

# Debating academic boycotts and cooperation in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine

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## Abstract

This forum is a contribution to debates over the (im)possibility of cooperating with the Russian academic community while Russia's war against Ukraine continues. After briefly reviewing previous studies on the effectiveness and morality of academic sanctions, the forum continues to assess the politics and effectiveness of the academic boycott in changing the belligerent behaviour of the Russian regime. For this purpose, it introduces the idea of ontological (in)security and moves on to discuss, from different perspectives, whether sanctions and boycotts may lead to policy change by way of destabilizing the ontological security of Russia, or whether the academic boycott contributes to strengthening the ruling authoritarian regime.

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## Keywords

Academic boycott, academic sanctions, ontological (in)security, Ukraine, Russia, international academic collaboration

## Introduction

### *Anni Kangas and Sirke Mäkinen*

This forum contributes to debates over academic boycotts and the (im)possibility of cooperating with the Russian academic community while Russia's war against Ukraine continues. It arose from the public seminar "War and academic cooperation with Russia: why, how and whether to continue," organised by the EDUneighbours research project at Tampere University in May 2022, where initial versions of the contributions were presented. The contributions have since been developed on the basis of comments received at the event, discussions among the contributors, and also due to a desire to reflect the current situation in Russia's war against Ukraine. In 2023, the situation with the war is largely the same as it was during the seminar: Russia continues its brutal attacks against Ukraine, the authoritarian regime in Moscow tightens its control over universities, and the academic boycotts introduced in Spring 2022 remain in effect.

The forum consists of an introduction and four contributions discussing and evaluating the idea of the academic boycott from different perspectives. The contributions assess the politics and effectiveness of the academic boycott in bringing an end to the war and changing the belligerent behaviour of the Russian regime. The goal of boycotts is to prompt policy change by inflicting a high symbolic and material cost on the target. The academic boycott of Russia refers to the decisions by scientific institutions from several countries to suspend formal cooperation with their counterparts in the Russian Federation following the February 2022 full-scale military attack against Ukraine. It was motivated by requests for support from Ukrainian state bodies and academic communities. While supranational bodies, ministries, individual universities, funding programmes, science academies, as well as publishers and other business organisations have joined the boycott, it has remained partial. Academic institutions from some parts of the world have refused to join the boycott, and many academic publishers have not joined the suggested ban on authors or reviewers from Russian institutions (e.g. [Nazarovets & Teixeira da Silva, 2022](#)).

There is plenty of previous research assessing the effectiveness and morality of academic boycotts or sanctions, mostly focusing on the cases of South Africa and Israel. The academic boycott of South Africa initiated in the 1960s is often considered a successful case, as it contributed to making South Africa a "pariah state", changing the regime, and bringing an end to the apartheid system in the early 1990s ([Knopf-Newman, 2008: 92](#)). The academic boycott of Israel, which highlights the complicity of Israeli universities in the occupation and apartheid policies of the state, remains a debated issue (e.g. [Newman, 2016](#)).

Previous research on academic boycotts also offers several insights for analysis of the academic boycott of Russia. It alerts us, for example, to the question of collective responsibility ([Butler 2015](#)), to the often-complicated connections between academic institutions and the state ([Newman, 2016](#)), to the (im)possibility of treating academic institutions as apolitical ([Nordkvelle, 1990](#)), as well as to possibilities for the powerful to misuse the concept of academic freedom ([Butler, 2006; Knopf-Newman, 2008; Kagee, 2022](#)). In it, we can also find proposals for alternatives: censures, public condemnations of specific institutions or

individuals, and refusals to reward them; or, rather, focusing on helping the harmed or speaking vigilantly on behalf of the truth (Nussbaum, 2007).

Oksana Zabolotna's contribution in this forum argues for the extension of the boycott to the members of the academic community on the basis of Hannah Arendt's idea of collective responsibility. This idea is discussed in relation to a survey conducted among the members of UERA, a Ukrainian academic association. Some representatives of Russian academic institutions have published appeals in support of the war, while others have bravely spoken out against it (for a summary, see e.g. Nazarovets and Teixeira da Silva, 2022: 664). Most academics cannot be held personally guilty for the atrocities. However, following Arendt (1987), Zabolotna suggests they may be said to still bear collective responsibility. Moreover, academia has inescapably become a battlefield in the war, as Russia has destroyed academic infrastructure in Ukraine. In their contribution, Dubrovskiy and Yarovoy point out that some Russian scholars who have remained in the country resist the war behind the scenes. This suggests that they acknowledge a form of responsibility for the war.

From an International Relations perspective, another interesting angle on the academic boycott is provided by the idea of ontological (in)security. The concept was initially developed by Ronald David Laing (1990) and later elaborated by Anthony Giddens (1991) to conceptualise processes where individuals and groups try to establish a stable identity in the midst of everyday chaos. It has later been applied in the field of International Relations to examine how states or other collectives try to maintain biographical continuity or sustain narratives about the self in the international realm (e.g. Kinnvall, 2004; Mitzen, 2006).

When the concept of ontological security is used in the context of boycotts and sanctions against states, it is presumed that sanctions may lead to a foreign policy change by destabilizing the ontological security of a state (Rosler and Press-Barnathan, 2021). The background assumption here is that social norms are reinforced through stigmatization and through marking out some behaviours as unacceptable (Rogstad, 2022: 4). The deliberate use of force against another state is unacceptable. It breaks the constitutive norms of the international society of states. Yet, as Rogstad (2022) suggests, the stigma imposition after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 failed to deter further aggression, which has been argued to necessitate a broader array of sanctions. Academic boycotts combine the symbolic and material aspects of stigmatization. In addition to the symbolic status loss, sanctioning is material in the sense of reduced access to forums of scientific cooperation, research funding, publication venues, and so on.

The potential of a boycott to prompt policy change depends on whether it generates insecurity about self-perception. As Abed (2007: 85) suggests in his defence of the academic boycott of Israel, the perpetrator society should be "susceptible to outside pressure." An academic boycott of Sudan, he argues, would not be as likely to succeed as that of Israel, as the latter attaches great value to international academic connections. Sirke Mäkinen's (2016, 2021, 2022) research shows that higher education has been one of the arenas in which the Russian state has sought recognition for its status. Yet, according to Svetlana Shenderova's contribution in this forum, despite the rhetoric, the current regime has been reluctant to invest in the internationalization of higher education and research. This suggests that international isolation may backfire; it may end up reinforcing the ontological security of the ruling regime by providing continuity to some of its "autobiographical narratives" (cf. Subotić, 2016; see also Dubrovskiy and Yarovoy in this forum), such as the myth of Russophobia. The narratives that provide ontological security to the regime may mean something different for other segments in the society. Rosler and Press-Barnathan (2021: 20) refer to this as "the need to de-construct national ontological security". Shenderova's contribution highlights exactly this aspect of the academic

boycott. She suggests that “salient scholars” – i.e. scholars with a specific role in system maintenance – are able to escape the boycott due to their privileged positions.

The contribution by Shenderova reminds us that, in the context of the academic boycott, the question of ontological security has to be considered beyond the “territorial trap” (Agnew, 1994) of the Russian state. Indeed, Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine has multiplied calls to decolonize Russian studies, Central and Eastern European studies, as well as related fields. This means destabilizing the Russo-centricity and ontological security of Russia as a colonial/imperial state in the realm of academic knowledge production. Judith Pallot’s contribution turns attention to the Cold War period, during which the Western powers abstained from academic boycotts despite the USSR’s external aggression; the interests of knowledge production were prioritized. Pallot discusses the practices and strategies, such as self-censorship, through which Western scholars studying Soviet Russia sought to safeguard their security. The contribution can be read as an exploration of the ontological security of the academic profession itself, often constructed around the “autobiographical narratives” of impartiality and objectivity.

## **Tell Me who your friend is: Academic cooperation with Russia**

*Oksana Zabolotna*

This contribution discusses academic boycotts from the point of view of collective guilt and Hannah Arendt’s concept of collective responsibility. Drawing on the results of a survey among the members of the Ukrainian Educational Research Association (UERA) conducted in Spring (2022), as well as on previous research on the notions of collective guilt and responsibility, it presents academic boycotts as a strategy for getting members of the Russian academic community to accept responsibility for their country’s aggression. It also suggests that intellectuals have a specific responsibility in times of war (e.g. Chomsky, 1967).

There is a long tradition of research in this area related to the tragic lessons of genocide carried out against one nation or cultural group by another. Discussing the differences between guilt and responsibility, Hannah Arendt (1987: 43) states that “guilt, unlike responsibility ... is strictly personal” and one cannot feel guilty “for things that happened without oneself actively participating in them.” This leads to the assumption that guilt cannot be collective. Nevertheless, “there is such a thing as responsibility for things one has not done” that can be “political and strictly collective” (Arendt, 1987: 43). Proceeding on the basis of Arendt, scholars have produced different examples of trying to escape collective responsibility, such as leaving the evil community or non-participation in shameful acts. They have looked into the political, emotional, and moral aspects of responsibility, supporting them with historical examples and individual cases. Rääkkä (1997), for example, seeks to clarify the ethics of disassociating oneself from unjust collective practices. He asks whether genuinely opposing evil practices means that the individual does not share the group’s blame, and suggests that the position according to which opposing evil practices saves a person from responsibility is not justified. These questions are, again, relevant in the current situation, where Ukraine has become a battlefield afflicted by genocide and ecocide, which necessitates exploring the collective responsibility of Russian intellectuals for the aggression on their neighbouring independent country.

The role of the academic community should be to support the concepts truth, development, and academic freedom. However, the Address of the Rectors’ Union, signed by more than 300 rectors, made it clear that many Russian academic institutions, including all leading universities such as the Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, Higher School of

Economics, Tomsk State University, Novosibirsk State University, Nuclear University (MEPhI), Moscow State Institute of International Affairs (MGIMO), and all federal universities, support Putin's war and thus abandoned this fundamental role. Instead, they have become an obedient tool of the authoritarian regime and its propaganda program.

The idea of the collective responsibility of intellectuals finds support in the Ukrainian Educational Research Association survey<sup>1</sup> conducted in April 2022 among members of the association, which is a non-governmental organisation of about 400 members. The 99 respondents represented 16 regions of Ukraine. Twelve of them had been forced to leave their homes and become internally and externally displaced persons due to the aggression. The vast majority of the respondents (96.9%) argued that Ukraine can be supported through academic boycotts. Not as many, but still a solid majority (72.3%), agreed with the statement that "all ties with higher education institutions and scholars in Russia should be cut". However, there were also those (24.6%) who objected to cooperation with such institutions but still advocated collaboration "with those who openly condemned the war." Only three percent of the respondents chose the option "cooperation should be continued with both institutions and individual scholars."

The respondents suggested that the academic boycott, as a consequence of which Russia would turn into a closed social system, would hinder the development of Russian academia. For Ukraine, this would be of utmost importance, because it would also mean that Russia could not make use of the latest technological and other achievements for improving its military potential. The UERA members noted that Russian academics had contributed to the formation of their country's colonial worldview and were blameworthy for the political decisions of their state. This responsibility extends to scholars supporting Russian politics, those who keep silent, those who have left Russia, and even those who have protested (cf. Dubrovskiy and Yarovoy in this forum). This approach invites reflection on whether (the act of) leaving the country exempts scholars from collective responsibility. Arendt, in her nuanced discussion of the topic, suggested that "only by leaving the community" would it be possible to escape collective responsibility, and that only "refugees and stateless people [...] cannot be held politically responsible for anything" (Arendt 1987: 45).

To conclude, the Ukrainian academic community demands that Russian academics should share collective responsibility even if they oppose the atrocities carried out by their country, which, as Rääkkä (1997) logically proves, "is hardly groundbreaking" (p. 102). Russian intellectuals cannot claim to be innocent after advocating for imperialistic ideas that inflated the national sense of impunity to the extent that their country started a genocidal war against a neighbouring people that have been trying to throw off the colonial burden for centuries.

## **Silent but salient: The stakeholders of Russian internationalisation policy before and during the war**

*Svetlana Shenderova*

Over 50 countries suspended their institutional cooperation in higher education (HE) and research with Russia after its treacherous attack on Ukraine. As the previous contribution discusses, Ukrainian academics urged a total academic boycott of Russian colleagues (see also Chumachenko et al., 2022). International collaboration has also become potentially dangerous for Russian scholars because of the repressive "foreign agent law" (see Gosudarstvennaya Duma, 2022). This contribution highlights that the academic boycott has different impacts on differently positioned scholars.

It de-constructs Russian internationalisation policy through the prism of decision-making processes in the higher education sector.

Despite the severing of ties between European and Russian universities, some individual scholars have maintained their connections both outside and within Russia. This has left Russia some room to continue their pre-war internationalisation policy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Russian higher education on the global stage (Mäkinen, 2021; Shenderova, 2018a, 2021). According to my analysis of university websites, there are several such double-affiliated scholars, mainly social scientists. They are based at academic institutions in the EU and Nordics, USA, and the UK, and their Russian host institutions have close links with the Presidential Administration of Russia. Some scholars who were affiliated both with Russian and western universities before the war have kept their positions after its outbreak. They are now able to avoid both the repressive national law and the Western academic boycott. The webpages of the elite Russian universities confirm their presence as employees without information about their other affiliations, while the websites of their European hosts do not refer to their Russian affiliations. Therefore, Russian universities are able to increase their symbolic capital with the help of these scholars who work abroad but continue to update their publication lists on the websites of Russian institutions. Moreover, the Moscow State University Web site (MSU, 2023) shows a research paper published by *Cells*, MDPI, Switzerland in November 2022, by a team of scholars including Maria Vorontsova, who heads the MSU regenerative medicine laboratory but is also under sanctions as Putin's alleged daughter. When discussing academic boycotts and their effectiveness, it is therefore essential to consider various levels of academic privilege among the impacted scholars. Simultaneously, it should be taken into account that some Russian academics were arrested or lost their jobs because of their previous European cooperation and/or stays abroad (e.g. DOXA, 2022).

The examples above show that knowledge of the institutional environments inside and outside Russian universities is crucial to discussions of the effectiveness of academic sanctions. Moreover, the university charters confirm their historical dependence on the top tier of the state. The Empress Elizabeth established the Moscow State University in 1755, and the Russian President today heads its board of trustees and appoints the rector (Postanovleniye Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii 2008; Kremlin, 2023). The government established the Higher School of Economics (HSE) – an institution that is promoted as being “based on academic freedom and self-governance” (Gel'man, 2021: 1093), but which is directly funded by the Presidential Administration, whose first deputy chair Sergey Kiriyenko heads the HSE Supervisory Council *ex officio* (HSE, 2023a). Aleksey Kudrin founded and supervised the European University in St. Petersburg (EUSP) in 1994 while having been closely linked with the current President for decades. This is something they also emphasize in their official bios (EUSP, 2023) and in multiple interviews (e.g. TASS, 2020; RBC, 2020).

In addition, these universities inherited Soviet traditions such as spectacular numbers of top-management personnel and non-transparent internal decision-making processes where a top-down approach is combined with the interests of certain university stakeholders. The ability to do research with a small (if any) teaching workload and have the opportunity to leave the country have been considered privileges (Cai et al., 2022; Meduza, 2022; Shenderova 2022; Shenderova et al., 2023). Since Vladimir Putin signed the RF Government Resolution (Rasporyazheniye Pravitel'stva Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2008), the Presidential Administration has distributed funding for internationalisation activities and influenced the university top-managers and educational administrators who determined the procedures of employee selection for internationalisation activities abroad. As a result, Russian academia has been divided into a top-down approved (HSE, 2023b) privileged

minority and a domestic majority. The former has enjoyed doing research and improving their skills abroad while having a small (if any) teaching workload at home (Cai et al., 2022). At the same time, the majority has had little or no time for research under the pressure of maintaining over 800 contact hours per academic year (Ustyuzhantseva et al., 2021). The ability of Russian academics to answer urgently to the demands of the university administration (for example, by providing academic publications, access to funding schemes, and legitimacy for international partners) determined their salience in Russian internationalisation policy at the university level. Based on this, these university stakeholders could be referred to as “salient stakeholders” (Shenderova, 2022b). Meanwhile, many European partners have been indifferent to the internal mechanisms of internationalisation policy in Russian universities (Shenderova, 2020; Shenderova, 2022a). Institutionalised internationalisation activities legitimated Russian stakeholders, who, in turn, helped their European counterparts to achieve the objectives of national internationalisation policies, for example a solid amount and quality of international students and research (Shenderova, 2018b; Shenderova et al., 2023). One could argue that the indifference of the European academic and expert community to the decision-making processes in Russian universities has also contributed to the regime’s resilience and legitimation.

To summarise, knowledge of the background and real objectives of Russian internationalisation policy suggests that the kinds of academic sanctions that have now been implemented are not an effective means to bring about change in the policies of the current regime. Academic sanctions, when implemented without in-depth knowledge of the intricacies of Russian internationalisation policy, are likely to impact non-privileged academic workers in Russian universities. At the same time, those salient academics who have played an important role in system maintenance over the years are able to escape the impact of the sanctions and participate in academic life both in Russian and in foreign universities.

## **War on Ukraine and Russian academia: boycott, responsibility, and resistance**

*Dmitry Dubrovskiy and Gleb Yarovoy*

The question of academic responsibility is a debated issue (see above). At the centre of these debates is the question of the complicity of academics (Rodin and Yudkin, 2011). Those who emphasize the responsibility of all citizens in crimes committed by their regimes, as well as national academia’s direct involvement in it, advocate for academic boycotts (Riemer, 2022). Others propose other forms of response than boycotts, and consider an academic boycott to be a violation of academic freedom that prevents the global flow of ideas and knowledge production (Nussbaum, 2007).

The pro-boycott position in the current Russian aggression against Ukraine is based on the idea of Russian academia as a “weapon of the aggressive state”, which, it is argued, justifies a total academic ban for Russian scholars (Chumachenko et al., 2022). This position is grounded on the assumption of the full support of the war among Russians, including Russian academics. In this context, the pro-war petition signed by 350 rectors of Russian universities is often taken up. However, we should take into account, first, that the representativeness of public opinion surveys in authoritarian countries has been questioned many times (e.g. Tannenbergh, 2022). Second, Russian rectors are not proper representatives of Russian scholars (e.g. Gerashchenko, 2022), just as Putin is not a political leader elected in fair elections. Thus, the assumption of “full support” is grounded on unreliable data and a simplified vision of Russian academic mechanics.



Among other features of this mechanism, the “full support” assumption ignores the resistance of Russian scholars. The open anti-war protest of Russian academia started with the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Holdren et al., 2022). It was suppressed only by a de facto military censorship introduced by the Russian government. Breaking that censorship results in the imposition of criminal sanctions (Dubrovskiy, 2022). As a reaction to this censorship (and to the war itself), thousands of Russian academics resigned from universities and/or defected from the country, creating academic diasporas abroad.

Some of these were public intellectuals with hundreds of thousand followers on social media, and many of those who left Russia significantly contribute to shaping anti-regime and anti-war opinions in Russian speaking communities around the globe (i.e. Konstantin Sonin, Sergey Medvedev, Ekaterina Shul'man etc.), and also participate in the high-level dialogue and initiative to provide peace for Ukraine and democratization for post-war Russia (for example, the “Russia Day After” conference held in the European Parliament in June 2023). Available studies suggest that, to no less a degree than other categories of Russian emigrants, exiled scholars have joined volunteer movements, helped Ukrainian (and Russian) refugees, supported NGOs, and participated in rallies (Zavadskaya et al., 2023).

This, of course, does not negate the fact that among Russian academics many ideological or opportunist supporters of the “special military operation” bear their own share of responsibility, guilt, and forthcoming punishment.

Nevertheless, among those who have for different reasons remained in the country, a substantial number are involved in the “silent resistance” against pro-war propaganda, introduced in Russia as compulsory disciplines in the schools’ and universities’ curricula in 2022. Many of them continue to resist the war behind the scenes, by teaching their students, publishing critical and anti-regime texts, and sabotaging pro-war classes (Zavadskaya and Gerber, 2023). That is, they continue what James Scott (1987: 273) refers to as “routine,” or “primitive,” resistance. All of these regular activities of lecturers and scholars, following Vaclav Havel, are a way to challenge the authoritarian regime simply by “living within the truth” (Havel, 1985: 40). This resistance also indicates their understanding of personal – if not collective – responsibility for the crimes of the Russian regime, and their readiness to help change the situation through teaching, research, or societal activities.

The international (or, first of all, EUropean) boycott, along with domestic pressure – repression of dissents and exerting ideological control over the humanities and social sciences – is smashing the remaining possibilities to practice such primitive resistance, and is further marginalizing Russian scholars. The deglobalization of academic knowledge production in Russia will serve the interests of the regime; academia will be incapsulated and isolated following the desire of the Putin dictatorship. Given this, we argue that an international academic boycott is not an effective means to help stop the war in Ukraine.

Blanket sanctions in general have demonstrated their ineffectiveness; while smart, targeted sanctions have been proven more effective (Drezner, 2011). The full-scale academic boycott will make it harder for Russian academics to resist — through the means that they still have — the policies of the current regime. It will contribute towards a degeneration of Russian scholarship. This will hurt not only the global scientific community, but also complicate the efforts to re-construct Russia after the eventual fall of Putinism.



## The vulnerabilities of conducting research on Russia during the cold war (1947–1991)

Judith Pallot

It has become commonplace to describe the heightened tension between Russia and the West as a ‘new cold war’ (Monaghan, 2015; Hayter, 1975; Legvold, 2016). Historical analogies are much beloved by political actors with an axe to grind, but they nevertheless can contain lessons, so long as it is recognised that they are no substitute for thinking through all the options available in the current situation. It is with this proviso in mind that my observations should be read.

In the immediate post-WWII period, western governments wanted to increase their knowledge about the USSR and its satellites in Eastern Europe. To this end, NATO countries funded interdisciplinary centres of Soviet and East European studies and large Sovietological communities developed in the USA and UK, as well as smaller ones in other countries, including Sweden in northern Europe (Bonnell and Breslauer, 1998; Manning, 1957).<sup>2</sup> These centres participated in shaping programmes to take postgraduates and more established scholars on extended research trips to the USSR, as part of cultural exchange agreements negotiated during Khrushchev’s Thaw.<sup>3</sup> In later periods of more tense international relations some governments suspended cultural agreements, but these generally did not include such academic exchanges. In 1968, following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, for example, the USA suspended all cultural contacts with the exception of scholarly exchanges conducted under the USA-Soviet cultural agreement, while in the UK there was cross-party agreement in parliament that the decision to participate in cultural agreements should be left up to the individual (Hansard, 1968; Richmond, 2008: 106). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–1989), a country outside the Soviet sphere of influence, did prompt an immediate US boycott of most exchanges, but they were restored within 2 years, and in 1985, at the Geneva summit between presidents Reagan and Gorbachev, a much expanded agreement for scholarly exchanges was negotiated.

The first observation I would make is that such inter-state exchange agreements were inevitably subject to regulatory control. The advantage of the exchange agreements was that they provided access to archives, libraries, and research networks. They also provided an opportunity to experience life in the USSR first hand, as has been retold in the burgeoning number of autobiographies of former *stazheri* (Fitzpatrick, 2013; McAuley, 2019; Siegelbaum, 2019; Hanson, 2020). However, there was a price to be paid for participation, in the surrender of freedom over the choice of research topic and methodology, when research was conducted in the USSR and, if repeated visits were desired, how it was written up. There were also topics that were off-limits. These included most of the then-current research agenda in western social sciences, the use of fieldwork, social surveys and interviews, and any topic about the post-1930 Stalinist repressions and 1970s dissent. Data collection was confined to a restricted number of central archives, where actual handling of the catalogues was denied, and to publications in the public domain. Everyone was also subject to surveillance by agents of the security forces.

Following from the regulatory control over research activities, the second observation I would make is that every scholar had difficult ethical and personal choices to make about the direction of their research. To participate in an exchange, a researcher had to decide upon the level of self-censorship they were prepared to accept. For some, including those who pioneered research on the Gulags or who were known critics of the USSR, the decision not to visit the USSR was predetermined, but for many young scholars, choosing the direction of their research involved the

difficult task of weighing up an eye-catching but controversial topic against including work in the archives and first-hand experience of the region on a resume.

Thirdly, and in response to my first two observations, exchange scholars had to learn the skills needed to survive the hostile research environment. Some of these skills involved learning ways of circumventing the regulations, such as where and when it was safe to have unreported meetings; low level bribery (for example, a bar of soap to be shown *opisi* in the archives); when it was safe to break rules (it was almost a rite of passage to venture, at least once, beyond the 30 km limit around Moscow), and judging when it was necessary to be 'economical with the truth'. More risky was acquiring unsanctioned materials, developing friendships with people critical of the regime, and interviewing known dissidents. Presenting results acquired on study trips could involve the use of elliptical language, vague citations, imprecision, and obfuscation. These skills were necessary not just to secure the next visa but, more importantly, to protect informal networks in the USSR. Circumventing regulations was not necessarily frowned upon either by the academic community or authorities in the home country. Both the USA and UK permitted exchange scholars to use the diplomatic bag to send their research materials home, while a whole ecosystem of information transfer connected scholars who chose not to travel to the USSR with those scholars, journalists, and others who did. Without this, there would have been no monitoring the fate of dissidents or publication of their testimonies. Of course, not all exchange scholars had to engage in dissimulation; there were plenty of safe topics researchers could choose during the cold war, as, indeed, there are today.

The difficult choices that scholars who travelled to the USSR before 1991 had to make contrast with the freedoms that the current generation has enjoyed since 1991. Prior vetting of topics provided a protection that was lost with the end of the cultural agreements; exchange scholars were part of a diplomatic process of bridge-building that eventually led to a *détente*, so that neither side was interested in rocking the boat; and scholars were relieved of the need to do their own due diligence when accepting invitations or funding, or developing collaborations. This is not to advocate a return to the cold war level of regulatory control, but I have been struck by how few of the signals of the need to develop adaptive strategies to a hostile research environment have informed the choices made by scholars over the past two decades. Doing research in Russia has been far less predictable since 1991 than it was during the cold war, and the risks greater. Bi-lateral collaborations negotiated by scholars themselves are inherently risky and leave scholars vulnerable to being manipulated for propaganda purposes, or to expulsion with the notorious 10-year ban on entry to Russia, or worse. Failure to recognise the signals has also put Russian nationals at risk, including both those who have accepted employment in the west and research partners in Russia.

Ultimately, the difference between the original and new cold war, notwithstanding the proxy conflicts, is that today's war is 'hot', involving armed combat between Russia and a western country – Ukraine. This calls for the acceptance by every individual of the need to make the sort of choices I have described above, and to develop the research 'skills' consistent with the current and more threatening hostile research environment. However, the principal recommendation I would make for the new generation of scholars, who are understandably frustrated that their freedoms have been taken away, is patience, until the time for bridge-building returns.

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## Notes

1. Preliminary results of the survey were presented in the EDUneighbours seminar with the title “War and academic cooperation with Russia: why, how, and whether to continue” at Tampere University in May 2022.
2. The first was the Harriman Center at Columbia University, while the five Hayter-funded centres were founded in the UK in 1961 and Uppsala University’s Institute was founded later in the 1960s
3. These were the product of a Foreign Ministers’ agreement between the USA, Britain, and France in Geneva in 1955, which agreed to work to remove barriers to information media, culture education, books, and publications, science, sports, and tourism.

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