mobilisation of researchers carries “the risk of losing existing scientific schools that have been formed over decades of painstaking work, many of which will be impossible to restore” (Otkrytoe pismo ot predstavitelei nauchnogo soobshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2022, translation added).

8. Discussion: Cultural Trends Shape Communicative Actions

This study observed the reactions of Russian academics to the crisis in Ukraine, but there may be questions on why some academic articles, specifically those written by Russian government supporters, lack scholarly rigour and why other scholars do not point this out. It is also unclear why Russian readers take publications at face value without engaging with them and why a botched identity of a supposed British scholar exists in the Russophone academic sphere undetected for several years. Additionally, it is unclear why academics who do not agree with Russian policies are not more vocal in initiating change in society.

Addressing these questions at length would require a separate study. Here I will highlight some cultural trends that shape Russian academics’ communicative actions.

In my previous research, I state that if we want to understand the reasons behind Russian people communicative actions, we need to account for Russia-specific ways of accessing, processing, and communicating information:

[W]hen dealing with the matter in hand, Western traditions prescribe paying mindful attention to detail, meticulous planning and verbalisation of every possibility, acknowledgement of every fleeting phenomenon. Russians, on the other hand, practise the opposite approach: they lend their attention to what they consider important and worthy of attention, leaving out gaps of unacknowledged eventualities, circumstances and potentialities. [...] Understatements, overstatements, conceptual leaps and patchy silences obscure important areas and leave the unexplained subject matter, which Westerners would normally want to acknowledge and duly address (Fell, 2017, p. 92).

Cognitive lacunae and conceptual leaps, integral to Russian communication culture, manifest themselves in the works of Russian academics too. Old-school scholars produce material that a western reader would easily dismantle by employing straightforward analysis. However, Russian academic readers are accustomed to communications laced with gaps and lacunae, and even progressive scholars fail to notice the lack of justifications for arguments coupled with the confusion of facts and opinions.

The poor quality of Russian scholars' academic writing, the lack of lateral thinking and the inability to think analytically (Fell & Lukianova, 2015.) is, at least partly, the result of the Russian-specific approach to information processing, which I describe as macro-reasoning, as opposed to western-style micro-reasoning (Fell, 2017).

Another entrenched cultural trait that impedes constructive scholarly discourse is the deficit of academic discussion between scholars. Articles are produced as separate narratives, not as fragments of ongoing conversations. It, in my opinion, illustrates a Russian-specific tendency to produce monologues rather than engage in dialogues (Fell, 2020). Accordingly, in Russian academia, when an author writes an article, he or she does not aim to contribute to an existing scholarly conversation but presents their research as if it were something completely original and novel. A Russian author initiates a monologue as a standalone thinker and expects his or her publication to trigger a chain of predictable events, where readers accept their text at face value and treat it as a source of authority and wisdom.

Russian authors do not expect dialogical engagement. If collegial criticism occurs, they feel attacked and offended. They consider a dialogical response to their work to be an initiation of someone else's monologue that intends to compete with theirs.

The deficiency of dialogical engagement as a cultural trait of Russian society is a significant factor that prevents academics from speaking out against government policies and actions. This trait is reinforced by another culturally conditioned trend that makes academics accept the political situation as is. This other tendency that underpins the behaviour of silence and acceptance is Russian intelligentsia's long-standing practice of self-withdrawal, or inner exile, a trait which I discuss at length in my forthcoming article "Atheism and Spirituality in the USSR: can atheists be spiritual?" (Fell, 2023, in print).

Conclusion

Russophone academic research on Ukraine and the Ukrainian crisis is dominated by old-school academics who provide theoretical justification for Russia's military action in Ukraine. A dialogue with these scholars is impossible because it would violate Russia's current legislation. Early-career researchers attempted to engage with the Ukrainian theme but did not address the question of the legitimacy and necessity of the special military operation for that reason. Instead, they focus on peripheral issues. Their articles dealing with random themes have one common feature: the authors subtly indicate their lack of enthusiasm for Russia's military action. It is as far as they go.

The international academic boycott affected a small number of Russian scholars who had been actively involved in international collaboration and developed personal and professional connections with western colleagues. Academics that dominate Russian academia in 2022 welcome the new iron curtain and, nostalgic for the Soviet ways, are delighted to return to their comfort zone. In there, they enjoy respect and

influence without the threat of competing colleagues who have begun to acquire internationally recognised academic competencies.

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