

“Historical and Political Dynamics of U.S.-Russian Relations in Higher Education and Research”

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Historical context and research questions:

- Given broad global trend toward rising mobility and convergence of policies and practices, *why are US-Russian relations in HE sector so weak, an anomaly?*
- In US, studies of Russia and university partnerships often relegated to area studies, structural legacies of Cold War funding, programs isolated in universities;
- In Russia, broad focus on European ties; also hopes for sustained cooperation with USA often thwarted by lack of interest in the US, lack of funding from US Government, alienation among émigré academics;

Historical dimensions of US-Russian relations?

- 1958-1960s: First phases of US-Russian cooperation in higher education and research (controlled on both sides by national security establishments, limited);
- 1970s: Significant cooperation (especially in medicine and life sciences, physics, social sciences, including professional groups in support of US-Soviet detente);
- 1980s: US shift to market-based “laissez faire” model in international education policy and mobility plans;
- 1990s: One-sided US “technical assistance” to post-Soviet higher education, with “missionary” impulse (market forces to transcend “bilateral” framework).

Political dimensions of US-Russian relations?

- Ironic twist: more investment and interest on US side when relations are bad (“know your enemy”), tends to decline when relations stable or simply eclipsed by US domestic politics, struggles over federal budgets; persistent anti-Russian attitudes in US public opinion;
- Steady decline of “chosen instruments” on US side for such cooperation (IREX, ACTR/ACCELS now ACIE, NCEEER, Kennan Institute), along with shift away from region by major US foundations in recent years;
- Russia: renewed HE funding meets US dysfunction?
- Perceived failure of Obama-Medvedev era “reset”?

New Independent States College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP)

- US Government-funded program in 1990s to foster reform in Russian (and post-Soviet) universities;
- Lack of language and area studies expertise on US side; lack of mechanisms within many “reforming” Russian universities to make use of new information (weak management, slow curricular reform, weak IT);
- Congressional politics in US: spread grants out to many lower-tier and provincial institutions, many not able to sustain relationships beyond end of grants;
- Parallel efforts by private foundations (Soros, etc.).
- Steve Kotkin: \$1 billion “wasted” on such efforts...?

Centers for Advanced Study and Education (CASE) Program (in Russian, MION)

- 1990s: Western focus on private graduate schools?
- Co-funded and managed by RF MOES and Carnegie Corporation (16\$ million) & MacArthur Foundation, with Kennan Institute and New Eurasia Foundation;
- CASE: Linked network of nine interdisciplinary social science research centers in regional state universities (*success dependent on inclusion and governance*)?
- After end of Western funding, many centers function with MOES or university funding, often linked to later conversion into federal universities (Ekaterinburg, Rostov, Kaliningrad, Vladivostok) or NRUs (Irkutsk);

Basic Research and Higher Education (BRHE) Program in Natural and Physical Sciences

- Similar model as CASE, but MacArthur Foundation and MOES as core funders; operated through CRDF (Civilian Research and Development Foundation); out of efforts to demilitarize Soviet science establishment
- Network of twenty Research and Education Centers (RECS) to foster integration of advanced research and science education in state universities; with TTOs (technology transfer offices) and student training in English, research management, entrepreneurship;
- Also continued by MOES after Western funding ends, contributed to Federal University and NRU reforms.

U.S. Department of Education FIPSE US-Russia University Partnerships (2007-2010)

- 2006 US-RF Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide bilateral relations (cooperation in math and science, foreign languages, and teacher education);
- Approximately 15 university partnership grants in areas such as foreign languages, public health, energy policy, economics, distance learning, global environmental issues, biotechnology, cybersecurity;
- Suspended for lack of funding from US Government.
- Other joint projects continue through NSF, NIH, NASA (yet larger pattern of decline in US funding/interest).

EURECA (Enhancing University Research Capacity and Entrepreneurial Activity)

- Funded by US-Russian Foundation for Economic Advancement and Rule of Law (endowed by former US-Russian investment fund), operated ACIE and FNE
- Partnerships between leading research universities to develop mechanisms for commercialization of research, student entrepreneurship programs, staff for intellectual property rights, licensing, patenting;
- Core partners for new bilateral “triple helix” models: University of Maryland, UCLA, and Purdue University; U Nizhnii Novgorod, St. P ITMO, Urals Federal U, etc;
- Great exception to all this: Skolkovo-MIT partnership

Lessons learned and future prospects for US-Russian cooperation in higher education?

- We *have* learned how to do it: need *capacity* on both sides in languages, project management, exchanges; spirit of *mutual* respect and peer-to-peer dialogue;
- Need *research* on both sides to better understand elements that can be adopted, adapted, translated;
- Sweeping reforms in Russian universities, and grant funding to support dual degrees, exchanges, new IT;
- *Yet severe budget cuts (potential end of Title VI, risk to Fulbright, etc.) and policy dysfunction on US side;*
- Need for professionals/universities to lead (explain Russian potential to US partners, develop new ties)?