
Academic Cooperation between Russia and the US. Moving Beyond Technical Aid?



Andrey Kortunov

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Summary

This article outlines the developments in Russian-American cooperation in the area of higher education since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It reveals the fundamental problems that have arisen in this partnership and draws conclusions about the necessity of moving away from technical aid towards a new model of cooperation between Russia and the United States in this sphere. It makes practical recommendations for the more effective integration of Russian universities into the global educational space.

Inter-University Cooperation, Hostage to Political Relations

Russia and the United States (US) are two states with strong scientific and educational potential. Each country has developed this potential in line with its particular traditions, cultural characteristics and history. In many areas of education and the sciences, Russia and the US complement one another.

However, experience of Russian-American (and previously, Soviet-American) relations shows that cooperation in the area of education is, to a large extent, defined by the general political background, which can both stimulate and hamper this cooperation. Educational cooperation could become an important cushion for political problems arising between the two countries, but the scale of such cooperation is currently so insignificant as to have no effect on decisions at a political level. As such, cooperation in the sphere of education is not yet an independent factor in the development of relations between the two countries.

Since the end of the Cold War, two periods of development in educational cooperation between Russia and the US can be discerned. The first was the decade between 1992 and 2002; the second began in 2003/2004 and continues today.¹ Around 2001-2003, the end of the first, favorable period, the political relationship between Russia and the US was seen as a strategic partnership. The two sides cooperated constructively in the war on international terrorism, in addressing the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and in securing energy supplies. The prospect of the two countries growing closer in their approach to fundamental ideological and political values, and the possibility of Russian integration into Transatlantic structures, albeit in the distant future, was not ruled out. Even though mistrust was present on both sides, this did not change the desire of the Russian political elite to align itself with the Western way of life.

This generally favorable background contributed greatly to a rapid expansion of Russian-American cooperation in the field of higher education. It evolved dynamically in three directions:

Translated from Russian by Jennifer Northup.

¹ The start of the second stage is dated variously by different researchers. Some consider the "YUKOS affair" (fall 2003) to be the turning point, while others think that the upset in Russian-American relations occurred after President Vladimir Putin's re-election in March 2004. A third group is inclined towards the theory that the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine (fall-winter 2004) was the critical juncture. In any case, it is fair to say that the period from 2003 to 2004 was the turning point.

– American government programs for technical aid to Russia (University partnership programs and individual academic exchange programs);

– American Private foundations working in Russia, with substantial educational projects (Ford, MacArthur, Carnegie and Soros Foundations, etc.);

– “Commercial” (fee-charging) Russian-American projects in the sphere of higher education (preparation of bilateral programs, primarily in the areas of business studies, English language and applied economics).

There are no exact figures for US investment levels in Russian higher education. Nevertheless, data from foundations and their programs allow some estimates to be made. At the start of the 1990s, the annual budget of the Soros Foundation’s Open Society Institute (OSI) devoted to higher education programs in Russia averaged 5-6 million US dollars; annual budgets of the Ford, MacArthur and Carnegie Foundations averaged 3-4 million US dollars each, without taking into consideration the funds allocated for US-Russian cooperation on American territory. Volumes allocated annually to Russian higher education by private American foundations at the start of this decade were about 25-30 million US dollars. Similar amounts came from different US governmental institutions.

During Vladimir Putin’s second presidential term (particularly 2006-2007) an acute and unexpected breakdown in the overall positive trend in Russian-American political relations took place. The discord between Russia and the US on political developments in CIS countries, global and regional security provision, and the problems of democracy and human rights in Russia led observers to conclude that relations between Russia and the US had entered if not a “new cold war,” then a “cold peace.” The initial tensions were followed by fundamental disagreements over the United States’ role in the modern world, the expansion of NATO’s military infrastructure in Central Europe, the issue of Kosovo’s independence and the deployment of components of the American Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) on Polish and Czech soil, as well as divergence in their positions regarding Iran and Middle East conflict settlement.

Responsibility for this deterioration in relations lies with the political elite of both countries. The Russian political authorities are still not familiar with the art of *soft power* and are inclined to follow the model of great power politics and oppose the West on a wide range of problems. The American elite, meanwhile, has not yet found an adequate way to respond to Russia’s new potential and aspirations.

As far as Russian society is concerned, for the most part it is not prone to anti-western emotions and phobias.² Similarly, the majority of polls

² According to data gathered by the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) (2 April 2008 poll available at: <wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/9919.html>), more often than not, Russians believe that their country’s relationship with the US is “sound,” “peaceful” (36%) or “cool” (26%). The terms more seldom used to describe relations between the two countries were “good,” “neighborly” (7%) or “strained” (12%).

conducted in the US do not register any increase in anti-Russian feeling outside the narrow circles of the political elite. Moreover, in recent years interest in Russia has once again increased among the scientific and educational community in the US: the number of students choosing to specialize in Russian and the number of courses connected to Russian topics has risen accordingly. The number of American students in Russia is also increasing gradually.³ Consequently, worsening political relations between Moscow and Washington have not yet had a destructive effect on the prospects for cooperation between the two countries in the sphere of education and the sciences, although the danger of such an effect remains. The signing, in May 2006, of a bilateral Memorandum on Cooperation between the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and the US Department of Education,⁴ and the start of a Russian-American Program of University Partnerships in fall 2007 demonstrate the continued progress in the area.⁵

Under such conditions, it is particularly important to find forms of cooperation that meet the needs of both sides fully and are unaffected by fluctuations in the political environment. It is clear that the old models for cooperation developed in the 1990s do not substantively reflect the balance of power nor the new challenges facing Russian and American higher education establishments (HEE). They merely obstruct Russian-American cooperation in the area of higher education (and sciences).

Rarer still were the “extreme” assessments: either “amicable” (4%) or “hostile” (3%) relations. Overall, positive responses were given slightly more often than negative (47:41). Since 2004, the opinion among Russians regarding relations with the US has changed very little (it was 48:41). Attitudes toward American society itself were on the whole more positive than the assessment of the current US foreign policy. For example, according to data from the “Levada Center” (7 June 2007 poll available at: <www.levada.ru/press/2007060701.html>), 76% of those asked were convinced that the US is abusing its role as the “world’s policeman” (that being said, the same percentage of Americans themselves hold a similar opinion on US foreign policy).

³ At the start of the decade there were about one thousand American students studying in Russia per year, their number has doubled since. See: <opendoors.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/66745/Russia+2007.doc>.

⁴ See: <www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/05/05312006.html>.

⁵ See: <www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/10/10222007.html>.

Technical Aid and its Drawbacks

American technical aid programs for Russian higher education, established by both state organizations and private charitable foundations, have been at work in the country since the early 1990s.⁶ During this time, representative offices of many American organizations opened in Russia, providing financial resources and managing programs.⁷ Aid programs reached their maximum volume around the year 2000, and at present, there is a visible trend towards the stabilization and ensuing reduction in funding levels. Also, Washington is currently making attempts to rethink the concept of “technical and humanitarian aid” and to find a new format and new mechanisms for its planning and allocation, as well as appraisals of its effectiveness.

Features of the American model for technical aid

The character of technical aid provided for Russian higher education by the United States between 1990 and 2000 reflected the condition of Russian society and higher education establishments at the time, as well as the American donors’ perceptions of the possibilities and limitations affecting the aid programs. The following characteristics of the US programs in Russia can be singled out as limiting their effectiveness:

Firstly, aid was predominantly “*substitutional*” in character, it aimed to compensate for the shortfall in government support for education and the sciences (as well as culture, public health services, and many other areas). This took the form of large-scale, target-oriented programs to distribute textbooks, create Internet centers, and support students, teachers, journalists, etc.

Secondly, technological programs were *too uniform*—leading to standardized tenders, training, consultancy and the spread of poorly-adapted Western (chiefly American) experience to different target groups.

⁶ Most of these programs were developed and launched in 1991-1993, some even earlier. The Soros Foundation was the first Western foundation in the USSR, starting its work as early as 1987.

⁷ The USAID mission, delegations of the Ford and MacArthur Foundations, a branch of International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF) and other operators of American aid programs.

Such target groups included the biggest universities in Moscow and St Petersburg, certain categories of young researchers and teachers, expert analytical communities that had gradually formed in the field of educational policy, and specialized mass media. The majority of American donor organizations (unlike the programs of the European Union, for instance) did not cooperate with federal regulatory bodies overseeing higher education because it was assumed in the first half of the 1990s that federal authorities had to a large extent lost control over developments in Russian HEE.

Thirdly, the emphasis was frequently on “*demonstrational*” projects. Structures, projects and organizations given financial assistance were to become “models” for subsequent emulation. Since the state system of higher education establishments appeared to be extremely sluggish and poorly prepared for any meaningful or managerial innovation, many American programs supporting Russian education appear to have focused on the creation and subsequent support of a small number of private universities, which also were to become centers for the development and dissemination of new educational techniques.

Fourthly, the technical aid programs “market” proved to be *highly segmented*, with functional priorities differing between the main donors, the interaction between them being extremely weak. The coordination of activities between private charitable foundations, on the one hand, and government programs for aid in education, on the other, was particularly feeble. Moreover, it turned out to be extremely difficult even to coordinate efforts between different government programs. The US State Department, for example, was persistently lobbying exchange programs and individual traineeships, while the US Department of Education was attempting to shift the focus to institutional partnerships between Russian and American universities. Problems arose with regard to duplication of workload and misallocation of financial resources.

It is important to stress that during the 1990s, and later on, American universities barely even considered Russian HEE as potential partners in the global academic network existing between educational institutions in the US, European Union, Australia, Canada, and various other countries. The potential—both pedagogical and scientific—of Russian HEE was seen as insufficient for cooperation at this level. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in the management of Russian HEE, low competency in English or other foreign languages, excessive bureaucracy, and outdated equipment were off-putting. Thus, in the US, Russian universities were considered *objects of influence*, but not *equal partners in cooperation*. For this reason, in most cases, American universities used unilateral cooperation mechanisms (validation⁸ or franchising⁹), while programs for

⁸ Validation (accreditation) of programs involves the elaboration of a program of study by the Russian university, its American partner verifies the quality of the program and grants its diploma.

⁹ With this form of cooperation, the American university controls the structure and content of the program almost entirely—the curriculum, number of study hours, choice of professors and teachers, etc.—while the Russian partner organizes the process and, if possible, ensures that the educational “product” conforms to the Russian national standard.

joint (*double*) diplomas were developed with great difficulty.¹⁰ In this context, in the 1990s, American universities were already starting to lag behind their European counterparts, many of which were oriented towards joint training programs from the very start.

Accumulation of problems

These peculiarities of Russian-American cooperation in the sphere of higher education predetermined the following unresolved problems:

– Links between Russian universities and American scientific and educational institutions lacked coherence and measured strategy. The selection of partners was often determined more by personal contacts or “old boy network” links developed over time, than by issue-related priorities or Russian universities’ long-term development strategies.

– A very small number of teachers and professors at privileged Russian universities participated in joint projects with Americans. International projects, on the whole, remained one of the more “elite” components of university work, particularly due to the shortage of experts with knowledge of foreign languages. Only a few researchers and teachers (the direct participants) benefited from successful international projects (including traineeships abroad, participation in conferences, etc.), which had little effect on the university as a whole. There was no effective mechanism within the university for disseminating knowledge and experience gained, not to speak of beyond its boundaries.

– As regards content, international projects frequently amounted to participation in conferences abroad, arbitrary assignments and long-term trips by groups of university teachers to a scientific or educational center abroad. Accounts of such activities were frequently formalities, and the trips themselves had no significant continuation forecast.

– Russian universities remained outside the main international networks, were not members of relevant associations and unions, and very rarely published the results of common projects abroad.

– The development of cooperation with the US in scientific and educational spheres often went with a reduction in international efforts by Russian HEE in other geographic areas (for instance, during the 1990s, the curtailing of traditional educational and scientific links with CIS countries and central European states was particularly apparent).

¹⁰ These programs are created and established by both partners, students from one partner university spend part of their period of study at the other university. The hours spent and the examinations taken at the partner universities are accepted automatically, and teachers from each establishment also teach at the other university, develop curricula jointly and form joint commissions on enrolment and examinations.

Despite these drawbacks in the joint Russian-American scientific and educational programs of the 1990s, they had an undeniably positive effect: they helped Russian universities to develop international links, to acquire considerable experience leading large-scale international projects, and to create a system of stable ties with leading partners in the West. In some fields, American programs enabled professional communities to be formed and consolidated as well as mechanisms to emerge (albeit at a basic level) for independent public evaluation of scientific and educational activities.

American technical aid: ill-adapted to the new Russian context

Since 2000, the failure of the existing model for American aid programs in Russian education has become more and more noticeable. The Russian government has stepped up its activity in the sphere of education considerably, radically changing the situation on the ground.¹¹ Above all, it is important to point out the substantial increase in state funding for higher education establishments since 2005; with this, the growth in funding for university sciences took off at a rapid pace.¹² Nowadays, not only leading universities in Moscow, but also many regional universities possess considerable funding for conducting their own scientific research, publishing projects, and organizing conferences and seminars. The problem of the survival of Russian university sciences is henceforth off the agenda: it has given way to the questions of optimizing the way in which sciences in universities are managed, increasing the quality of scientific research and development, and ensuring that science and academic activity are integrated.

Besides, poorly-adapted Western experience is increasingly rejected by potential beneficiaries (universities, experts, directors of regional and municipal educational regulatory bodies), and the experience accumulated from international cooperation combined with the new possibilities for funding and infrastructure allow them to be more exacting in their selection of partners. Competition is intensifying on the market for international scientific and educational partnerships, and American universities are far from possessing a sufficient competitive advantage over the leading HEE of Europe and East Asia. In addition to this, political

¹¹ The increase in budget funding began to emerge as early as 2003-2004, but the turning point was President Putin's announcement, in September 2005, of plans to implement four major national projects (education, agriculture, healthcare and housing development). Within the framework of the national project Education, 25 billion rubles were allocated exclusively to stimulate innovative programs in HEE in 2006-2005. See: *Prioritetnye natsionalnye proekty: tsifry, fakty, dokumenty* [High-priority National Projects: Figures, Facts and Documents], Moscow, 2007, p. 73.

¹² I. Dezhina, *Gosudarstvennoe regulirovanie nauki v Rossii* [State Regulation of Sciences in Russia], Moscow, 2008, p. 49-71.

activity by some American foundations has undermined the credibility of Russian-American cooperation as a whole. These new conditions have led to the marginalization of traditional American aid programs.

The customary format for projects (standard grants, training, exchanges and consultations) has proved *inadequate* for the problems of Russian higher education in this new period. Russian partners have started to insist on implementing more complex, individualized projects, requesting highly-specific professional expertise, but American operators managing the aid programs appear to be ill-prepared for such changes to the demands of their Russian partners.

It must also be noted that the Russian partners have not been able to ensure optimal conditions for foreign, including American, technical aid programs to function on their soil. Problems causing difficulties for the activities of many western foundations in Russia have persisted in the areas of tax legislation, the customs regime, tariff and non-tariff regulation, monetary control, and accounting. Russian partners of American foundations have not always fulfilled the commitments that they have taken on; as often as not, the rules of the game are changed during project implementation.

While recognizing the undeniable success of some projects in international educational and scientific cooperation, it is important to acknowledge that the task of integrating Russian higher education and science into the global scientific and educational field has not been completed. Even in the case of real educational and scientific cooperation, its subject matter often displays a “neocolonial” nature. Essentially, Russian participants supply intellectual “raw material” (interviews, field studies, statistics) adapting Western methods to specifically Russian contexts (adding Russian illustrative material to Western theories and adjusting course content to meet Russian standards). It is the Western partners that analyze the empirical material and promote the end product on the international academic market.

Such asymmetry, which was completely understandable at the start of the 1990s, can no longer be put down to the difficulties of the transition period. A lasting division of functions is being formed, which is systematically reproduced and reinforces the junior status of Russian participants in scientific and educational projects. Moreover, study placements have become one of the channels of “brain drain:” trainees have frequently not returned to the institutes that sent them, preferring to pursue an academic teaching career abroad or move into the private sector. Such manifestations of geographical and professional mobility among the most promising researchers and teachers have undermined the general attitude toward international scientific and educational cooperation on the part of the heads of Russian universities and the educational community. All of these factors indicate that the old model had run its course by 2001-2003.

American Strategy for Penetrating the Russian Educational Market

The reaction to the new situation by American donors has been ambiguous. Some, such as the Soros Foundation, have reduced their activities in Russia sharply, leaving only long-term programs for institutional support of some private HEE. Others, such as the Ford Foundation, have tried to shift their substantive priorities from their traditional projects in the field of higher education to other areas. Some foundations have endeavored to narrow down these priorities in order to increase effectiveness (the MacArthur Foundation) or to strengthen the expert analysis in their work (the World Bank Institute). It is still too early to talk of consensus among American donors with regard to long-term work in Russian higher education. Much will depend on the position taken by the Russian side.

The US Federal Government is actively encouraging the developing export sector in American education, because the “internationalization” of universities may increase the American economy’s competitiveness. This strategy will help to improve the American HEE graduates’ socio-psychological, economic and cultural adaptation to the global, 21st century world, make use of the formal and informal networks of foreign graduates at American HEE to advance the US’s interests in different countries, improve the image of the American nation and society in the world (to pursue these aims, extra funding is given to programs to train representatives of professional and political elites from different countries at American universities), and attract additional financial resources for the American higher education system, as well as allowing it to benefit from foreign best practices.¹³

Nowadays, with the increase of the solvent demand for educational services of international quality, Russia will become subject to ever more active expansion on the part of both US state universities with long-term ties to Russian partners (State University of New York, University of Maryland) and private American educational bodies (University of Phoenix, National American University).

¹³ Experts estimate that total US revenue from training foreign students is at least 14 billion US dollars annually, its 5th biggest export. There are more than 500,000 foreign students in the US, one third of the total number studying abroad. See: A. Arefiev, *Rossiyskie vuzy na mezhdunarodnom rynke obrazovatelnykh uslug*, [Russian Higher Education Establishments on the International Market for Educational Services], Moscow, 2007, p. 20; *Global Educational Digest 2006. Comparing Educational Statistics Around the World*, available at: <www.UIS.UNESCO.org/publications/GED>.

It could also be suggested that in the coming years, American universities will take additional measures to attract Russian candidates on a “commercial” basis. There are at least two circumstances allowing American HEE to count on increased numbers of “commercial” students from Russia. Firstly, the continuing depreciation of the US dollar against the ruble and other currencies is making education (and accommodation) in the United States more accessible for foreigners. Secondly, the US Congress has recently reduced the restrictions on foreign students, teachers and researchers adopted after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As a result, during the 2006-2007 academic year the number of foreign students registering at American universities increased for the first time in recent years.¹⁴

To all appearances, American universities will, in the near future, maintain the rate of increase in their basic income from training foreign bachelor’s students.¹⁵ At the same time, at the master’s degree level, American universities are sponsoring around 40% of the costs of tuition for foreign students, and this figure is rising. This is mostly explained by the fact that international master’s degree programs are now becoming a prestigious “calling card” for universities striving to improve their ratings and status. Furthermore, master’s programs have always been an important source of teaching staff (40-50% of foreigners taught in American master’s programs remain in the US and a significant number of these continue working at “their” university).

Consequently, activity on the Russian educational market will, most probably, consist of two complementary strategies. At the bachelor’s degree level, the emphasis will be on attracting fee-paying Russian students for the courses which are popular in Russia (business, management, economics). At the master’s degree level, preference will be given to the most talented Russian graduates, moreover endeavors will be made to enlist such candidates principally in the specialties most needed by the American economy (engineering, computer science, mathematics). Some graduates of the masters’ programs will continue their education by way of specialized PhD programs, while some will find work in American corporations or return to Russia.

The penetration of American universities in Russia may be facilitated by such factors as its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) or further development of new information technologies, which create additional opportunities for different models of distance learning.¹⁶

¹⁴ The trend towards decreasing numbers of foreign students was first noted in the 2003-2004 academic year: the reduction in comparison to the previous year was roughly 14,000 people, and the number of universities and colleges accepting foreigners also decreased – from 2,500 to 2,300. See *Opendoors. Report on International Educational Exchange*, 2003, p. 13; *Opendoors*, 2004, p. 3, 11.

¹⁵ Currently, around 80% of foreign Bachelor’s students pay for their studies, while universities and colleges cover only 8% of tuition costs (funds can be obtained from federal or other grants too).

¹⁶ Nowadays, American experts estimate the market for distance learning for foreigners that is accessible to US universities at 1.6 million people, with an expected growth of 10-15 million by 2025.

The reform currently taking place in the Russian education system and realignment towards two-tier student training (*bakalavriat/magistratura*¹⁷) have allowed American universities to break into the Russian educational market more easily. Some talented and ambitious bachelor's graduates, having been taught at Russian HEE, would certainly apply for places on American master's degree programs instead of the second level at their "alma mater" universities.¹⁸ This practice will be impeded in Russian HEE that maintain the system of indivisible 5-year training for some specialties (medicine, architecture, some engineering specialties).

As far as the Russian market for post-university education is concerned, training for top and mid-level managers for Russian businesses in the form of on-site and off-site courses seems to be a particularly promising area (the value of this segment in Russia's educational market is estimated at 1.5-2.5 billion US dollars per year). One may predict that tactical and even strategic alliances will form between American business schools and the strongest and most advanced Russian "corporate universities,"¹⁹ which are particularly attractive to Russian companies entering into global markets and acquiring production capacities in other countries, including the United States. These alliances will be beneficial to their participants, but they will certainly exclude Russian state HEE from the most profitable sector of educational services unless state-run HEE find ways of fitting into such alliances, transforming them into public-private partnerships.

Besides franchising, to infiltrate the most promising regions in Russia, a number of American universities will probably create subsidiaries in Russia, and thus will consider local universities to be tactical rather than strategic partners. Consequently, cooperation between Russian and American HEE on Russian soil (and partially in CIS states) will include elements of both cooperation and competition. Russian-American cooperation in penetrating the markets of third countries (China and Southeast Asia) may turn out to be equally contradictory.

The prospects for development and operations on the Russian educational market will depend on a whole series of external factors: the state of political relations between Russia and the US, success of the Bologna process in Europe and the degree of inclusion of Russian universities, the specific conditions of Russia's accession to the WTO,²⁰ as

¹⁷ Editor's note: *Bakalavriat* (4 years) and *Magistratura* (2 years) in the Russian system correspond to two first levels of the European system of higher education or BMD (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate).

¹⁸ As the number of Russian HEE with their own master's programs is low, educational mobility would unavoidably be not only inter-regional, but also international.

¹⁹ Editor's note: *Korporativnye universitety* (in Russian), this term does not correspond to a precise legal concept, but rather to various forms of training: the last years of a specialized program, training center, or continuing education courses, bound by the same goal, namely, to train personnel for one or several companies' concrete needs, by transmitting the culture of these particular companies.

²⁰ The history of different candidates' negotiations with WTO shows that developing the educational market remains one of the most complicated and delicate issues. At present, only 40 out of 146 WTO member states have signed agreements to also open up their educational markets for reciprocal provision of educational services, moreover in 30 of these

well as the rate of growth and structural features of development of the Russian economy and the development of a Russian middle class, which is a main consumer of American educational services—both in Russia and the US.

states this process is restricted, including only adult education and training for technical staff.

Recommendations for Russian Strategy

Russian priorities and procedures for shifting from technical aid to bilateral cooperation on a market basis are far from fully defined. *A Russian course of action to curtail current American programs of technical aid in the area of higher education* may be one possible scenario in the period from 2008 to 2011. It may include tightening administrative and financial control of the activities (even of their content) of American foundations in Russia and their beneficiaries. New Russian legislation concerning regulation of the activities of non-profit organizations has already exerted a significant influence on the work of American foundations, having demanded greater precision and clarity in both choosing priorities and in pursuing them. In this scenario, Russian-American educational cooperation will not cease completely, but may take different forms. In particular, a shift of Russian-American partnerships toward disciplines with more long-term, commercially promising prospects can be expected.

Such transformation in Russian-American cooperation in the area of higher education, putting it onto “market tracks” will not sever institutional ties, and will even have some positive results. It will help Russian HEE become familiar with market approaches to education, increase their effectiveness and build up their competitive edge to a level that will allow Russia to enter the international education market in the long term. Equally, competition with American providers of education services is far from doomed to fail in all cases—in many fields Russian HEE will retain considerable advantages over external competitors. The transition from technical aid provided in the 1990s to bilateral or multilateral cooperation on a new basis may prove to be a success if necessary measures are taken.

Offensive strategy

From the point of view of long-term Russian interests and taking into account the changes to the situation that have been discussed above, *the preferred strategy* toward American organizations rendering technical aid to Russian HEE *appears to be an offensive one, not a defensive one*. Since the majority of leading American donors are now actively revising their strategy with regard to Russia, the Russian side sees a real possibility of moving from the old aid models to a fundamentally new model of

cooperation between Russia and the US (using the mechanisms of cooperation existing within the European Union or between the US and Western Europe). The transition to such models demands coordinated efforts by federal authorities (in the first instance, the Ministry for Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), perfection of a legislative and regulatory foundation, focused action by the leading universities, and the involvement of the professional expert community.

Today, there is no reason to retain the old format of Russian-American cooperation, which is flawed from a Russian point of view and typical of Western relations with less developed countries. This fact is understood by the majority of Russia's partners, but bureaucratic inertia and active lobbying on the part of the operators of major programs means that any change in format will have to be driven from the Russian side. The transition to new models of Russian-American cooperation in the area of higher education may start as early as 2008, even before the president in Washington changes, and continue to 2009-2010 under the new administration. Of course, the new model must be based on the plentiful bilateral and multilateral educational ties that have been developed in Russian-American relations since 1990.

Export of specialists

The "offensive" strategy and foresight must also be used to tackle "brain drain", which is a pressing problem in Russia. Expecting to retain the best graduates in Russia, while a significant difference in living standards, academic infrastructure and levels of pay between Russia and the West remains, is unrealistic.²¹ Nevertheless, one ought not to think about intensifying protectionism in the face of the global market forming in educational services and human capital (such a position is doomed to fail), but about means of entering this market under the most favorable conditions. The challenge for Russia is to move gradually from "raw specialization," that is, supplying the world markets with "primary," custom-made products—students, postgraduates, teachers or researchers—to the more complex "advanced specialization" with more value added.

The first step in this direction could be regulating exports of Russian intellectual "raw material." The search for work in the West and preparations for this work remain a matter for individuals, not organizations (universities), and much less the state (Ministry of Education and Science). A meaningful and coherent (both at government level and at the university level) strategy for exporting intellectual resources must be arrived at to change the chaotic, spasmodic, poorly-regulated flow of intellectual

²¹ According to some assessments, at least a quarter of the US's staffing needs in high-tech areas of the economy are filled thanks to "brain drain" from Russia. *Finansovye Izvestiya*, 26 November 2004.

resources from Russia to the West.²² Russian universities must penetrate Western markets by positioning themselves as service structures, consciously and purposefully preparing manpower for their Western partners. Taking into account the fact that today, internationalization has become a fashionable topic for major educational establishments in the United States and Western Europe, it is logical to make decisive efforts to “infiltrate” such establishments, saturating them with Russian staff.

Furthermore, Western partners would consider the possibility of training their Russian staff directly in line with their requirements in Russia, sharply reducing expenses and increasing the effectiveness of their work. Russian partners could provide the conditions of such a partnership: the financial, administrative and academic participation of corresponding partner structures for training the “export version” of graduates; gradual “internationalization” of Russian universities, transforming them into “educational franchises” of American or European partners (training students not only from Russia but also from other countries); a commitment on the part of the “export staff” trained to spend a defined period of time (for example, one semester every three years) at their “alma mater” university to participate in teaching and research. In this way, even if the “brain drain” from Russia to the West cannot be stopped, Russia and its universities might benefit from it by training world class specialists.

Fundamentally new possibilities are emerging for the “refinement” of the arrangement of exports of “intellectual raw material.” The dynamics of global educational markets will suggest the niches that are best suited for Russia. But the general strategy is obvious enough—it is essential to gradually *move the increasingly advanced stages in the “production process” in education and science to Russia* (first preparing the export model for bachelor’s programs, then master’s, then PhDs, and in the long term establishing “ready-to-operate” laboratories and academic chairs). It would also be possible to move gradually away from training predominantly Russian specialists toward training citizens of CIS countries too, and, in the long term specialists from different parts of the world (including America and Europe). Analyses show that even if the cost of training specialists at Russian HEE increases three to five times over the next five years, Russian education will still remain a highly profitable market in education worldwide.

This strategy could also contribute to overcoming the most important political challenge—creating a new social, cultural and intellectual basis for developing relations between Russia and the West. Scientific and educational cooperation would undoubtedly promote cooperation in the field of business. Widespread “infiltration” of the Western educational environment, direct contact between Russian students, researchers, and teaching communities and their partners in Europe and North America,

²² A large proportion of Russian specialists that emigrate permanently to the US do not find work in a scientific field, having more success establishing themselves in a commercial one. However, around 50% of Russian scientists and engineers leaving for an academic exchange of more than three months remain there permanently, working in scientific and technical fields.

would contribute to a new basis for the development of stable and mutually-beneficial relations between Russia and the West.

Overcoming asymmetrical mobility

The task of overcoming or even leveling out the current asymmetry in academic mobility between Russia and the United States is extremely important.²³ The inability or unwillingness to attract a substantial number of American students to study in Russian HEE will remain one of the most significant obstacles to developing bilateral scientific and educational cooperation.²⁴ Long-term, consistent efforts are required to ensure that parts of the academic process in certain Russian HEE are carried out in English (as is the practice in China, for instance), to guarantee that the entire learning process (curriculum, program content, teaching methods and evaluation of students' knowledge), and also learning conditions (quality of equipment, information resources) meet American university standards. The provision of the necessary living conditions for foreign students in Russia will also play a large role in this.

It is important for the necessary changes to be introduced to the acts governing residence of foreign citizens on Russian soil and their rights with regard to work and research activities during their period in education, and beyond.

Cooperation in the area of university management

Russian-American cooperation in the area of university administration appears to be promising. For all the differences between Russian and American universities in their legal regulatory framework, historic traditions, and technical equipment, the experiences of HEE in the US are useful to Russia. American universities are leaders in the areas of strategic planning, development of relations with business, management of university property and various other important areas (university as a factor in regional social and economic development, enhancement of intra-university administration, innovative educational technologies, etc.).

²³ Nowadays, the US is not the main foreign center for training Russian specialists. Approximately 5,600 Russian students study in the US in comparison with around 12,000 in Germany. A. Arefyev, *op. cit.* [13], p. 43. Nevertheless, the number of Americans studying in Russian HEE is one fifth of that figure (roughly 1,000) – *idem*, p. 82.

²⁴ This failure is understandable, considering that American educational traditions do not include large-scale study placements abroad.

Conclusion

The main challenge in the foreseeable future is not to increase the number of Russian-American university partnerships (this goal may be relatively easy to achieve on account of incentives for the simplest forms of cooperation, validations and franchising), but to change their nature towards fully bilateral scientific and educational cooperation between equal partners.

The experience of Russian-American partnerships can help find solutions to two fundamental problems facing Russian higher education establishments:

- *Improving the system of training highly-qualified staff* (modernizing existing postgraduate and doctoral studies, providing quality control of specialists trained);
- *Modernizing the curriculum in HEE* (supplementing traditional educational formats, such as lectures and seminars, with more modern methods, including “master classes,” workshops, collective scientific projects, etc.).

For the first time in the post-Soviet period, objective prerequisites—both material and intellectual—for such changes have emerged and not only in the elite Moscow HEE, but also in many regional universities. A ranking of Russian universities according to their potential and relevance to the educational system and shaping of the country’s intellectual potential may turn out to be a strong stimulus for taking Russian-American cooperation in the area of higher education to a new level. The new ranking will promote around one hundred major HEE (20-25 at the federal level and 72-80 at the regional level), which will take the lead in developing partnerships with American universities. The concentration of resources will make it possible for Russian participants to play in the same “weight category” as their major foreign partners, including leading American universities.²⁵

The modernization processes currently taking place in the Russian higher education system (new concept for educational standards built on the basis of competence, introduction of credit systems and module structure in educational programs, increased volume of elective courses, and autonomous work) are creating a favorable background for the

²⁵ The current fragmentation in the Russian higher education system, along with other negative consequences, also complicates development of international cooperation: many Russian universities do not have sufficient scientific or educational potential to uphold international partnerships without constant “doping” through foreign technical aid programs.

transition to a new form of cooperation with the US. To successfully integrate leading Russian HEE into the global university network (through multilateral strategic partnerships), the active participation of the Russian federal state is essential. Joint programs between Russian and American (or, more generally, foreign) universities are called for, and must become constituent elements of state educational policy.