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# Academic freedom in Russia

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# Presentation outline

- academic freedom violations in Russia – key characteristics
- the wider socio-political context
- challenges to Fundamental Academic Values in the process of internationalization

# Academic Freedom Index - Russia

- **Russia's AFi score: 0.374**
  - behind Vietnam
  - among European countries, only Belarus (0.072) and Turkey (0.064) scored worse

# AF violations in Russia – key features

- **the paradox:**

- *formal constitutional protection vs legal bills that obstruct research and scholars' public engagement*

- **AF violations:**

- *relatively slow-pace* (compare e.g. Turkey), although accelerating
- *just below the threshold of domestic and international outrage* (compare e.g. the treatment of Alexei Navalny)
- *blurred red lines:*
  - e.g. for and against internationalization

- slow-pace process
- veiled interference
- blurred red lines

plus a host of “supporting conditions”:

- strategic absences of the state  
(in particular when it comes to funding)
- over-bureaucratization



- uncertainty
- self-censorship
- decline in academic standards
- change of research topics
- students deterred from civic activism and political participation

# Academic freedom in Russia: **self-censorship**

- 'I always have to think twice. I understand self-censorship also in terms of **responsibility for my students**; I introduce libertarian ideas to them and always think where this may take them. I don't want to push them into traps, because then they go to the streets, they get caught, and then we try to help them; we even pay money for them.'

# Legal protection of AF in Russia

- the Russian Constitution (articles 29, 44)
- the federal law “On Science and State Scientific and Technology Policy”
- Russia ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 15.3 - freedom indispensable for scientific research)
- however, government decrees defining the tasks and responsibilities of the MSHE and Rosobrnadzor do not mention AF

# Indirect limitations on AF in Russia

- the so-called foreign agent law (adopted in 2012)
- penalization for the rehabilitation of Nazism (Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code, introduced in 2014)
- laws on extremism (a federal law adopted in 2002 and Article 282 of the Criminal Code)
- laws on “disrespect” for the state and its authorities (adopted in 2019)
- laws on so-called “unwanted organizations” (adopted in 2015)
- the 2019 amendments to existing laws that broadened the “foreign agent” category to include individuals



# Academic freedom in Russia: the wider context matters

*The myth of the ivory tower (severely undermined university autonomy)*

Limited public debate:

- controlled state media
- growing online censorship
- ideological straitjacket:
  - *the conservative-patriotic turn*

# Challenges for HEIs

- the European University at Saint-Petersburg (2016-17)
  - deprived of a teaching license and accreditation
  - unclear reasons (research interests pursued by the faculty; a lucrative building; infighting within the ruling regime)
- the Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Science (**2021**)
  - established in 1997 between the St. Petersburg State University and Bard College (US)
  - the university limited the Smolny's autonomy
  - closed in 2021 as Bard College was declared an 'undesirable organization'

# Challenges for HEIs

- from Higher School of Economics to Free University (**2020-21**)
  - HSE leadership's uneasiness about growing students' and faculty's political and civic activism
  - Free University: a new independent virtual higher education project
- the Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences ("Shaninka")
  - deprived of accreditation (2018)
  - Shaninka rector, Sergei Zuev, charged with embezzlement and put under house arrest (**2021**)

# Not every kind of internationalization is desirable in Russia

- all the above mentioned HEIs have been among the top Russian institutions
- all have promoted Fundamental Academic Values in their research and teaching
- all have developed dense ties with international HE institutions
- all well-recognized internationally

# Targeting individual scholars

- Sergei Guriev – left for France **2013**
- Andrei Zubov – ‘caused indignation’
- Yurii Pivovarov – ‘corruption’
- Vera Afanasyeva – authored a critical blogpost
- Viktor Kudryavtsev – ‘treason’
  - sent a report to a research consortium

# Thank you for your attention

Please take a look at the following publications for further information:

- Kaczmarska, Katarzyna (2020) Academic freedom in Russia, In [\*Researching academic freedom: guidelines and sample case studies\*](#), Kinzelbach (ed.), FAU University Press, pp. 103-140
- Kaczmarska, Katarzyna (2020) [\*Making Global Knowledge in Local Contexts: The Politics of International Relations and Policy Advice in Russia\*](#), Routledge
- Kaczmarska, Katarzyna and Dmitry Dubrovsky (2020) '[\*Russia's limits on critical thinking are hitting its academic performance\*](#)', *Times Higher Education*, 13 September
  - Kaczmarska, Katarzyna and Dmitry Dubrovsky (forthcoming 2022) Authoritarian modernisation and academic freedom: Internationalisation and pockets of effectiveness in Russian higher education, *Etudes transtextuelles et transculturelles*