

BARBARISM AS A RESULT OF THE OBSESSION WITH STATE-CIVILIZATION

Yulia Sineokaya

Independent Institute of Philosophy (Paris) /
Centre for the History of Modern Philosophy, Sorbonne University (HIPHIMO) /
National Institute of Languages and Civilizations Orientals (CREE INALCO)
ORCID: [0000-0003-4401-1070](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4401-1070)

DOI: 10.36169/2227-6068.2025.01.00008

Abstract: *This paper examines the transformations within the Russian academic community that have occurred since the beginning of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. The author focuses on state control and Kremlin-led repression in the fields of science and education. By the start of the war's fourth year, the Russian Academy of Sciences had virtually lost its autonomy from the state. Social sciences and the humanities in Russia are gradually reverting, as they did during the Soviet era, to serving as instruments of political propaganda. Universities are undergoing a comprehensive ideological restructuring of their curricula in accordance with the Russian spiritual and moral traditional values approved by the Russian president in 2022. The ideological foundation of this process is Russia's newly asserted identity as a "state-civilization": a Greater Russian World in opposition to the 'collective West.' New academic disciplines are emerging, presented by the Kremlin as a "sovereign model of humanitarian knowledge," such as Foundations of Russian Statehood (Andrey Polosin), Westernology (Alexander Dugin), and others. Pro-war ideologues are intensifying the level of "patriotism" and waging an aggressive campaign against members of the academic scientific community.*

Keywords: *Russian academic community, Russia's war in Ukraine, collective will, Z-philosophy, Z-ideology, state-civilization, repressions, self-censorship*

The article **received:** May 5, 2025; **approved:** July 3, 2025.

Russia's war in Ukraine and the escalating repression inside the country can be described as a mechanism of 'self-destruction of civilization' (Klaus Offe's term) or a relapse into barbarism. Paradoxically, against the backdrop of these events, Russia increasingly insists on referring to itself as a state-civilization.

The fourth year of Russia's war in Ukraine began with a sweeping campaign to tighten state control over science and education. Repression within the academic community is part of a radical overhaul of all spheres of public life. The goal of the current purge is to replace universal human values with "Russian spiritual and moral traditional values" within a single country. The source of the centrifugal will to expand and dismantle the state borders established in the 20th century, emanating from the Russian Leviathan, is Russia's new political identity as a state-civilization. The center of the Russian 'state-civilization'—the 'Greater Russian World'—is located in the Kremlin, while its borders end nowhere.

The state's large-scale assault on the key pillars of democracy—education, the media, and the judiciary—began on the eve of the full-scale war. Russian scholars were the largest professional group that did not support Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. According to a survey conducted by the sociological service Russian Field in February and March 2022, 85% of surveyed academics opposed the 'Special Military Operation,' while only 8% expressed support (Дубровский 2025). And although the repression of the academic community has not yet provoked a strong public reaction, it is clear that the consequences of the purges in science and education will affect Russian society as a whole.

As the military conflict continues, the 'security measures' implemented by the state against intellectuals have grown increasingly severe. Each Friday, the registry of 'foreign agents' expands (the list is now approaching four digits), and it includes a considerable number of scholars and university professors. The legislation surrounding foreign agents continues to tighten in a spiral. In 2024, at one of Russia's top universities, the Higher School of Economics, undergraduate journalism applicants were prohibited from mentioning materials of 'foreign agents' under threat of having their interview results canceled (ОВД-Инфо 2024). An April 2025 ruling by the Ministry of Justice prohibits foreign-agent scientists from engaging in educational or public outreach activities starting September 1, 2025, under threat not only of fines but also of prosecution. In effect, this is a ban on their profession.

Russia is also targeting independent and opposition-affiliated Russian-language research and educational centers abroad, regularly adding them to the list of 'undesirable organizations' (currently numbering over 200). As a result, Russian scholars are increasingly afraid of any contact with academic institutions in 'unfriendly countries.' The State Duma has passed, in its first reading, a law that prohibits Russian academics from collaborating with foreign colleagues or institutions without prior approval from the FSB. In today's world, 'science sovereignty' essentially equates to a ban on science.

Self-censorship, cautious online activity, rumors of searches and arrests, threats of frozen bank accounts and property seizure—all this has plunged the academic community into a state of fear. Scholars are labeled as being under 'foreign influence,' criminal cases

are opened against them, and their books are removed from stores and libraries. According to *T-invariant (Эхо Москвы 2025)*, between 2022 and the end of March 2025, 89 individuals from the academic community have faced repression: 64 scholars, 18 students and graduate students, and seven lecturers. Authorities have opened 41 criminal cases and 29 administrative cases; 19 individuals have been terminated. The fear of losing one's job or peace of mind, as well as the fear of humiliation and ostracism, has now extended beyond individual cases—it affects science as a whole. Even those who have left Russia are paralyzed by fear, haunted by the possibility of endangering family members left behind, losing property, or being barred from reentering Russia. Self-censorship has become the norm for both those who stayed and those who left.

A campaign is underway to replace respected academics with vocal Kremlin loyalists in the leadership of Russian universities, research foundations, and institutes. This process mirrors the pattern described by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: totalitarian regimes replace competent administrators with incompetent loyalists. We are all witnesses to purges and show trials of those who might dare to speak out. One of the first victims was the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka), whose rector, Sergey Zuev, was dismissed and arrested in autumn 2021. The Artes Liberales program at Shaninka was later shut down, and Rosobrnadzor recently banned the school from admitting new students as of September 1, 2025 (*Интерфакс 2025*). At the Higher School of Economics, the Department of Constitutional Law was dismantled in 2020, and the Public Policy and Human Rights Program was closed in February 2022. Other institutions, such as the European University at St. Petersburg and Smolny College at St. Petersburg State University, also suffered.

After the war in Ukraine began, the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) virtually vanished from the public sphere. In contrast to the rectors of the country's leading universities, who signed the infamous Address of the Russian Union of Rectors¹, the RAS refrained from public political statements. The RAS leadership did not publicly support the launch of the 'Special Military Operation.' In fact, on February 24, 2022, several dozen RAS members signed an open letter calling for an end to the war in Ukraine (*T-invariant 2022*).

Three months later, RAS leadership was reshuffled. The Academy now refrains from political involvement and has made no public effort to protect scholars from persecution. Several institutes, including the Institute for Information Transmission Problems, the Institute of Philosophy, and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, have come under pressure from Z-bloggers and far-right media. The situation is especially

¹ From the Address of the Russian Union of Rectors dated March 4, 2022: "This decision by Russia—to finally put an end to the eight-year confrontation between Ukraine and Donbas, to achieve the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, and thereby protect itself from growing military threats... It is very important in these days to support our country, our army, which is defending our security, and to support our President... Universities have always been a pillar of the state. Our primary goal is to serve Russia and to develop its intellectual potential. Now more than ever, we must demonstrate confidence and resilience in the face of economic and informational attacks, unite effectively around our President, and, by our own example, strengthen the spirit of optimism and faith in the power of reason among the younger generation, inspiring hope for the swift advent of peace. Together we are a great force!" (*PCP 2022*).

difficult in the Siberian Branch of the Academy, where scholars have been arrested and sentenced to long prison terms on charges of ‘treason.’

The RAS has gradually lost its independence and now operates under government control. The first step in this process was the loss of financial autonomy. In 2013, the government decided to merge the RAS with the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences. The merger was conducted under a ‘two-key’ system, which transferred roughly 400 RAS research institutes to the Ministry of Education and Science. While the Academy retained scientific oversight of the research and expert evaluations, all project funding was centralized in the ministry. This transition phase lasted from 2013 to 2018. During this period, the institutes answered to the Federal Agency for Scientific Organizations (FANO), which also oversaw education, healthcare, and agriculture, as well as the Academy’s property. One major result of FANO’s activity was the classification of all research institutions into three categories: leaders (which received increased funding), second-tier institutions (which were instructed to improve), and third-tier institutions (which were slated for reorganization or liquidation). As a result, the number of institutes decreased by one-quarter, and FANO itself was eventually abolished. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education and Science was split into two separate bodies: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. All RAS institutes that remained after the reform were transferred to the latter.

The final stage in the RAS’s loss of autonomy came in its 300th anniversary year, 2024. On that occasion, the Academy initiated the creation of a Board of Trustees—a body that had never existed before. In May 2024, at the Academy’s annual general meeting, the academicians asked President Putin to chair this board (*PBK* 2024). The Academy’s charter commission stated that the creation of the board could strengthen the Academy’s standing. The decision was approved by an overwhelming majority, with only one academic voting against and seven abstaining. In this way, the RAS renounced its independence, and Putin became the first Russian leader since Stalin (who was elected an honorary member in 1939) to hold a formal role in the Academy (*PAH* 2024). On November 22, 2024, Putin submitted a bill to the State Duma amending Federal Law No. 253-FZ “On the Russian Academy of Sciences, the reorganization of state academies, and amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” (*PCP* 2024). According to this law, the RAS Board of Trustees (with no more than 20 members), led by the President of the Russian Federation, will determine the Academy’s strategic priorities, regulate the number of academicians and corresponding members, and oversee the Academy’s international cooperation.

At the spring annual general meeting of the Russian Academy of Sciences in May 2025, two corresponding members from the Department of Historical and Philological Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences were scandalously not elected as academicians because they had signed in 2022 the anti-war letter against Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and did not renounce their position.¹ Despite the fact that the votes were divided, with half of the academicians in favor of electing the anti-war scholars,

¹ Mikhail Kovalchuk organized a campaign against candidates for the Russian Academy of Sciences who signed an anti-war letter (*Insider* 2025).

their candidacies were rejected by the Presidium of the RAS. At the same time, Nikolai Azarov, the former Prime Minister of Ukraine (2010-2014) and co-founder of the Party of Regions, was elected as an academician for the Earth Sciences Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Azarov became the first academician in the history of the Russian Academy of Sciences who has no scientific publications in reputable scientific journals and whose Hirsch index (citations) is zero. Since 2025, academic merit has taken a back seat to political position at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The higher education system, since the start of the war, has entered a phase of escalating turbulence. On the one hand, nonconformist professors and students continue to be dismissed; on the other hand, various academic disciplines are being discontinued, while new curricula and methodological programs are being introduced.

By 2025, anxiety within the university environment reached a peak. An unprecedented number of university rectors and vice-rectors have been arrested on charges ranging from violations of migration policy to embezzlement, bribery, and corruption. Open support for the war and patriotic rhetoric is no longer a safeguard. Among those persecuted are many who had signed the 2022 letter from university rectors in support of the 'Special Military Operation.' Over the past year, university leadership has been arrested in Kaliningrad, Voronezh, Astrakhan, Nizhny Novgorod, Ulyanovsk, Cherkessk, Kurgan, Pskov, Tambov, and other cities (*Радио Свобода* 2025). While it is difficult to determine the proportion of politically motivated arrests, the trend toward panic and repression in the higher education sector is unmistakable. The wave of denunciations—students against professors and vice versa—has reached its highest level in the past 25 years.

These developments discredit science and education, eroding public respect and trust in scholars and academics.

Numerous changes are being prepared for the 2025–2026 academic year. Aleksandr Dugin has called for the Russian education system to be drastically reduced and compressed. He is echoed by Vladimir Medinsky, who advocates revising educational standards and shortening the duration of study. President Putin stated that government support should be limited to university disciplines that can ensure Russia's technological independence and leadership (i.e., mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences). Starting in 2026, enrollment in disciplines deemed "unnecessary" by the government will be restricted (*Коммерсантъ* 2025).

The exposure and public punishment of scholars serve two functions: first, they prepare public opinion for the constant tightening of legislation; second, they facilitate a worldview shift in Russian science and education, aligning it with the new framework of traditional values. The ideological foundation of this process is Russia's newly declared identity as a 'state-civilization'—the 'greater Russian world' positioned in opposition to Western centrism.

The Kremlin was committed to the 'civilization project' well in advance of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The introduction of the 'state-civilization,' which followed the notion of the 'Russian world' that entered official discourse in 2006. The ideologeme

“Russia as a State-civilization” has appeared in official Kremlin documents since 2022, though Vladimir Putin began using this concept as early as 2012. Putin used the concepts of ‘cultural code’ and ‘state-civilization’ for the first time to refer to the unity of Russians living on both sides of the Russian border. In his programmatic article *Russia: The National Question*, he wrote:

The self-identification of the Russian people is that of a multiethnic civilization held together by a Russian cultural core. And this choice has been affirmed by the Russian people again and again—not in plebiscites or referendums, but in blood, through its thousand-year history. (Путин 2012)

In 2014, during the signing of the Treaty on the Accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, Putin described Russian civilization as a special community, opposing it to the ‘collective West.’ By contrasting Russian with European civilization, Kremlin ideologists are refashioning Stalinist legacies into a contemporary ideological project (Сталин 1944).¹ After 2014, civilizational nationalism, based on ideas of civilizational exceptionalism and internal solidarity, has emerged as the country’s ideological reference point. Concerned with preserving the unity of Russia as a complex, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional state (unlike the Chinese ‘nation-state’), the Kremlin has embraced the concept of ‘Russian civilization’ as the spiritual successor to the Soviet multinational federation and the antithesis of ‘Western civilization.’

The early 2020s marked a significant shift in the Kremlin’s priorities. Previously, the goal of Russian policy was to establish the country as a full-fledged part of the ‘civilized world,’ seeking integration into major economic, technological, and environmental projects. However, with the adoption of the status of a state-civilization, the Kremlin began not only to emphasize Russia’s national identity but to present it as an alternative to the European Union and the United States.

The social sciences and humanities in Russia are gradually reverting, as in Soviet times, to instruments of political propaganda. The Kremlin has made its mission for the scientific community clear: to implement the traditional values of the Russian world by restructuring academic research and education. The promotion of these values began just before the invasion of Ukraine and was institutionalized in the amended Russian Constitution adopted in 2020² (*Конституция 2020*). The starting point for shaping a “coherent worldview based on traditional spiritual and moral values” was Presidential Decree No. 809, *On the Approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values* (*Указ 2022*).

The implementation of this decree sparked fierce competition among Z-ideologues, each promoting their own algorithm for imposing the new worldview and shaping an all-Russian civic identity rooted in the concept of Russia as a state-civilization.

A major milestone in the restructuring of education was reached with the January

¹ Speaking at the ceremonial meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers’ Deputies with party and public organizations on November 6, 1944, Stalin spoke of the civilization of Europe saved by the Soviet people from fascism.

² Article 114 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that the state ensures the implementation of a policy aimed at preserving traditional family values.

2023 session of the Federation Council, which discussed the future of Russian education. There, it was explicitly stated that Russia must change how all humanities and social science disciplines are taught. Officials decried the current situation: while Russian soldiers are fighting the ‘collective West’ on the battlefield, universities continue to rely on textbooks and teaching materials grounded in a Western-centric worldview. Patriarch Kirill expressed hope that Russia’s “sacred war” against the West would also bring about a transformation in education, so that a truly Russian approach, rooted in traditional values, would finally prevail.

The first step in forming this new worldview for the younger generation was the introduction, on September 1, 2023, of a mandatory university course for all first-year students: Foundations of Russian Statehood (Основы российской государственности). This course was developed at the Presidential Academy under the supervision of Vice-Rector Andrey Polosin, who also heads the *DNA of Russia* Project. Polosin refers to his course on Russia’s civilizational foundations as a “sovereign model of humanitarian knowledge.” The course is dedicated to “the value and worldview foundations of Russian civilization and its role in shaping a modern, just, multipolar world.” It is explicitly designed to counteract the “cultural and informational expansion of the West,” critique “pseudo-liberal Western values,” and consolidate Russian youth around traditional values that “sustained the Russian state in the past and guarantee its victories in the future”: harmony and cooperation within society, sobornost and collectivism, unity between society and the state, and so on.

Polosin’s textbook was created through the joint efforts of three dozen universities and with the participation of Alexander Kharichev, head of the Presidential Administration’s Office for Monitoring and Analysis of Social Processes. In fact, there are two official textbooks for the course Foundations of Russian Statehood: one for students in the social sciences and humanities (edited by Sergey Perevezentsev) (Перевезенцев и др. 2023), and another for students in the natural sciences and technical fields (edited by Alexey Larionov, aka Hieromonk Rodion) (Ларионов и др. 2023). A teacher’s manual accompanies both. According to the annotation, the textbook contains materials “on the historical development of Russia, the civilizational dimension of its statehood, traditional spiritual and moral values of Russian society, the country’s political system, and current challenges that form the basis for state strategic planning.”

The ORG course is currently being expanded. By September 1, 2025, ten new teaching aids are expected to be published, covering core humanities and social science disciplines such as Pedagogy, Economics, and others, including The History of Novorossiia (ИФУР-ПА 2023).

The Foundations of Russian Statehood course has sparked not only criticism from Kremlin opponents but also debate within Z-communities, who have begun to suggest edits and propose their own complementary teaching materials. The enthusiasm of both mainstream and fringe ideologues of the “sovereign Russian world” has led to a flood of proposals to reform the teaching of philosophy, history, economics, law, and other humanities disciplines.

One such initiative came from a coalition of regional “creative and active

dreamers” led by Alexander Prokhanov (*Русская мечта* 2022). In December 2023, they held a roundtable titled “Standards and Canons for Worldview Disciplines in Russia’s Education System: From Western Globalism to the Optics of Our Own Civilization” (*Русская мечта* 2025). There, they proposed a new canon for Russian education and new standards for humanities teaching. The roundtable featured contributions from Z-sociologist Sergey Baranov, Z-philosophers Anatoly Chernyaev and Svetlana Ilyinskaya, and Z-historian Vardan Bagdasaryan, a professor at the Faculty of Political Science at Moscow State University.

At the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH, РГГУ), which sponsors the “Sparta” battalion fighting in Ukraine, a new Ivan Ilyin Higher Political School was launched to promote and refine the “sovereign model of humanitarian knowledge.” The school is headed by Aleksandr Dugin, who brands himself as Putin’s chief philosopher. At a January 2024 roundtable in the Federation Council, the school was presented as a crucial element of Russia’s “sacred war against the West.” It is not a traditional educational or research center, but rather a training ground for university vice-rectors responsible for student affairs. Its goal is to change the ideological climate in higher education and build the worldview foundation of a Russia-centric civilization by promoting “true Russian values” and rewriting the history of Russian philosophy.

The fact that the Higher School of Political Administration was named after the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954), author of the Putin-era bestseller *“On Resistance to Evil by Force,”* carries significant symbolic meaning. In the early 1990s, a period when Russia was defining itself as a sovereign state, two antagonistic camps emerged in the country’s ideological space: a liberal anti-imperialist camp, represented by Georgy Fedotov, author of the widely cited work *The Fate of Empires* (1947), and an opposing alliance of imperial-statist forces, symbolized by Ivan Ilyin, whose 1950 work *What the Dismemberment of Russia Promises the World* became one of the most discussed texts of that time. Since then, Ilyin’s name has been associated in intellectual circles with a patriotic-statist ideology and, in recent years, has come to be seen as a symbol of the Putin era.

A fervent anti-communist and critic of Tolstoyan pacifism, Ilyin is the most frequently quoted philosopher by Putin. Ilyin’s clear ideas on the legitimacy of resisting evil by force, the necessity of state coercion, the role of a strong leader, and his praise of state patriotism, nationalism, the church, and the family serve to legitimize Putin’s decrees and embed them within the Russian cultural tradition. Putin has referred to Ilyin as a “true patriot” and has stated that he reads and rereads his works; however, labels such as “Putin’s favorite philosopher” or the journalistic cliché “Dugin as Putin’s brain” are more accurately described as media inventions. According to Michel Eltchaninoff, author of *Inside the Mind of Vladimir Putin*, it was filmmaker Nikita Mikhalkov who introduced Ilyin’s texts to Putin. After Putin cited Ilyin several times in his public speeches, the philosopher became widely regarded in Russia as an indisputable spiritual authority. Putin’s pragmatic use of Ilyin’s reactionary ideas to present his new national doctrine has undoubtedly been effective.

It is essential to recall that Ilyin was an uncompromising opponent of Bolshevik

ideology and politics, devoting the majority of his life to combating Bolshevism. As an ideologue, Ilyin sympathized with certain socio-political ideas of fascism, believing that fascism could serve as an ally in the struggle against Bolshevism. However, he soon became disillusioned with National Socialism when he recognized in it a form of “racist Bolshevism,” to which he was categorically opposed. Ilyin was neither formally a fascist (he did not belong to any relevant movements or parties, unlike many among the White Russian émigrés) nor ideologically aligned with fascism. National Socialists viewed religion in a Marxist manner—as a relic useful only for propaganda purposes—while fascists regarded it as a “traditional value” essential for preserving the nation’s health. This position was entirely unacceptable to Ilyin, a religious philosopher and devout Christian. Among the statist-minded circles of Russian émigrés, Ilyin was one of the few who resisted the “fascination with evil”—the idea of a postwar transformation of the Stalinist regime.

In the spring of 2025, Z-media and social networks began promoting the first products of the Higher Political School: *Westernology*, a university discipline invented by Dugin, and Vladimir Varava’s course *The History of Russian Philosophy: Hidden and Burning*.

Dugin’s elective mini-course, *Introduction to Westernology: The Political Dimension*, which requires no exams or assessments, was launched on March 31, 2025, at Moscow State University’s Faculty of Political Science. According to the faculty website, the entire course consists of two lectures. Dugin defines the essence of his subject as follows:

Westernology is the placement of the Western tradition in its historical context, alongside other civilizations. Every civilization believes that its particularity is universal. This is true of the West, but also of China, India, and the Islamic world. But only the West has dared to equate itself with humanity as a whole. (Дугин 2025)

Dugin names individualism, liberal democracy, “gender politics,” unrestricted migration, globalism, and internationalism as the defining features of this hostile Western civilization. His spring-semester appearance is positioned as a prelude to a more extensive lecture series, which the director of *Tsargrad* and the Ilyin School will begin delivering at Moscow State University in the fall semester of 2025.

There is a particular irony in Dugin’s attempt to reinterpret the Russian philosophical tradition. He has long denied Russian philosophy any value or independence. His position is most clearly articulated in his 2011 book *Martin Heidegger: The Possibility of Russian Philosophy*. On the back cover, the blurb declares:

Russian philosophy does not exist, and the possibility of its emergence has been blocked by the discordant fusion of European modernity with archaic layers of Russian popular consciousness.

The chapter titles are telling: Vladimir Solovyov’s *A Marginal of European Discourse*, Pyotr Chaadayev’s *Philosophy as a Practice of Russophobia*, Ivan Ilyin’s *Russian Patriotism in a Prussian Key*, *Soviet Philosophy as Toxic Waste*, and so on. Today, however, Dugin calls for overcoming this “caricature parody” of philosophy in Russia and creating a true Russian philosophical tradition.

The first to answer Dugin's call was Vladimir Varava, a specialist in Russian philosophy, thanatology, and feminine existentialism. His "unique course" launched on March 13, 2025, at the Sun of the North club. According to the course description, it aims to "foster the development of genuine Russian self-awareness among participants, build skills in analytical and critical thinking, and teach them to understand the spiritual, cultural, and political processes of the contemporary world at a deep and expert level." The course comprises five lectures, which can be purchased on the Sun of the North website for a modest fee. It opens with a discussion of "Russophobic and Russophilic tendencies in relation to Russian philosophy" and the "ideological (liberal) distortions of Russian philosophy in the post-Soviet period." It then covers the "diversity of languages in Russian philosophy," including a section on its "nonverbal style" (Varava 2025). The course offers personal analyses of Danilevsky, Leontiev, Solovyov, Pushkin, and Dostoevsky. In the section *The Philosophy of Death*, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Platonov are examined. The final lecture is titled *The Metaphysics of Love, Gender, and Marriage*.

Slightly earlier than Dugin's Higher Political School at RSUH, another ideological center emerged—the Institute for Heritage and Contemporary Society, which now competes with Dugin's initiative in designing new educational programs in the humanities based on traditional values. The Institute's mission is "to develop the value-semantic and intellectual foundations of Russia's strategic development" (PFTY 2025). It is headed by Valery Fadeev, advisor to the President of the Russian Federation and chair of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights. He is also the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the M. Matusovsky Luhansk State Academy of Culture and Arts.

Fadeev's Institute plays an active role in creating new principles for the education of young people, issuing recommendations on how to "instill true values" in university and school students, as well as in vocational colleges. It also develops strategies for working with children of migrants and with artificial intelligence and proposes innovations such as an "integrated grade" that includes a behavior score for schools in Russia, as well as a strategic educational vision for BRICS countries. The Institute's Telegram channel, named after Fadeev's 2022 monograph *The Transfiguration of Humanism* published by RSUH (PFTY), states its credo as follows:

Value-based issues always become urgent in times of historical crisis. That is exactly the kind of time we are living through. The world system is being restructured, and Russia's position in the emerging new global order will depend on the resilience of its sociocultural foundations and the direction of its development. The presence of a historically developed, unique and stable value system is one of the key markers of a civilization. A cultural-historical community aspiring to the status of a civilization must possess its own system of spiritual and moral (value-based) coordinates. Russia is a civilization. And to reproduce itself as a civilization and preserve its cultural sovereignty, the Russian socio-state system must become conscious of, understand, and protect its own values. (PFTY 2023)

Fadeev's deputy, Taras Vakhitov, combines his work at RSUH (PFTY) with chairing the Department of Philosophy and Methodology of Science at the Faculty of Philosophy of Moscow State University. In 2000–2001, he was the founder and editor-in-chief of the philosophy and culture journal Z.

A similar agenda is being pursued at the MSU Faculty of Philosophy by the International Research and Education Center named after Alexander Zinoviev (*Философский факультет МГУ 2025*), led by Zinoviev's widow, Olga Zinovieva, and Dmitry Vinnik. In addition to their persistent efforts to introduce the mandatory study of Alexander Zinoviev's work into academic curricula, the center specializes in political denunciations. Lacking original intellectual contributions, the Center compensates by escalating its displays of 'patriotism' and waging aggressive campaigns against representatives of academic science. In March 2025, the Zinoviev Club once again called on the State Duma to begin the "ideological demining" of the humanities and social sciences within Russia:

Given the ongoing lawlessness and the lack of official response to the unpatriotic actions of hundreds of scholars and RAS members (whose anti-Russian declarations in the early days of the Special Military Operation are well known), are we not, in fact, dealing with a collective persona non grata and a collective crime against the Russian state—in a time of war? These people deserve a tribunal. Yet instead, scoundrels, impostors, traitors, and turncoats in academic robes are showered with awards and budgets... Dear colleagues, today we must speak of the vital necessity of an ideological demining of the Russian humanities. I appeal to the deputies of the State Duma: do not remain on the sidelines of this scandalous situation in Russian academia—do everything in your power, as required by your governmental duties and your human responsibility to our Motherland. (Зиновьева 2025)

Despite the diversity and noise of competing initiatives, the largest event in Russian academia in 2025 is expected to be the Future Forum 2050, scheduled for June and organized by the Tsargrad Media Group at Moscow State University (*Форум будущего 2025*).

Not only has the academic world, but also publishing and bookselling, come under tight control. In 2025, raids and seizures of books began in some of the most prominent bookstores in Moscow (Falanster) and St. Petersburg (Podpisnye Izdaniya). In earlier years of the war, only books by Russian authors labeled as foreign agents were banned from promotion, although they were still available in stores and libraries, albeit wrapped in opaque plastic and bearing a warning label. Now, anything remotely associated with dissent is being removed from circulation and access. Works by Arendt, Benjamin, Sontag, Foucault, and others have been seized and confiscated by police.

Although there is currently no legal definition of 'destructive content' in Russia, the Russian Book Union has begun compiling an electronic catalog of books banned by authorities. This initiative primarily affects libraries and is integrated into the National Book Platform. Each book entry will indicate, along with its international ISBN, whether it "promotes non-traditional values" or was written by a "foreign agent."

Control over thought and speech is exercised not only by the state but also by 'concerned citizens.' In February 2025, for instance, Orthodox activists demanded that the publishing house New Literary Observer refrain from releasing Konstantin Pakhalyuk's *In Search of Russian Antiquity*, due to the author's political views (Гребенникова 2025). A few days later, a book presentation for Antifascism for Everyone—about the murder of

lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova—was disrupted at Falanster bookstore in Moscow, following a denunciation from Z-affiliated Telegram channels.

Researchers and educators alike report declining productivity amid rising bureaucratic workloads, increased state audits, and the relentless demand for reporting. Silence and busywork consume their time and energy, disturbing their psychological and emotional stability. The now-routine presence of Z-activists, Duma representatives, and other state officials at academic events hinders scholarly activity and renders scientific discussion a mere formality.

With each passing month of war, daily life grows more absurd, state control expands, and the separation from the global academic community becomes more acutely felt. A large part of Russia's scientific community has retreated into escapism, silence, and isolation, mistaking conformity for solidarity and the absence of active support for the war for resistance.

However, the silent majority of academics in Russia condemns both the invasion of Ukraine and Putin's regime. Most researchers are intimidated, depressed, and paralyzed by the lack of clear perspectives and reduced professional contacts. They regret that the world is losing freedom. At the same time, they still see meaning in their professional activity, which includes preserving the intellectual traditions in Russian, passing on their values and knowledge to students, and as a form of self-preservation, self-salvation, and an escape from reality.

A small number of scholars who have left Putin's Russia are now trying, like the émigré scholars of a century ago, to build free research and educational institutions abroad. In the 20th century, the mission of émigré scholars was to preserve their national and cultural identity and sustain Russian intellectual and religious traditions abroad. Today, the goal of the academic exile is different: to become an organic part of the global scholarly community, to activate Russia's intellectual legacy, and to maintain academic ties across the borders of the Russian Federation.

The Russian academic community, divided by war, dreams of peace. Those who remain inside quietly pursue the refinement of knowledge, awaiting their liberation by the 'traitors' who fled to a better world. Those on the outside live in hope that the 'traitors' still clinging to their salaries will rise up—and that they, in turn, might return under their once-comforting wing, all while keeping quiet enough not to lose their right to a safe return. Everyone longs for—and fears—the encounter. Everyone waits for peace... But the war goes on.

Bibliography:

Insider. (2025). Михаил Ковальчук устроил травлю негодных ему кандидатов в академики РАН, подписавших антивоенное письмо. *The Insider*, May 29, <https://theins.ru/news/281671> (accessed May 11, 2025).

- T-invariant*. (2023). Открытое письмо российских ученых и научных журналистов против войны с Украиной. *T-invariant*, January 4. <https://t-invariant.org/2022/02/we-are-against-war/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Varava, Vladimir. (2025). Personal page “#Varava” [#Варава]. *Facebook*, n.d., <https://www.facebook.com/vladimir.varava> (accessed July 3, 2025).
- Гребенникова, Анна. (2025). Пострадавший получает всё. Историк Константин Пахалюк – о конструировании исторической памяти и «геноциде советского народа». *T-invariant*, February 11, <https://t-invariant.org/2025/02/postradavshij-poluchaet-vsyo-istorik-konstantin-pahalyuk-o-konstruirovanii-istoricheskoi-pamyati-i-genotside-sovetskogo-naroda/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Дубровский, Дмитрий. (2025). Прорыв тёмной материи. Исследование: российское высшее образование после февраля 2022 года. *Новая газета*, March 14, <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2025/03/14/proryv-temnoi-materii> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Дугин, А. Г. (2025). Первая лекция курса А. Г. Дугина для студентов ФП МГУ «Введение в вестернологию. Политический аспект». *Факультет политологии МГУ*, April 2, <https://polit.msu.ru/2025/04/02/dugin-kurs-fp/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Зиновьева, Ольга. (2025). О необходимости идеологического разминирования гуманитарной науки России. *Московская школа конфликтологии*, March 2, <https://conflictmanagement.ru/2025/03/02/olga-zinoveva-o-neobhodimosti-ideologicheskogo-razminirovaniya-gumanitarnoj-nauki-rossii/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Интерфакс*. (2025). Рособрандзор на год запретил прием в "Шанинку". *Интерфакс*, April 24, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/1022353> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- ИФУР-ПА*. (2023). Противодействие экспансии Запада: в Академии подготовили новый учебник «Основы российской государственности». *Институт финансов и устойчивого развития (ИФУР) – Президентская академия (ПА)*, n.d., <https://ifur.ranepa.ru/news/protivodeystvie-ekspansii-zapada-v-akademii-podgotovili-novyy-uchebnik-osnovy-rossiyskoy-gosudarstve/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Коммерсантъ*. (2025). Путин поручил ограничить чрезмерный набор в вузы по ненужным специальностям *Коммерсантъ*, February 7, 2025. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7480898> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Конституция*. (2020). Конституция РФ. *Конституция РФ на сайте Государственной Думы*, n.d., <http://duma.gov.ru/legislative/documents/constitution/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Ларионов, А.А. (иеромонах Родион), Шевырёв, А.П., Лапин, В.В., Рогачёв, С.В., ТUTORский, А.В., Уваров, П.Ю., Бремин, В.С., Пивоваров, Н.Ю., Ефремов, О.А., Маковецкий, Е.А., Овчинникова, Е.А., Андреев, Д.А., Булатов, В.В., Чагадаева, О.А. (2023). *Основы российской государственности: учебное пособие для студентов естественнонаучных и инженерно-технических специальностей*. Издательский дом «Дело» РАНХиГС.
- ОВД-Инфо*. (2024). В ВШЭ абитуриентам факультета журналистики запретили упоминать материалы «иноагентов». *ОВД-Инфо*, January 30, <https://ovd.info/express-news/2024/01/30/v-vshe-abiturientam-fakulteta-zhurnalistiki-zapretili-upominat-materialy> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Перевезенцев, С.В. (ред.), Евгеньева, Т.В., Кузнецов, И.И., Селезнева, А.В., Сорокопудова, О.Е., Страхов, А.Б., Боронин, А.Р. (2023). *Основы российской государственности. Учебное пособие для студентов, изучающих социогуманитарные науки*. Издательский дом «Дело» РАНХиГС.
- Путин, Владимир. (2012). *Россия: национальный вопрос*. *Независимая газета*, January 23. https://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html (accessed May 11, 2025)
- Радио Свобода*. (2025). «Она не насильник и не убийца». Массовые аресты в российских вузах. *Радио Свобода*, April 10, 2025. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/ona-ne-nasiljnik-i-ne-ubiytsa-massovyie-aresty-v-rossiyskih-vuzah/33381422.html> (accessed May 11, 2025).

- РАН. (2024). Члены Общего собрания РАН поддержали создание Попечительского совета Академии наук. *Российская Академия Наук*, April 28, <https://www.ras.ru/news/shownews.aspx?id=3f551351-70eb-4abe-8fff-47c7e48e895d> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- РБК. (2024). Академики предложили Путину возглавить новый орган РАН. *РБК*, May 28. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/28/05/2024/6655981d9a794728022e877b> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- РГГУ. (2023). *Telegram Channel «Преображение гуманизма. Канал Института наследия и современного общества РГГУ (научный руководитель – В. А. Фадеев)»*, May 11. https://t.me/iniso_rgggu (accessed May 11, 2025).
- РГГУ. (2025). Институт наследия и современного общества. *Института наследия и современного общества РГГУ*, n.d., <https://iniso.rgggu.ru/about/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- РСР. (2022). Обращение Российского Союза ректоров. *Российский Союз Ректоров (РСР)*, March 4, <https://rsr-online.ru/news/2022/3/4/obraschenie-rossijskogo-soyuza-rektorov/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- РСР. (2024). Владимир Путин создаст и возглавит Попечительский совет РАН. *Российский Союз Ректоров (РСР)*, November 22. <https://rsr-online.ru/news/2024/11/22/vladimir-putin-predlozhil-sozdat-popechitel'skij-sovet-ran/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Русская мечта*. (2022). О Движении. *Русская мечта*, n.d., <https://rusmechta.ru/about/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Русская мечта*. (2023). Эксперты «Русской Мечты» предложили новый канон российского образования. *Русская мечта*, December 15, <https://rusmechta.ru/news/eksperty-russkoj-mechty-predlozhili-novyj-kanon-rossijskogo-obrazovaniya/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Сталин, Иосиф. (1944). Доклад на торжественном заседании Московского Совета депутатов трудящихся с партийными и общественными организациями 6 ноября 1944 года. *Marxists.Org*, n.d., https://www.marxists.org/russkij/stalin/t15/t15_44.htm (accessed July 3, 2025).
- Указ. (2022). Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 09.11.2022 г. № 809 «Об утверждении Основ государственной политики по сохранению и укреплению традиционных российских духовно-нравственных ценностей». *Сайт Президента Российской Федерации*, November 9, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Философский факультет МГУ*. (2025). Международный научно-образовательный центр имени А. А. Зиновьева. *Философский факультет Московского государственного университета им. М. В. Ломоносова (МГУ)*, n.d., <https://philos.msu.ru/node/5389> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Форум будущего*. (2025). Видео дебатов Форума. *Форум будущего*, June 10, <https://forumfuture2050.ru/> (accessed May 11, 2025).
- Эхо Москвы*. (2025). В России стали чаще преследовать учёных... *Эхо Москвы (Facebook page)*, April 10, <https://www.facebook.com/echofm.online/posts/660504940177834/> (accessed May 11, 2025).