

## Digital Imperative

MGIMO hosted a major conference on Digital International Relations

## PriorityFest: MGIMO Beyond the Familiar

Festival of the best practices under the Priority 2030 State Program

## 30 Years Together

Landmark anniversary: 30 years since Anatoly Torkunov became the MGIMO Rector

# Elena Pronicheva

New head of Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery





The Kyrgyz society's desire to revive historical memory is a good example for the Russian world, which is rediscovering its true identity.





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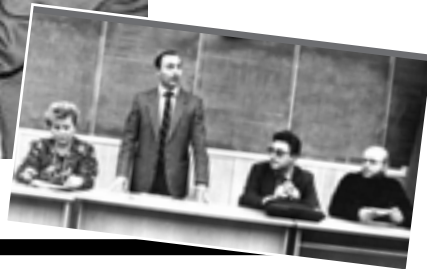


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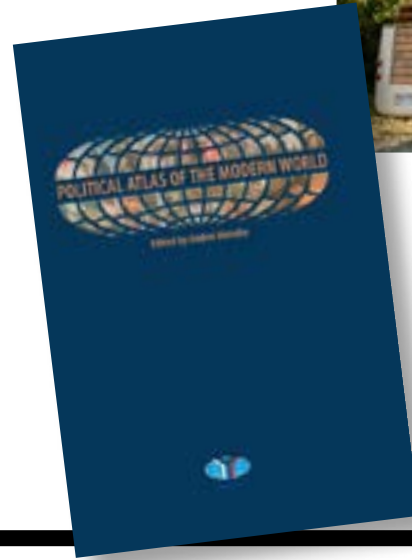


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The Moscow Region is like Russia in miniature. There is probably no other region with such diverse areas of tourism.



Sochi hosted the first interuniversity conference “Russian Universities as the ‘Sherpas’ of International Tourism” — a joint initiative of MGIMO and a few South Russian universities.



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The University contributed to the development of the Jewish Museum in Moscow through its graduates — Elena Pronicheva, Kristina Krasnyanskaya and Nina Dymshitz.



MGIMO hosted a conference on Digital International Relations with more than 800 representatives of the largest Russian corporations, IT specialists, and industry experts.



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MJ

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# DIGITAL IMPERATIVE

MGIMO hosts a conference on Digital International Relations. More than 800 representatives of the largest Russian corporations, IT specialists, and industry experts discussed and reflected upon the best global practices of digital transformation in the areas of international relations, management, economy, and education.



The benefits of the digital environment are well known, although not as faultless as they are presented by the evangelists of the brave new digital world. Digital technology brings speed, convenience, unparalleled access to information, new opportunities for the public sector and communications, and new types of entertainment and employment. However, this shiny coin has another side: risks that are much less obvious, but no less real. These are digital addiction, the mass user's perception becoming more simplistic, infringement of privacy, violation of human rights, digital crime and corruption.

We have witnessed these digital risks

in the international arena since the beginning of the military conflict in Ukraine—a giant tsunami of fakes and attempts to manipulate public sentiment in Russia and the world by the world's digital ecosystems.

How to use the digital space so it does no harm and how to protect oneself from digital threats, how to protect your rights and your mind—the conference at MGIMO discussed all of these questions.

Rector of MGIMO, Academician Anatoly Torkunov, opened the plenary session, “International Relations in the Context of Public Life Digitalization.”

“Information technology is visibly transforming society,” he stressed, “and the practical aspect of international



relations, the way countries interact, is also changing under its influence. The constantly increasing volume of information affects cause-and-effect relations; events are becoming less and less clear, and decisions are constantly being challenged by representatives of essentially different information realities.”

The Rector noted that in a situation of unprecedented information fragmentation, the search for effective digital practices is more relevant than ever. “It is no coincidence that our conference discusses both world politics and the international aspects of all spheres of public life, which are greatly affected by digitalization,” he added.

The Rector pointed out that with this conference, MGIMO contributes to the solution of the future transformation and development of Russia's foreign policy.

The new undergraduate program, Big Data and International Relations Modeling, and the master's program, Data Analysis and Dynamics of International Processes, have welcomed their first students.

The university will train international relations professionals with expert knowledge of big data analysis technologies, the ability to work with systems containing elements of AI, and other digital competencies. The Rector recalled that the MGIMO Institute for International Studies runs and constantly develops a laboratory for intelligent data analysis in the field of international relations.

“It is absolutely clear,” said Anatoly Torkunov, “that we need to take the best from the global experience of digitalization and adapt it to the current Russian agenda and specifics, ensuring control over the

**How can we use the digital space so it does no harm, and how can we protect ourselves from digital radiation, as well as protect our rights and minds?**

tools of digitalization in order to preserve the real intellectual autonomy of Russia.”

In his address, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, “The world is changing before our eyes, new technologies are appearing, which entails a change in the established paradigms. The coronavirus

pandemic has accelerated trends that have been gaining momentum in recent decades, giving a powerful boost to digitalization in many aspects of everyday life, including the public sector, business, and education. International relations do, indeed, keep up with these trends, which is the subject of this conference.”

The Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, Valery Falkov, emphasized that it was crucial and instrumental to develop digital relations. “The new digital reality and the opportunities it provides for the development of science and education are certainly unprecedented,” he said, “Digital technologies have now become an essential part of both the educational process and research; they are now part of the international cooperation projects program.”



CONFRONTATION  
IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Andrey Sushentsov, Dean of the School of International Relations, moderated the panel discussion “Confrontation in the Digital Environment: New Rules of International Politics.” “Over the past few years,” he said in his opening remarks, “we have been exploring how

account of a country’s president should be blocked. The exaggerated role of the digital economy can also lead to bubbles such as those that triggered the dot-com era crises. So, the only way to interact with such platforms is through the language of regulations and norms... Our era is deeply analog. We have an analog special military operation going on, an analog

confrontation unfolding in a digital environment that uses disinformation tools. Journalism is dead, replaced by propaganda-driven media outlets, and we will soon see new doctrines for coordinating interactions in the cyber environment, as well as a new order of attribution of cyber incidents. “We are returning to the archaic view



rivalry between major powers leads to the formation of enclaves in the digital space, and creates artificial barriers, impeding the development of globalization and multilateral cooperation.”  
Former Deputy Minister of Digital Development and MGIMO graduate Mikhail Mamonov warned against putting digitalization on a pedestal. “Look at this: a major platform, that is also a search engine, a news aggregator, and a messenger, at some point decides an

**A**natoly Torkunov: “Information technology impacts the practical aspect of international relations and the way countries interact.”

of the world as a chaotic cluster of states, each governed by its own interests (and the crisis Europe is experiencing is deeply analog!), and the concept of imperialism is reemerging in foreign policy discussions. Even the threat to digital existence is analog. It is difficult to talk about the technical possibility of disconnecting any state from the global Internet, but cutting the cable is quite doable.”  
The same is true of the ‘cyber-proletariat’, who are forced to forget their beloved cosmopolitanism and become domestic. And it does not happen under pressure from the state.  
Ivan Zuenko, senior research fellow at MGIMO Center for Eurasian Studies, talked about the Chinese model of digital sovereignty. This model rests on two pillars: first, a strict policy of free movement of information on the Internet, and second, Chinese alternatives to foreign sites.  
The first pillar is the Golden Shield project, referred to as the Great Firewall of China. After the events of Tiananmen Square and the death of Deng Xiaoping, China prefers to filter information. The Golden Shield blocks access to foreign websites, filters the content of Chinese



**S**ergey Lavrov: “The world is changing before our eyes, new technologies are appearing, which entails a change in established paradigms. International relations do, indeed, keep up with these trends.”

sites using keywords, making a significant chunk of Western sites inaccessible.  
“In 2014, Xi Jinping said, ‘If there’s no security on the Internet, there’s no security for the state.’ Therefore, in addition to the personal responsibility of website administrators for content, China has developed a whole range of security tools. These include equipment for analyzing the content of mobile devices, and ‘censorship factories’ – companies where the ‘digital proletariat’ reviews pictures, labels them, and then sells stop-lists to sites, helping to block unwanted content.  
“As a result, most users do not go to Western platforms – the sovereign Chinese Internet is quite good, they have equivalents of Western social networks and online encyclopedias like Wikipedia.  
Does the Chinese model suit Russia?  
“We have already embarked on the path of



adapting the Chinese model, but we are at the very beginning. The difficulty is that it requires strict censorship and constant updating of stop-lists – it is a huge market in China. But most importantly, the road to sovereignty is impossible without the development of our own competitive applications.”

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MEMO Head of Sector Ivan Danilin discussed the reasons for a conflict, which “was expected and inevitable in the digital sphere. By the mid-2010s, in terms of the number of unicorn startups, large companies, and the volume of funds raised, two global centers of digital



economic power emerged in the global economy: the Chinese and the American. The clash of the two systems for digital leadership was inevitable for two reasons. First, there is this fascinating neo-Marxist concept of technological rent, where a country’s ability to control key elements of global value and technology chains can have a significant impact on the entire economy of industries and markets. Second, digital markets are inherently global because, in order to maximize this technological digital rent, one system or another must globally dominate.

“The clash resulted in the events that happened during Trump’s presidency when, for example, the entry of Chinese corporations into the U.S. stock markets was limited. On the other hand, the big problem of the innovation economy is that both the production (60 percent of global high-tech exports are digital

products) and the narrative are shaped not by economists, but by people from innovation who see what is happening in the context of revolutions and geopolitical competition. And when it came to the AI revolution, big data, quantum computers, and the like, the politicians in charge of

**Ruslan Ibragimov:**  
“They say big data is the ‘new oil’. It could really become the new oil if it is extracted from deep within of the Earth, so to speak, and put into circulation.”



decisions in China and the U.S. realized that this was not just technology; this was a fight for the markets of the future, and there was no room for negotiations; this was a zero-sum game.

“The Chinese can’t say, ‘Let’s share our future with Americans!’ – or vice versa. “Accordingly, the confrontational component has increased, which has resulted in specific forms of technological warfare. It is amazing how quickly a very small group of digital platforms has seized enormous power in the field of innovation. And when they realized that they could do anything, including censoring the President of the United States, buy media outlets, as Amazon and Alibaba did, it suddenly occurred to the political elites that their alliance with these companies (like the one the Democratic administration had with the digital giants) begins to look like an attempt to feed a big, hungry crocodile, and it is not at all obvious who is going to be food. It is time to suppress their desire to monopolize political processes. As a result, in the U.S., there was a falling out between the Democrats and Big Tech, while China restricted the influence of the obstinate Jack Ma.

“The technological confrontation is also fueled by the issue of resources required for humanity’s development (there are now 7 billion 700 million people). There is an idea that today’s digital world is, in a sense, a natural way out – through sharing, through the metaverse, that helps to address critical resource limitations for our development. All platforms create their own metaverses to duplicate the real one, but it’s interesting to know who specifically creates and controls it. It’s not like we can just let it run its course because, at some point, God forbid, its creators might think that they don’t really need the rest of the people.”

Maxim Suchkov, Director of the Institute for International Studies, focused in his address on the impact the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution has on international relations and the geopolitics of the great powers. “The new energy sources for the first three industrial revolutions are steam power, electricity, and the atom; the new energy source for the fourth revolution is big data. The first revolution led to the mechanization of production, the second – to mass production, and the third – to automation and digitalization, but so far, we do not know what may be the result of the fourth revolution. But the fact that it develops



exponentially, not linearly, and affects human nature itself has led me to think that it actually encroaches on three basic concepts around which humanity has revolved since its inception: the concept of justice, the concept of freedom, and the concept of power.

“And this is related to three major megatrends in world politics: the demand for a new social contract, the problem of big data localization and the related concept of digital sovereignty, and the category of new threats (taking into account the impact of artificial intelligence development on them).

“Each industrial revolution created new political conflicts and technological arms races. Today, the technological duopoly between the U.S. and China is unfolding a rivalry for the right to create a new digital standard, and therefore for a competitive advantage. And this is economics at its purest because the latest 5G system could, as the Americans have calculated, generate 3 million jobs and an additional \$500 billion in GDP growth.

**Elina Sidorenko:**  
“This new legal concept, digital platform legislation, has snuck up on us without our batting an eye. The challenge today is to try and somehow find a point of convergence for the law of digital platforms and national law.”

“The development and implementation of AI is primarily a growing human epistemological crisis. Today’s transition from the third to the fourth revolution is historically comparable to the mental

and epistemological transition from the religious worldview of the Middle Ages to the worldview of the Renaissance. But in contrast to that time, the current transition has one important difference: while the Enlightenment challenged a particular philosophy based on religious beliefs, in the modern world there is no uniform philosophy. And, therefore, there is nothing to challenge. And all this brings us to the plane of some new, incomprehensible security threats and significantly changes the categories of deterrence, balance of power, and mutual assured destruction. And it raises serious questions about the use of AI in military systems.”

**LAW AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

The session “Legal Support for Digital Economy Development in Russia and Abroad” was moderated by MGIMO’s First Vice Rector Gennadii Tolstopiatenko and the Dean of the International Law School, Nikita Molchakov.





The Vice President of communications giant MTS, Ruslan Ibragimov, shared his views on how to solve the problem of depersonalization of personal data as the basis for the development of Russia's digital economy. "You've probably heard this cliché already: 'Data is the new oil.' Big data is the core of the digital economy; it could really become the new oil if it is extracted from deep within the Earth, so to speak, and put into circulation. But it has not yet been extracted, and we do not observe the turnover as such, or rather, it is very modest.

"But the demand for big data is very high, and the data itself is inexhaustible, generated every day, so it can meet this demand.

"Why then can't we extract and use them yet? The point is that this requires depersonalization of large data sets. This is the prerequisite for managing flows – that of transport, tourism, migration, fintech. The more depersonalized data is in circulation, the more effective the management is. But not everyone has this

kind of data: banks, telecom operators have it, insurers have less. The problem is the legal barrier that prevents us from tapping into the potential of big data. Today, companies are legally obliged to only use their own data for in-house purposes (service improvement, targeted advertising, etc.), they are not able to exchange data, and thus we do not achieve a synergistic effect."

"This new legal concept, digital platform law, has snuck up on us without our batting an eye," opened her address Elina Sidorenko, Director of the Center for Digital Economy and Financial Innovation at MGIMO. "This law began to evolve very rapidly, raising many questions for traditional law.

"What is a digital platform? There is no definition in the current legislation of Russia, Europe, and the United States. And one of the challenges today is to try and somehow find a point of convergence for the law of digital platforms and the national law. And given the sanctions, Russia has to find its own way. The key

issue today is to give a definition to a digital platform user and protect their rights. It is imperative to determine who is responsible for the information that is posted on digital platforms – the organization or the platform operator?

"For example, Germany's law says that if someone posts information about something, they share responsibility with the person who actually provides the service. However, the practice has taken a different path: today the main trend is to keep the platform and the actions of individuals who work on it apart.

"As for the protection of the user's account, this does not exist in Russia.

"Here's a recent curious case: traffic officers stop a car for a violation, they

**The digital revolution comes after the third industrial revolution because it is really a leap into a new space – cyberspace. The most important problem is regulation.**

come up to the car for a document check, and it turns out it's a self-driving car. You should have seen the look of sheer astonishment on the officers' faces. But while it's a funny story, it reflects a big problem: we, like those traffic officers who tried to find the person responsible for a traffic violation, will increasingly find ourselves with a look of astonishment on our faces, searching for those responsible for actions related to digital platforms."

Ekaterina Ryzhkova, Associate Professor at MGIMO, focused on three problems highlighted by the discussion. "One of them concerns not only lawyers but also programmers. Why? There are two concepts: digitalization and digitization. The first is analysis; the second is a new form. If we take financial law and write it in Arabic, it won't be Arabic financial law, will it? If we record this law as code, it won't automatically become digital law. In short, recording something old in a new form is digitization. So, we need to understand what digital law actually

means.

"The digital revolution comes after the third industrial revolution because it is really a leap into a new space – cyberspace. It cannot be defined within the existing system. And the biggest problem is regulation. To begin with, we lack a clear definition of a party to a relationship. We are used to having a plaintiff, a defendant, a debtor, a creditor. But here we're talking about a customer who gives a brief, a programmer, a tester, and others. We can regulate them in terms of labor law, but we do not regulate them in terms of their tasks and functions, and most importantly, responsibility.

"We have a new entity, artificial intelligence, and a problem associated with it is responsibility. We give AI a lot of power over our lives, even when it literally comes to our lives – in healthcare. So, what happens? Relying on AI, a doctor prescribes treatment. But who is then responsible – AI? And if it makes a mistake? As long as we believe that it cannot suffer, its destruction will have no negative consequences for it. Or are the doctor and others involved in the process to blame: the tester, the programmers?

"The uniqueness of the AI situation is that when we turn to the law regulating it, which is the European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2017, it spells out Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics, that is, it refers us to a unique source – to fiction! It is unbelievable that the rules for determining the status of a new entity are based on futuristic philosophy, on science fiction!

If the new entity that determines our existence for us is AI, then the digital revolution gives us an entirely new relationship plane – an algorithm, and an entirely new kind of law – a code that we cannot even perceive. For now, the digital law says nothing about it."

**DIGITALIZATION GOES TO THE REGIONS**

A session titled "Economy and Social Sphere Digitalization: Regional Experience and Best Practices" was opened by Sergey Shitkov, who, in his capacity as MGIMO Vice-Rector, oversees the development of information systems as well as the University's regional policy. "I am often in touch with the regions in my work," he pointed out, "and I can say that each region, in terms of digitalization, has its own specifics. MGIMO has signed agreements with 28 regions of the Russian



Federation, which include, among other things, issues of digitalization. In addition, we are opening a master’s degree program in Big Data System Analysis and a similar program for undergraduates at the School of International Relations. This is only the first step, which in the future may allow us to create a separate department that will train professionals in this field.”

“Regions should adopt the elements of digitalization that exist in international relations,” claims Tamara Shashikhina, Director of MGIMO’s European Studies Institute. “Today we are discussing the issue of implementing e-justice. By the way, this system already works in arbitration, but the courts of general jurisdiction, which consider cases of ordinary citizens, have extremely little experience with this.

“A pilot project has been launched in the Belgorod region, where three magistrates’ courts have been connected to AI, which prepares documents for the collection of arrears on property, transport, and land taxes. It aggregates, verifies the particulars, and issues a draft of the court order. Fortunately, unlike China, where all processes are handled online on the platform, we still have a judge to make the right decision – no AI will ever replace a human being.

“In addition, it is necessary to find the right balance in the use of AI. Yes, on the one hand, it helps to avoid corruption, but on the other hand, it is an algorithm that is developed and controlled by humans. How do you ensure the algorithm works correctly? Not to mention the fact that the AI itself can learn. Therefore, it is necessary to tread carefully.

“The experiment in Belgorod’s courts is indeed welcomed, but unfortunately, we are talking about the collection of debts of an individual in favor of the state. While there is no algorithm that protects the rights of people, informing them the state may also owe them something, they have to guess now. It would be good if some region developed such an algorithm! Abroad, there is this good case of electronic lawyers working on the basis of an interesting algorithm that is not yet used in our country. It’s unfortunate because such a lawyer could prepare claims against incorrectly issued fines.

“A new stage in the development of e-justice will begin very soon; by 2024, we expect the launch of the Online Justice super service, which will automatically determine jurisdiction and subordination of cases in courts.”

Anton Lebedev, Head of the Department of Digital Development of the Nenets Autonomous District, spoke about the peculiarities of digitalization in such special regions of Russia as the Arctic region. “We have three distinctive features: first, the large territory – 176.8 thousand square kilometers; second, the lowest population – 44,000 people who, and this is the third, are scattered throughout this vast area. The settlements are not connected by overland communication at all, and the only means of transportation between them are helicopters, snowmobiles, and reindeer sleds.

“Therefore, transferring government services into an electronic format is an excellent way for people to interact with the government. There is no need to fly 350 kilometers to the city, as it was before. It is very convenient when you can access

**Tamara Shashikhina: “Yes, AI helps to avoid corruption, but on the other hand, it is an algorithm that is developed and controlled by humans. You have to implement it carefully.”**

a web platform with public services and order a service. So, we are very interested in the development of digitalization.”

The State Duma expert Alexey Mikheev spoke about blockchain technology. “Unfortunately,” he said, “it is not reflected in the national Digital Economy program, although it is a revolutionary technology that can help solve the problems of corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency in governance.

“Now the Bank of Russia is working on the digital ruble, based on the blockchain technology, which may allow tracking funds allocated for a particular regional project, for training, or for digitalization, that we discuss now.

“E-justice must necessarily be based on



blockchain because it is a decentralized, independent network made up of a multitude of computers, which can provide decision-making based on a clear algorithm with no influence on decision-making. For example, in America, they now have a chatbot that deals with half of the lawsuits challenging motorists’ fines. It used to take a lot of time; now, all you have to do is contact the, a robot lawyer asks you questions, records the answers, draws up a claim, and sends it to court.”

DIGITAL HYGIENE

The moderator of the Digital Hygiene section, Kribrum Analytical Company CEO Igor Ashmanov, tempered the conference’s general excitement in

his speech. “We’ve seen a galloping digitalization over the last few years. Yes, it allows you to speed up interactions, remotely manage government resources, and provide all sorts of public services, but it has risks. Due to the operation in Ukraine, our country was bombarded with a flood of fakes, and there was a serious need to protect the rights of citizens in the digital space, not to let their minds and brains be taken over, and to maintain mental hygiene.

“It is delusional to think that people are so smart that they can tell when information is fake and are perfectly capable of navigating a toxic environment without being manipulated. It is not like that! Especially when minors are involved. Our teenagers, who grew up in peaceful

**Igor Ashmanov: “Digitalization allows us to speed up interactions, remotely manage government resources, provide all sorts of public services, but there is a serious need to protect citizens’ minds and brains, maintaining mental hygiene.”**

times, never sacrificed anything, and have a sense of self-worth, are used to living in a protected space. They walk the streets where there are police, security in parks and stores, no predators around, and the information is reliable. In reality, they are not protected: there are predators, inaccurate information, and toxic content on the Internet, which, while not forbidden, can still be harmful to one’s mind.

“Before, we talked about the security of hardware and software, that is, of computers and programs. Now, we are talking about the security of minds.”

Philosopher Sergey Volobuyev drew the audience’s attention to the fact that



in a world already ruled by AI, there is a process of isolation going on. “Digital spaces are formed as several civilizational and cultural spaces, or noospheres, if we use Vernadsky’s terminology. Russia already has its place among these noospheres and retains the features of a law-based, free society.

“Today, the free Internet propaganda claims that a person possessing freedom and intelligence is able to navigate the flow of information. But it begs the question: even if a person has developed a system of cultural censorship and is able to think critically, dealing with fake information, should they be in a toxic environment and spend a significant amount of personal time and effort filtering out the information noise in search of something valuable? Not to mention those who do not have such a system, primarily children. Therefore, we should talk about hygiene not only in the digital but also in the educational space, where there should be no market, advertising, or marketing technologies. We cannot transform the relationship between a teacher and a student into a commercial transaction, where culture is a commodity, as it was not long ago when education, medicine, and even the country’s defense were referred to as services. And we should not allow the reverse – the market using our symbols and heroes of classical culture because it will demean them. In other words, there can be no Pushkin vodka.

“The important question is: where is the line between digital hygiene and censorship? There should be a presumption of inherent human dignity. We are against censorship, but let’s first understand what people live for: if a person is a free being who lives to experience the world and appreciate culture, that’s one story, and if they are an animal who needs to be integrated into as many marketing chains as possible, that’s another. And once we’ve figured that out, we can talk about the mechanisms for managing information processes.”

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“Today we are no longer talking about hygiene, but an attack on the system of values,” says social analyst Alexander Grebenyuk. “Social media serves as a platform for applying social technologies. Like any soft power, they have a huge manipulative resource and a set of mechanisms. Let’s see: a lot of



companies have left Russia, but the think tanks that deal with our food market and pharmaceuticals are there, collecting data about us. So, I would add to the discussion of digital hygiene the question of the digital footprints we leave that allow us to be manipulated. They can be used to determine whether a person who is online is, for example, stressed, what posts they likes, what pages they visit, what they repost, that is, to understand their lifestyle and, consequently, what you can sell them, thus stimulating future impulse purchases.

“Hygiene or censorship? Social networks are dumpsters, and without proper

hygiene we can’t move forward. Call it censorship, but you have to filter – just as parents filter what they say when talking to their child, censoring their words. Particular attention must be paid to people without enough agency – those who browse the web aimlessly, waiting for others to engage them in communication, they are dependent, and here they need protection. It is in the interest of such people that we have to put digital hygiene measures in place.”

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Wrapping up the discussion, Igor Ashmanov shared his thoughts on the line

between digital hygiene and censorship, “We had Mein Kampf banned; is that censorship? Swearing in public is forbidden unlike, by the way, in Ukraine, where it is built into everyday language, swearing is literally how they talk...

“We live in a space that’s been filtered; it’s already censored. Cultural space must be cleaned, not necessarily by law, but by public consent: everyone must understand that there should be no Pushkin vodka or Poddubny condoms.

“I am convinced that the Internet should be fundamentally safe. However, today it is impossible to agree on the security of the Internet at the

**It turns out that the Internet can’t be a freedom zone, as we used to hope. There should be no lawless zones. And digital literacy should be developed after the digital environment is cleaned up**

international level, and we see how it disintegrates into international enclaves with their own rules of conduct, national laws, and different ethical models. And it turns out that the Internet can’t be a freedom zone, as we used to hope; it was a foolish hope. That is why there should be no lawless zones.

“Digital literacy is a tricky concept. A teenager must learn how to enter this unprotected digital environment to do what? Fall victim to a plethora of fakes?

“In my opinion, digital literacy should be developed after the digital environment is cleaned up. Literacy must go hand in hand with cleanliness.”





# AVETISYAN: “OUR MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAM WITH MGIMO WILL TRAIN ‘DIGITAL SPECIAL FORCES’”

Director of the Institute for System Programming Academician Arutyun Avetisyan talks about partnering with MGIMO on research and educational projects.

**MJ: How did the collaboration between ISP RAS and MGIMO start?**  
We met colleagues from MGIMO University during our collaborative work with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a year ago. MGIMO invited us to be an expert center for the Ministry’s

digital transformation. It was then that the foundations were laid for working on a project to create a system for intelligent analysis of big data in the field of foreign policy. In 2021, in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, the

but also participates directly in the research work. For example, as a co-organizer of the Digital International Relations Conference, we have held a number of specialized events, including a discussion on natural language machine processing

Rector of MGIMO, Academician Anatoly Torkunov, and I signed a cooperation agreement which marked the beginning of a meaningful collaboration between the ISP and the University.

**MJ: How do you evaluate this interaction today?**  
We have come a long way since then. Initially, our collaboration came down to a bilateral working group for implementing joint projects. However, in the fall of last year, the ISP became a partner of MGIMO University, with the two institutions signing an agreement to create a consortium. We are currently successfully implementing joint research and educational projects based on this consortium.

**MJ: The Digital International Relations conference announced the creation of a laboratory for intelligent big data analysis in international relations. Is the ISP part of the project?**  
Our institute is actively involved in this project, as we possess all the necessary resources and capabilities to implement such initiatives. In 2021, our Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence Center was among the winners of the research centers competition under the aegis of the Artificial Intelligence federal project. The ISP team not only develops a data analysis system for the laboratory that MGIMO is creating under the auspices of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Photos by: Igor Lileev, Alexey Bakhtin

in international relations. Later, MGIMO’s Institute of International Studies and the ISP organized a joint foresight session, Digital Analytics, which discussed the possibilities of integrating machine data analysis into applied research in the field of international relations.

**MJ: Are there professionals today who possess the competencies necessary for this work? Or do you have to improvise?**  
We have such people both at our institution and at MGIMO, predominantly these are established practitioners or experienced researchers, but they are very few. It is precisely to address this deficit that in 2022 MGIMO and the ISP launched a fundamentally new master’s degree program in Data Analysis and Dynamics of International Processes. This master’s degree program is offered by the School


The master’s degree program is designed to develop students’ skills in analyzing big data, developing and implementing new big data research methods and technologies, and managing the corresponding infrastructure.

of International Economic Relations, with ISP staff teaching specialized courses related to data analysis, algorithms, and programming. A new interdisciplinary field is emerging before our eyes at the intersection of humanities and technology. Analysis of big data in international processes is a fundamentally new competence. There are very few such specialists, but they are in high demand.

**MJ: Could you tell us more about the new master’s degree program?**  
As the ISP supervising director of Data Analysis and Dynamics of International Processes, I would like to note that the program is truly unique. It is aimed at



developing students’ skills in analyzing big data, developing and implementing new big data research methods and technologies, and managing the corresponding infrastructure. The interdisciplinary nature of the program is evident in its inclusion of three sets of disciplines: data analysis methodology, economic analysis, and political analysis. Upon graduation, students will have developed skills that are in demand across the public sector, state and large private corporations, research, and business. The program also includes a lot of hands-

on practice: master’s students will be able to consolidate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in real-world environments by working on projects at the Intelligent Big Data Analysis Laboratory. This is a crossroads of education and research, theory and practice, which is the main focus of our comprehensive collaboration with MGIMO University. Those who have completed data analysis training within our master’s degree program are the future “digital special forces”, truly unique professionals, since only 15 people will be admitted into the program. 



# MGIMO’S ACCELERATOR: BUILDING BRAND IN STARTUP MARKET



As part of the Priority 2030 government support program, MGIMO launches an accelerator program for startups at the Odintsovo campus. MGIMO Ventures is implemented in partnership with Startech.vc, a venture company. “We have been promoting technology entrepreneurship in Russia for four years now,” says Oleg Linnikov, co-founder of Startech.vc, “universities are a crucial link in the ecosystem of market players. We are happy to have started working with MGIMO, one of the leading Russian universities.”



**MJ: Please explain to the uninitiated what an accelerator is.**

An accelerator is a program for startups that allows them to go through certain stages of their business life much faster. There are quite a few such programs in Russia. Various private corporate players have their own accelerators, as do universities. The startups that the accelerator works with can be at different stages of development. It can be a very early stage – a mere idea of a project, or there can be startups with developed prototypes, who already had sales. With MGIMO, we have focused on middle-stage projects with a well-developed idea but not yet a full-fledged business. It is also important for the accelerator to find a niche. Understandably, topics related to education are most relevant for a university. Therefore, the fields we have chosen are close to the technological

component of MGIMO master’s programs: FinTech, AgroTech, FoodTech, MedTech, LingvoTech, LegalTech, UrbanTech. Startups concerned with the development of technologies in the government sector (GovTech), tourism, leisure, and event management (Tourism/Events), and others were also very prominent at the selection stages. In total, 20 projects successfully passed the selection and joined the accelerator.

**MJ: How did you reach out to MGIMO University?**

We were introduced to the university’s leadership by its alumni. At first, we talked to Vice-Rector Artem Malgin, and then we had a meeting with the Rector, where we discussed everything in more detail.

**MJ: What did you bring to the meeting with the Rector?**

Our portfolio, which shows that we are well-known and established players in the market, we have implemented over 50 acceleration programs and received a lot of favorable feedback during our three years of operation.

**MJ: What is the star project in your portfolio?**

Among the top projects, I would name FinTechStart at MIPT. We have been involved with this accelerator for five years and have done nine seasons so far. Another project is Global Pilots, our program with EY and Microsoft for mature startups ready to work with large international companies.

**I**t is also important for the accelerator to find a niche.

**MGIMO, indeed, focuses on areas concerned with education, master’s programs.**

**MJ: How do you start working with clients?**

We have a tested methodology that we simply adapt to each specific client.

**MJ: Describe this methodology.**

First, we collect applications. Let’s say we receive 200 applications for the program at MGIMO, we then select around 20 of the most interesting and promising ones. Then we open the program, and our “trackers” (experts in startup development) meet with the participants several times a week to go over the plan for the week.

The program offers opportunities to deepen knowledge through expert and mentor sessions, educational webinars, lectures, and workshops with corporate players, during which participants must first understand how they will choose to achieve their objectives – either by raising funds or by earning money. They have access to resources from both the university and program partner companies. When we reach the “equator”, then we are through half the program, we look at the preliminary results: participants talk about their accomplishments. Then we prepare for the graduation, for the DemoDay, attended by interested companies, investors, and graduates.

**MJ: So what will result from this?**

The program under MGIMO University’s brand will include projects not only from the university but also businesses that want to develop in collaboration with it. Among the projects that made it through the first selection of the MGIMO Accelerator are an online platform for preparing for the Unified State Exam, GoVerbum, a mobile application for learning Chinese words for standard tests, bewise.ai, a recommendation AI platform for sales departments, and Microcirculation, a project that develops artificial intelligence for medical diagnostics in ophthalmology.

**MJ: How will startups learn about the MGIMO accelerator?**

Our company is well-known in the startup market, and we are announcing the new accelerator program with MGIMO to the startup community. As a result, a community of entrepreneurs will emerge around the university, these will be external projects, graduates with their own businesses, and students who will begin to interact with each other. And when they become successful, they will say, “I graduated from MGIMO, where they helped me create and develop my business.” This is how an entrepreneurial ecosystem can grow around a university, thanks to an accelerator.

**MJ: Your accelerator program graduates these 20 startups. What’s next?**

It’s not a one-time thing, there are classes. The program lasts for three to four months, then startups graduate, much like university students, and the application process for the next program begins. That’s how we develop from class to class: first, second, third... At MIPT, my alma mater,



**A** business ecosystem grows around MGIMO University: outsiders, alumni and students with startups start getting in touch.

we’ve had nine classes. By the way, that was our very first program, and it’s still alive and kicking!

**MJ: Today Russia is under Western sanctions. How do you deal with this?** We are interested in creating an entrepreneurial environment in Russia and

in its development. Previously we focused on working in the global market, which is incomparably wider, now we focus on working with Russian entrepreneurs, both in the local market and abroad. When we talk about the technology business, startups, we ought to understand that the market in Russia is very narrow compared to the markets of China, India, America, Brazil, and doing business here is quite difficult. But we support building a Russian-speaking environment, keeping the company’s location in Russia, and creating an influential business in the external market as much as possible. We help our companies enter those countries that have not joined the sanctions, such as the UAE, Armenia, India, and then develop toward other markets through these hubs. That’s our strategy. ☑



# VOLODIN: “WE NEED A GROWING CREATIVE ECONOMY”

Photos by: ArtMasters, Igor Drobyshev

The Russian Center for Strategic Research forecasts that creative industries will account for 10 percent of Russia’s GDP by 2035. It’s an impressive figure. However, Borislav Volodin, Head of the ArtMasters National Open Creative Skills Competition, believes this forecast is overly optimistic. “Indeed, there are countries where the creative economy’s share has grown significantly,” he says, “as someone involved in the creative economy, I would be thrilled to see it grow so much in Russia. However, much depends on the government, the key investor in the creative economy, and other factors.”

**MJ: Isn’t the government involved enough?**  
The government has certainly taken many steps in this direction. For example, it offers various grants to creators to fund their projects, particularly through the Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives. In other words, the government is prepared to foster industry development from the bottom up rather than the top down, a crucial approach for the creative economy. The government has also launched a

**The government has approved a creative industries development roadmap. We are hopeful that these measures will foster the expansion of creative industries.**

number of projects to boost the creative economy’s growth. For example, at the federal level, our ArtMasters Competition promotes backstage jobs, which are not caught on camera or spotted on stage, but are necessary for high-quality productions—make-up artists, stylists, composers, camera operators, etc. I believe that the government is doing the right thing. However, in my opinion, the pace of offering financial incentives and launching various creative projects is insufficient.



But the government has approved a creative industries development roadmap to stimulate the creative sector of the economy, which includes legislative measures, and this is good.

**MJ: As far as we know, the ArtMasters Competitions are in full swing. You recently successfully held the individual competition finals for various media product creators. Are you satisfied with how your creative industries sector is developing?**  
This is the third year we’ve held the ArtMasters Competition. This year we had 20 skill competitions, with 10 finalists from different regions of Russia in each of them. For example, this year we introduced a new skill, Media Composer, which is in high demand and essential for complex stage productions. After the final stage, I was once again convinced of the enormous potential of our creative youth and the number of professionals we have who need to be integrated into existing projects and the industry as soon as possible. The competition does everything to shorten this distance: we invite members of industries, large companies, and potential employers as experts and spectators to the finals. They judge the work of the

**The majority of people with non-creative jobs undeniably have a creative spark within them, and it’s vital to allow it a chance to flourish.**

finalists, but it is also a way for them to notice the finalists or even approach them immediately.

**MJ: Do you offer career guidance for young people?**  
Indeed, we have an academy specifically designed to enhance the skill development of participants in the competition. It’s like an advanced training course with guest mentors, who are backstage professionals themselves. They are all practitioners involved in the most complex and large-scale creative projects. They are





good teachers as well – essentially, they are both instructors and practitioners, bridging education and work in creative industries. They impart knowledge that enables participants to more effectively utilize cutting-edge infrastructure. We are licensed as an educational institution, and the Ministry of Education finances the ArtMasters online courses. We have developed four-year training programs for various backstage professions, for example, in stage

We prepare young people for teamwork in the market, and sometimes they actually find their teammates at the competitions and continue working together afterward as teams of like-minded people. This allows them to integrate more quickly into the business.

**MJ: And to earn a name for themselves in their industry more quickly. Investors are more interested in teams as well. Undoubtedly. It is a more effective**



**We prepare young people for teamwork in the market, and sometimes they actually find their teammates, even soulmates.**

management, a very important and rare profession that has recently emerged due to the increasing complexity of stage technologies. A stage manager's functions include those of a technical director and a director; they guide the complex production process, coordinate it, and ensure smooth and fast stage assembly and disassembly for touring theater companies and concert performers.




approach, and the industry is more responsive – teams are viewed as ready-made project groups that can create products. Teams that have gone through the competition (we form 15 teams annually) are in demand among Moscow theaters. Last year, one of the winning teams was welcomed to the Drama Art School theater with their own play. At the competition, they did a 15-minute sketch, but for the theater's repertoire, they developed it into a full-fledged production of “Hard-Earned Bread” by Ostrovsky. So, we had five people joining the industry as theater residents.

**MJ: These days, everyone is talking about artificial intelligence. If we look beyond the horizon, what role do you**

**think it will play in creative industries?** I believe that in the future artificial intelligence will be inevitable as a form, but today it does not have a significant

**The creative process is very complex, irregular, and certainly cannot be programmed. AI will never be able to create a masterpiece, only a true creator is capable of that.**

impact on our work. People are the ones who nurture ideas and bring them to life – the very people who participate in our competitions. Artificial intelligence is currently manifested in the form of various applications, some additional software products that undoubtedly accelerate the process of creating designs and projects and improve it, but in no way replace it. I cannot say that there are any solutions today that could replace humans and creators. The creative process is very complex, irregular, and certainly cannot be programmed. It is impossible to manufacture creative products on a conveyor belt, so I am more than confident that AI will never be able to create a masterpiece, only a true creator is capable of that. 



Photos by: Universal University, Igor Drobyshev

# SITKOVSKAYA: “DEVELOPING CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT TOGETHER WITH MGIMO”

Marketing has always been a key driver of any business. “Now in this difficult time for Russia its importance has only increased,” says Maria Sitkovskaya, partner of the Universal University – a university of creative industries. “Disruption of logistical chains which is going on in the world will evidently require creating new brands, new services in this country, and there should be someone to provide brand awareness. This is what marketing is for – distribution, delivery, packaging. So, the importance of creative economy as a contributor to the GDP is unquestionable today.”

**MJ: Bright recognizable packaging, brand is the task of a designer or artist. Why did you choose to sign an agreement on joint bachelor’s degree program in marketing and communications with MGIMO rather than with, say, Stroganov Art School?** You are not the first to ask this question. True, in creative industries it is more logical to work with major cultural institutions. But we have a different principle: we seek to collaborate with

those who share the same educational principles. First of all, it is student-centered learning, focus on the student and their experience. This principle is in sync with that practiced at MGIMO, with which we have been cooperating since 2017 and have already done a few joint programs.

**MJ: On the other hand, MGIMO with its competences can complement education required in creative industry**



**U**niversal University and MGIMO signed an agreement to launch a joint bachelor’s program in digital marketing.

**by providing a classical international foundation – languages, region studies and so on.** Absolutely! Creative industry is impossible without a global context. To be integrated in it, to make a Russian product which will be interesting on the global market, you have to understand your own cultural code, to know what life is like in the regions as well as Moscow. It is also very important to be well aware of the international cultural background of your partners. Creative industries – fashion,



cinema, music, design, architecture, urban studies, games – are always teamwork. Joining international projects, joining a team with international partners it is important to be aware of their way of thinking, their cultural codes, their traditions. Today the key barriers any cultural products, or more generally – creative products, have are national identities and narrow targeting, which prevent reading these codes in an international context, due to, say, culturally specific jokes in comedies. A product sells better thanks to universal paradigms, if we mean a product that is supposed to become part of economy rather than only part of cultural heritage. This is where marketing comes in; it can make a product comprehensible, consumable, with its target audience ready to pay. Only then will we be able to create a new value, to create products understandable by many people across the globe. That is why we decided to launch a joint bachelor’s program together with MGIMO on digital marketing. It will be a practice-oriented course for future marketing specialists who aim to develop business in creative industries. The MGIMO-Universal University partnership will provide students with a high-quality business education, an excellent command of languages, which MGIMO has always been

**M**arketing makes a product consumable, understandable by many people across the globe, creates a new value.

famous for, knowledge of the history and culture of a particular region. At the same time students will immerse into creative industries as it was in our first experimental joint MBA program Management in Fashion Industry. Our second joint program, which is still on – Strategic Marketing and Management – involves interdisciplinary approach to studying contemporary competition principles and building added value with the help of various marketing tools. Digital marketing is an area which is changing very fast. Something which was effective yesterday, tomorrow will not be applicable; so, students’ main complaint is inertia and irrelevance of education. That is why it is essential for students to get up-to-date information, and the Universal University, which specializes in creative industries, practices education “here and now”.

Teachers prepare relevant briefs for students, teach them to solve up-to-date tasks thinking out of the box. Our huge creative community amounts to 8,000 students, doing 470 courses, in which they can work with creative industry representatives immediately, join collaborations. The synergy that we get from cooperation with MGIMO gives an additional drive to the educational process.

**MJ: Some forecasts predict that by 2035 the share of creative industries in Russia’s GDP will have amounted to 10%. Is this forecast real and under what conditions can it happen?** It is necessary to build an environment and tools for the convergence of technologies and creative industries, as well as for the development of entrepreneurship – this will create new products and stimulate the development of the economy. Our university is moving exactly in this direction; the Universal University’s strategy is to integrate entrepreneurship, business and tech in every course. We believe that only this way will we be able to ensure a significant shift in the economy. Our mission as an educational structure is to stimulate this interaction, providing opportunities for experiments at the junction of these areas. 





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# MGIMO: BEYOND THE FAMILIAR

Photos by: Igor Drobyshchev and Igor Lileev

On the eve of PriorityFest, a monument to Alexander Pushkin was unveiled on the Alley of Friendship in the courtyard of MGIMO. It was impossible in the olden days to live by poetry, and the great Russian poet devoted 17 years of his life to the diplomatic service.

MGIMO, the forge of diplomats, begins today its march into the field of creative industries. It is no coincidence that the 14th Russian International Studies Association (RISA) Convention held at MGIMO overlapped with PriorityFest – a festival of the best practices of the universities participating in the Priority 2030 state program, which encompasses many projects related to digital economy and creative technologies.



Strictly speaking, MGIMO is no longer a diplomatic university: only 50 to 60 people out of a total of 1,300 graduates of various master’s degree programs join the Foreign Ministry every year. It would be more accurate to call MGIMO an international university, and the main one in Russia. And thanks to its inclusion in the Priority 2030 state program, the range of educational tracks of the university has become truly diverse recently.

After a year of intensive work carried out in the priority format, it was logical to hold a show of best practices – PriorityFest, so that all those interested had, so to speak, their base of reference. And by going to a session of RISA held next door any festival participant had a chance to learn about developments in the field of international relations. And vice versa, internationalists could, by visiting the festival events, learn better and in more detail about how professionals are trained within the framework of the

Priority 2030 strategic projects.

MGIMO has come to the Priority 2030 program with its brand and unique experience of internationality. “Yet, we can play the role of a universal communicator in the country – and not only through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” says MGIMO Vice-Rector Artem Malgin. “There is an international component in any corporation, in any agency, and the task that we set before us within the Priority 2030 program is to emphasize this internationality, fulfill the need for it of this or that structure. We believe that through Priority 2030 MGIMO will be able to strengthen its leading position as an international university, directing its efforts to the development of the most significant tracks in the country.”

Two years ago, the state recognized that the five strategic projects proposed by MGIMO as a part of the Priority 2030 program can have a national economic impact in certain sectors. These are global applied research in international relations,



**A**natoly Torkunov:  
“Priority 2030 is a powerful motivation to follow the path of networking between universities. I believe this is the main track of developing higher education as such.”

development of Russian-language education abroad (Russian International School project), Institute of World Agricultural Markets, training agricultural attachés, the ESG-transformation and sustainable development project, and, finally, training personnel for tourism, hospitality and development of recreational zones. By implementing these projects MGIMO helps the state to find its economic driver; it strives to move forward with this driver, build up its capacities and develop partnerships.

“With the Priority 2030 money,” says Artem Malgin, “we implement 173 different projects that fall within these five strategic tracks, as well as the so-called institutional projects that are mandatory: without them, it is impossible

to implement the strategic projects. For instance, without digitalization, it will not be possible to implement ideas related, say, to ESG-transformation.”

In other words, the Priority 2030 program is aimed at creating 3.0-format universities, emphasizes Irina Zhukova, acting director of FSASA Sociocenter, so that universities, seeking additional funding, promote product-oriented projects. “This means,” she explains, “that the process should culminate in a result – a knowledge-intensive product or technology. Ultimately, University 3.0 is a model of a university that through the creation of new business, technology transfer and commercialization of academic activities contributes to the social and economic as well as scientific and technological development of the country. In such a university, science is an integral part of educational process.”

Olga Troitskaya, director of a project office that administers the Priority 2030 program, lists the key project management skills necessary for successful implementation: “These are, first, the ability to manage time in a multitasking environment; second, the ability to break down complex projects into specific tasks and manage communication within the team so that all performers understand their roles correctly; third, advanced IT skills, the ability to work in a digital environment,







collect and store digital data and work with various databases. Finally, it is the ability to cooperate and build collaborations.” This last skill is strategic by nature. One can, of course, invest in building up one’s competencies in order to implement a project, but this strategy, regardless of how fascinating it is, is too time-consuming. A shortcut to success is in finding partners who already have the necessary competencies and building a partnership with them.

It was the development of these skills that most of the master classes and sessions at PriorityFest were aimed at. The collocation ‘digital department’, which has become trendy, was often heard at the sessions covering the Priority 2030. Oleg Kachanov, deputy head of the Ministry of Digital Development, one of the two agencies responsible for

**P**riority 2030 is aimed at creating 3.0-format universities that promote product-oriented projects.



the implementation of the Priority 2030 program (the other is the Ministry of Education and Science, which allocates the money), spoke on this innovation. “Students receive additional IT qualifications in digital departments. Training is long – from 9 to 22 months with a workload of up to 250 hours, but during this time students get skills enabling them to become professionals who may be of interest to the market.” MGIMO knows not by hearsay what digital department is. Speaking at the



plenary session “The Role of Universities in the Social and Economic as well as Scientific and Technological Development of a Country”, MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov said, “Due to our strategic cooperation with Sber we are making good progress with the digital department: a large group of our students are studying at Sber’s School 21. The higher the IT-literacy of the students is, the better. Today high-class IT people are not even a social group, but an elite class. It is hard for me to judge, but I am convinced that students, whether they are humanities or economists, should go through IT training



**M** GIMO has come to the Priority 2030 program with its brand and unique experience of internationality.



and acquire the kind of literacy that will allow them to feel confident in the face of this elite class.”

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No less interesting was the program of the 14th RISA Convention “World. Beyond Convention”. The plenary session was attended by Andrei Fursenko, Aide to the President of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Bogdanov, Special Representative of the President for the Middle East and Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister,



Dmitry Afanasiev, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education, Fyodor Voytlovsky, Director of IMEMO RAS, Andrei Melville, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Higher School of Economics, Kirill Babaev, Director of the Institute of China and Modern Asia RAS, Nazih El Naggari, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Russia, Unuvar Necdet, Rector of Ankara University, Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the UN European Economic Commission, Borislav Volodin, Director of the National Open Championship of Creative Competences Art Masters. Academician Anatoly





Torkunov, Rector of MGIMO, moderated the discussion.

The Rector gave a general assessment of the global situation and outlined the current social, economic and political trends in shaping the international agenda. Referring to MGIMO's participation in the Priority 2030 state program, he pointed out that "apart from financial support, it is also a powerful motivation to follow the path of networking, creating network programs with leading universities that allow us to solve a variety of tasks within the association of universities. Today these are unified programs with roadmaps, and we have obligations and KPIs to implement these maps... It seems to me that this is the main direction of developing higher education in Russia as such."

This year's RISA Convention was a true symphony of events. An Art Masters – MGIMO round table "Creative Industries. New Context", the 2nd Russian Open International Conference on Sustainable Development and ESG-Transformation, a conference "Russia – ASEAN. Practice and Methodology of Modern Regional Studies", an expert meeting Russia – Africa, a discussion of topical issues of international legal research, as well as a meeting of the Russian Business Education Association were a part of the RISA Convention. 📸



The initiative to create this higher education institution came from Moscow Region Governor Andrey Vorobyov. MGIMO-Med, a medical university, was established by MGIMO and the Mother and Child Group of Companies (MD Medical Group), with Academician Mark Kurtser, General Director of MD Medical Group, becoming its Rector. This is a unique project, MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov notes. “Many people ask why MGIMO decided to

good communication skills to interact with their foreign colleagues. And I am sure that together with our distinguished physicians we will succeed in creating a completely unique new medical school of general medicine on the basis of MGIMO.” Why was MGIMO-Med established at MGIMO? “I would single out several reasons that prompted the creation of MGIMO-Med,” Mark Kurtser says. “Macroeconomic, geopolitical and local. All the three elements are connected

with the pandemic, which radically changed the country’s approach to healthcare, when an acute lack of medical staff became apparent and medical doctors fighting for every patient began to be called ‘medical heroes’. But the pandemic gave a boost to technology: digital medicine



Mother and Child Medical Group headquarters in Lapino, Moscow Region

take up medical subjects. The thing is that General Medicine is absolutely international, and it requires very solid ‘internationality’, as they say today. There is a good example: telemedicine, which is being developed today, demands that professional knowledge and skills of medical doctors from different countries and clinics be consolidated, and this requires that our medical specialists master foreign languages and develop



Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, Igor Lileev

# THE FORGE OF INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL DOCTORS

MGIMO-Med was opened on the Odintsovo campus of the University

started its development, telemedicine began to be introduced, virtual methods of consultation appeared... All these factors prompted the decision to open MGIMO-Med. “Finally, this decision may be attributed to the foresight of Rector Anatoly Torkunov, who, due to his experience and views, came to understand the need for a medical school within such a large educational institution as MGIMO. “MGIMO is one of the leading universities where foreign languages and social sciences are taught. And we,

**Mark Kurtser: “We want to make sure that every graduate is highly regarded both in the Russian and international medical markets.”**

for our part, will try to give the best possible individual medical education. An individual approach, the best teachers and clinical bases – all these factors will allow us to educate a new generation of physicians. “We have established a medical school, which will at first be a school graduating physicians in General Medicine. For the time being, there will be no pediatrics, dentistry, or other divisions in this structure, but there will be the most sought-after direction.” Unless one counts the MGIMO





International Institute of Energy Policy and Diplomacy, MGIMO-Med is probably the first such phenomenon both in Russia and abroad – a medical school within a university that trains international specialists.

“It is due to this approach,” Mark Kurtser says, “that MGIMO turns into a real university. I believe that establishing other schools – say, mathematics or physics and mathematics, which are fundamental to the activities of any university, – is not too far away.

“Indeed, MGIMO is a unique university with a unique vibe. After all, apart from higher school standards, it teaches according to its own standards as well. For instance, there should be no more than eight people in a language group, and there will be 11 students in the medical statistics and computer science classes in the computer lab. That way they can get to know each other more quickly.”

The educational process at MGIMO-Med will be carried out in the Lapino Clinical Hospital, on the MGIMO Odintsovo Campus, as well as at the partners’ sites. The Ministry of Health of the Moscow Region has allocated a grant to study at MGIMO-Med in 2022–2023. Applicants

**A**natoly Torkunov: “I am sure we will succeed in creating a completely unique new medical school of general medicine on the basis of MGIMO.”

scoring a total of more than 250 points at the Unified State Exam will receive a grant worth 75 percent of the annual tuition fee, applicants scoring from 200 to 250 points will receive a grant worth 50 percent of the annual tuition fee (subject to work in hospitals in the Moscow Region).

General Medicine educational program was designed in collaboration with experts from other universities as well as doctors of the Mother and Child complex on the basis of the best Russian medical universities’ programs.

Practical training will start in the first year. In addition to the basic

disciplines, the emphasis will be placed on developing a culture of physician-patient communication, as well as in-depth study of the English language.

Students in the program will enjoy all the benefits of studying on the MGIMO campus – they will have access to sports and recreation facilities, canteens and cafes, a modern library and a reading room, and will have an opportunity to participate in events, master classes and university extracurricular activities. Besides, a separate campus with a large number of laboratories is being built for MGIMO-Med.

The MGIMO-Med educational program is based on the network principle, i.e. there is one university – MGIMO – and many specialized resource centers where training takes place. Choosing leading medical institutions and research centers and working with them is the best road to take. And this is how it will operate in practice.

MGIMO will house all the basic theoretical departments, such as of biology, Latin, chemistry and languages, as well as general education departments, such as of physical education. The departments of histology and anatomy will further be established, and they will

be located both on the campus and at the site of the cadaver course, which is the detailed study of anatomy. “A good doctor knows anatomy by heart,” Mark Kurtser says. “The first years of medical school are associated with cramming; one has to know every cusp of a bone, the place where this or that nerve or vessel runs. Without it, no matter how well one knows, let’s say, the Krebs cycle or other biochemical and physiological processes, a graduate will not be a fully competent doctor. We are also creating clinical departments – those of general surgery,

**M**GIMO-Med educational program is based on the network principle, i.e. there is one university – MGIMO – and many specialized resource centers.

obstetrics and gynecology, oncology.” MD Medical Group is one of the leading actors in the Russian private healthcare market, comprising 49 modern medical institutions, including 10 multidisciplinary high-tech hospitals and 39 outpatient clinics with extensive diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical resources.



Beginning its history with medical care in the field of women and children’s health, the Group has been successfully implementing a multidisciplinary approach for several years already, each year expanding the areas of patient treatment.

MD Medical Group offers a wide range of medical services covering such in-demand areas as cardiology, oncology, trauma, dentistry, urology and others. In the future, the company’s management also intends to introduce new areas that it finds potential in.

“We are interested,” Mark Kurtser says, “in making sure that every MGIMO-Med graduate is competitive, able to work in a multicultural environment, is the best and is highly regarded both in the Russian and international medical markets.”



# MELVILLE: “THE GOAL OF OUR CONSORTIUM IS POLITICAL ATLAS 2.0”

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Lileev

MGIMO and HSE University signed an agreement on creating a consortium to realize a scientific project entitled “Political Atlas of the Modern World 2.0” as part of the latest St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. This idea has a backstory related to the time when Andrei Melville, Academic Supervisor and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of HSE University, was Vice-Rector for Science and Research at MGIMO University. He pioneered this project.



**MJ: Could you tell us the backstory of the Atlas, please?**  
This project was launched at MGIMO in 2005. I remember my colleagues from *Expert* Journal and the Institute of Social Project Planning come to me with the idea of developing an original Russian “democracy index”, as they put it. I replied that I was ready to give it a thought, but instead of one index suggested developing several ones, that is looking at the task at

hand from a broader perspective, and they agreed.  
**MJ: What attracted you in that idea? Was it something groundbreaking?**  
Well, I thought that a combination of indices of that kind would give us an opportunity to put every sovereign state in its particular place in the system of modern world order, and that was a new idea. Moreover, I believed that we should

**O**ur main idea is to try to reveal the hidden structure of modern world order, to find out the ways in which states are interrelated within this structure; we should do it on the basis of objective evidence, first and foremost statistics.

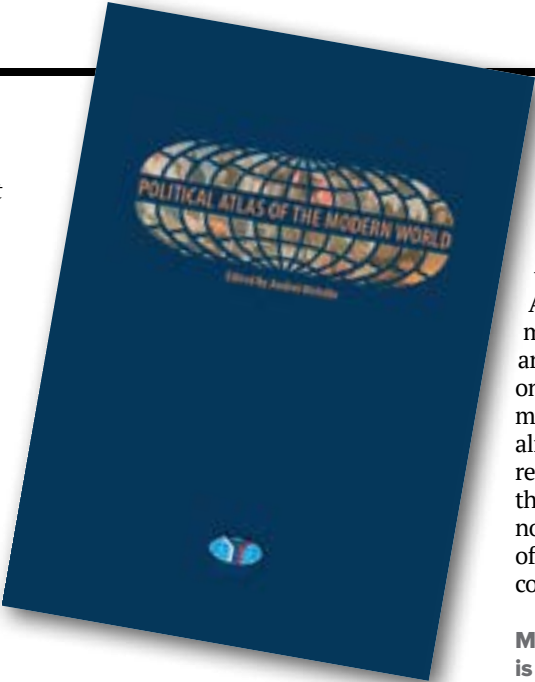
study the place of a state not only from the perspective of its “regime” traits, i.e. whether it is a democracy or autocracy, but considering a lot of different parameters which characterize modern states. In other words we should give a comprehensive assessment, which will result in a political “atlas” consisting of various “maps”.  
Our main idea is to try to reveal the hidden structure of modern world order, to find out the ways in which states are interrelated within this structure; we should do it on the basis of objective evidence, first and foremost statistics. We have developed five indices based on methods of multivariate statistical analysis, namely those of statehood, external and internal challenges, potential for international impact, quality of life and institutional foundations of democracy. We have collected massive empirical databases, and used discriminant analysis and principal component analysis as research methods. As a result, in 2007 we published a collective monograph *Political*

*Atlas of the Modern World: An Experiment in Multidimensional Statistical Analysis of the Political Systems of Modern States.* Later, a prestigious British publishing company Wiley-Blackwell published an updated and expanded translation of the atlas. Besides, there was published a four-volume encyclopedia *Political Systems of Modern States.*

**MJ: When did you realize that the project is outdated and version 2.0 is needed?**  
Personally, I wouldn’t speak about the project being outdated. The thing is that empirical data for the atlas were collected for 2005, and as a result we received a kind of ‘photo’ of the world structure as of 2005. Later, when I was already working for HSE University, we started thinking whether it was possible to create a dynamic picture instead of another “photo”, that is to trace the dynamics of changes that states are undergoing and study their place in the changing structure of the world order. So this is the main goal of the new project, “Political Atlas of the Modern World 2.0”.

**MJ: To achieve this goal MGIMO is creating a consortium with HSE University – what for?**  
I welcome the idea of creating a consortium that MGIMO University has put forth, as it seems to be quite an effective and forward-looking decision. This form of cooperation is interesting and useful both for MGIMO and HSE University, and it can provide for synergy of the two potent university structures.

**MJ: What will be new in the next version of the Political Atlas in terms of methodology and the format used?**  
It is obvious that a lot has changed in the world since 2005 – 2007 both in the countries themselves and in relations between them. Drastic changes in the modern world order necessitate a dynamic perspective on the issue. But dynamics is just one aspect that must be considered; a lot depends on the methods we rely on while working on the project. And here there are a lot of problems, not only empirical ones, but fundamental too. From empirical perspective, we must be aware of the fact that statistical data always lag behind and they are by definition incomplete. No doubt, there are ways to fill these lacunae, but



**W**e decided to create a dynamic picture instead of a “photo” to trace the dynamics of changes that states are undergoing. This is the main goal of the Political Atlas of the Modern World 2.0.

they reduce reliability of conclusions. And there are even more problems with statistical data processing methods themselves.  
In fact, I’m trying to convey the following fundamental idea: there are no ideal or universal methods of statistical processing of empirical data; subjective research preconditions always affect the result. That’s why we are going to try different research methods in the new project.  
**MJ: What will HSE University’s contribution to the consortium be? What are the unique academic and research characteristics of HSE University that can make the project truly innovative?**  
Each member of consortium contributes its potential and strengths to reach a common goal. From my point of view, MGIMO has a unique cross-cultural potential which will be of utmost importance for updating and expanding the project on creation of encyclopedic cross-cultural reference book, including its transformation into a regularly

updated online version. It is also evident that MGIMO will add a valuable international perspective to the studies planned.  
As for HSE University, I think its most valuable assets for the project are theoretical and methodological ones. We have an extremely strong methodological school here, and as I’ve already mentioned combining various research methods is a big challenge for the project. Another challenge which is no less significant is conceptualization of the ongoing global changes, from comparative perspective as well.

**MJ: Today’s geopolitical environment is totally different from the one 15 years ago. What effect is it likely to have on the Atlas, you think?**  
Indeed, this is a serious, if not to say central problem for political science and international relations today – the problem which is both political and scientific. What is the logic and dynamics of objective factors and indicators of the states’ position in the world order, and what are their subjective strategies and discretionary decisions that escape measurement by statistical and other stringent methods at hand? This important area is almost a complete terra incognita in modern research. We are going to raise some of these issues in our new project and look for possible solutions.

**MJ: Which new factors are you going to take into account while compiling the Atlas? Lately, they’ve been popping up like mushrooms after a spring rain. Take, for instance, Trump’s victory at presidential elections, which was totally impossible according to some heavyweight analysts. Or Biden’s sudden coming to power, although he wasn’t going to run for president; he was elected by US postal service, as a popular joke goes. Or take Black Lives Matter movement, which polarized American society even more. A recent poll suggests that 51 per cent of respondents are sure that civil war is quite possible in the near future. Surely, there appear new factors which ultimately result in a completely different architecture of the world order and relations between states. To determine and formulate these factors in the new Atlas is an extremely challenging task that we are really enthusiastic about.**



# LEVITIN: “EMPHASIS ON THE ASIAN DIRECTION OF SPORTS DIPLOMACY”

Photos by: Igor Lileev

Almost one hundred international sport organizations and federations have announced the suspension of Russian athletes from participation in international competitions under their auspices, as well as the cancellation of sporting events in Russia, the Russian Ministry of Sport reports. Certainly, one may say: we are proud, we will withstand as we have the truth on our side. But the thing is that sports cannot be put on hold. “Naturally, we have no right to give up and wait doing nothing,” agrees Igor Levitin, Aide to the President of the Russian Federation, who delivered a lecture at MGIMO on the development of international sport cooperation.

**MJ: Can indeed the maxim “sport is outside politics” be no longer relevant?** Unfortunately, today’s formats of international sport cooperation have been subjected to political manipulation. Certain states exert both overt and covert influence advancing their interests, using, among others, the channels of so-called autonomous organizations, employing both political and financial leverage. And we need to realize that the point of no return has been passed, which means that the task of promoting true values and establishing up-to-date principles of international sport cooperation rests with us.

This is why today we must make twice as much effort to further the principle of free access, of openness: the athlete, as an independent person, enjoys the right to choose the competition to take part in. Unlawful bans, non-admissions and suspensions go against the principle of competitive sport. The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin set tasks in 2022 to implement international sport cooperation in new formats, formulate new approaches to developing high achievement and professional sport, establishing and conducting commercially attractive multistage sport tournaments that would involve foreign athletes and sport clubs (teams) and envisaging a possible monetary remuneration for Russian and foreign participants. I should note that our country’s leadership takes quite specific political and practical steps to create conditions for the implementation of athletes’ rights. In particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin and President of the PRC Xi Jinping announced on 15 December 2021 that



**I hope that within the framework of cooperation with MGIMO a strong emphasis in training experts will be placed on the development of the Asian direction.**

the Years of Russian-Chinese Cooperation in Physical Culture and Sports were to be held in 2022-2023. And our President put forward an initiative at the meeting of the SCO Heads of State Council held in Samarkand on 16 September 2022 to establish an association of sport organizations under the aegis of the SCO to hold major sporting events.

**MJ: Such a mechanism would allow us to be free from the dictatorship of international sport federations.** Exactly. Establishing such a global association, however, will become possible only when national associations in other SCO countries are formed. Their activities will expand communication and competition opportunities of athletes from the SCO and other states, facilitate the development of a dialogue based on respect and equality as well as help to form an international independent and vertically integrated sport movement of the SCO countries, in no way related to the hijacked system existing today. Once an association of sport organizations in Russia is formed, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will hold consultations with representatives of India, China and South Africa with a view to establish national associations.

**MJ: As a matter of fact, the Republic**

**of India has assumed the SCO chairmanship for the coming period.** That is absolutely right. And the next meeting of the SCO Heads of State Council will take place on 24–25 June 2023 in New Delhi. To get ready for it, work is under way to include provisions in the final declaration of the SCO Heads of State Council on establishing a SCO commission on physical culture and sport, and also on supporting the activities of a SCO Global Association of Sports Organizations, which will have been created by then, I hope.

**MJ: This year marks the 70th anniversary of the debut of Soviet athletes at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Will this glorious history be indeed cut short at the turn of an epoch that we are now witnessing?** The question you have asked is a difficult one. Our country ranks second in the world by the total number of Olympic medals won; our athletes have won over 2,000 medals of various classes, with more than 740 medals being gold. An extensive Anthology of the Russian Olympic Movement dedicated to the history and role of our country in forming and developing the movement was published in 2020, on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the 22nd Olympic Games in Moscow and the 15th anniversary of the Russian Olympians Foundation. We provided MGIMO with several copies.

Russian athletes have been suspended from participating in international competitions in the current sports season, which means they will miss the first stage of qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Some international sport federations, such as the International Volleyball Federation, have already announced that our teams are not admitted to the qualifying competitions. The International Skating Union published a list of referees for 2023, and there is not a single representative of Russia on it. In this situation it is highly probable that our team is going to miss the upcoming 2024 Games in France, 2026 Games in Italy and maybe even 2028 Games in the USA. I have, as I see it, an important and obvious point to make. It is only by uniting with those sensible on the planet and by using our willpower that we will be able to counter the efforts of the manipulators. And I strongly believe that we will succeed.



**The point of no return has been passed; the task of establishing updated principles of international sport cooperation rests with us.**

**MJ: What is your assessment of MGIMO’s contribution to the fulfillment of tasks related to the development of international sport cooperation?** I would like to express my appreciation to MGIMO and its Rector, Academician Torkunov for the fact that close cooperation between the Russian Olympians Foundation and MGIMO

resulted in the introduction of an educational retraining program entitled “World Sport: Legal Regulation, Positioning, Communication” in 2015 and of the master’s degree program in Sports Diplomacy that followed. Four hundred fifty five people from more than 40 all-Russian sports federations have graduated from this program since then. I am sure that such a large group of experts will contribute significantly to implementing the above-mentioned tasks, as well as to developing not only domestic but also global sport movement. And I hope that within the framework of cooperation with MGIMO a strong emphasis will be placed on the development of the Asian direction where working contacts to establish partnership exchange programs with the most prominent universities in China and India will be created in the near future. ☑



# ON A NEW TRAJECTORY: REFORMING MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS AT MGIMO LAW SCHOOL

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Drobyshev,  
Tatiana Chekhranova

Recently, the International Law School has carried out a serious reform of the master's degree program. Why? That was the question we asked the MGIMO First Vice-Rector Gennadii Tolstopiatenko. "Conditions were ripe for this," he said. "On the one hand, in the modern working environment, lawyers are required to have a more flexible combination of mandatory and elective subjects. On the other hand, a group of lecturers from the middle and younger generations emerged, having many years of experience in the classrooms and led by the young Dean Nikita Molchakov."

**MJ: He was born in August 1991, being the same age as the new Russia, which is symbolic.**

I agree. They have a different view of how to teach modern students who can't imagine their studies without gadgets. At the same time, they understand that they shouldn't abandon all the previous practices, the past achievements of the School in terms of teaching methods, which are quite up to date. You just need to bear in mind that today's students perceive the information mainly through visual aids. If you ignore it, the teacher and the student will not hear each other.

**MJ: Why is this reform unique?**

It is based on a fundamentally different approach. What did we have before the reform?

Each department had its own master's degree program, with its own focus. The narrow focus for master's training has always been considered natural and the only possible option, but today things changed, as the knowledge graduates receive with a master's degree focusing on a narrow area is not enough. When they start working – be it in a state agency or a law firm – as young experts, at first they have to carry out the assignments from senior lawyers or their head. Therefore, they should know administrative, civil, tax, and customs law. Most importantly, the more versatile and complex the student training is, the easier it will be for them to navigate in legal databases, which are part and parcel of today's work.

Also, the analysis of the legal situation should always be comprehensive, since, as a rule, the client – an individual or a legal

entity – is interested in the whole picture rather than one aspect of it, they need to know how to solve the problem or how to avoid it. An integrated approach is most in demand today, so our students, who are already successfully competing with

**T**oday, we live in a different world. But we still teach students to answer the questions they are asked professionally, regardless of the conditions they find themselves in.

graduates of Moscow State University and other law schools, after a versatile training will be able to swiftly address complex issues.

**MJ: But do the programs keep the narrow focus?**

Yes, the reform introduces the following curriculum.


In the first term, students of all master's degree programs study the same subjects, approved by all the departments, without which it's impossible to provide basic training for a master's degree student in law. During the second term, students focus on their major subject, as it was before the reform. Before the third term, students choose a set of subjects that

they need out of seven modules, ending up with a combination: private, public, international, criminal law... After all, in the second year, many students already know where they are going to work, so they choose the subjects they need in this place of work. This approach allows, first, to make the program comprehensive; second, to keep the narrow focus; third, students get more opportunities to independently determine their own educational trajectory.

**MJ: It is important not to lose traditions, the MGIMO Law School, due to reforms.**

The training of lawyers specializing in international law at the School is impossible without these traditions. The MGIMO Law School is a complex of international, foreign and Russian law that our students learn about. Speaking about the school of thought, here we talk about two areas: the school of international law and the school of comparative law.

Despite the changes that have occurred in our lives over the past 30 years, the School has kept these schools of thought and the approach. It is our major advantage, which we hold on to, which we develop and strengthen: an expert in international law should know both the domestic law and the law of foreign countries.

New generations bring a new perspective and, thank God, support continuity, which allows us to maintain the originally established relevant educational philosophy, wisely combine conservatism and innovation. It is what allows us to strengthen and develop the School. 





# ORLOV: “PIR CENTER GETS A PLATFORM AT MGIMO”

Photos by: archives of PIR Center and Vladimir Orlov

Academic diplomacy and international studies circles received news: the reputable PIR Center specializing in nuclear non-proliferation and international security has come to MGIMO. “For 29 years PIR Center has been an independent organization and will always be,” pointed out its director Vladimir Orlov. “But now we have a new platform at MGIMO, and our cooperation is becoming closer.”

**MJ: Even more so, given that MGIMO is your alma mater, isn't it?**  
I am proud of it. I graduated from MGIMO in 1990, and in 1994 I founded PIR Center. Our constituent documents have the signature of Anatoly Torkunov, the MGIMO Rector. What MGIMO and our Center have in common is exclusiveness. MGIMO has always been exclusive in terms of personalized learning environment, and PIR Center has always been exclusive in its aspiration not to embrace the whole range of international issues, it has never been “omnivorous”. We pursue the line of research at which we are good – applied studies in international security, as well as the junction of science and education in this field.

On the MGIMO premises we are to join Priority 2030, which is being implemented at MGIMO, we are to become part of the academic diplomacy

**Since the foundation of PIR Center, MGIMO has been our good, reliable partner. But now we have a new platform here, and our cooperation is becoming closer.**

and political science hub, to join the consortium which is being created under the program. We have carried out several successful joint projects, but the main one, which has been on for six years already, is an academic one: WMD Nonproliferation, Nuclear Policy and Global Security dual master's degree program.

**MJ: I remember that nine years ago in Montreux you signed a trilateral agreement on this program between MGIMO, PIR Center and the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Has anything changed in this cooperation since the special military operation in Ukraine began?**  
It's unbelievable but nothing has changed. Everything has been stopped or suspended elsewhere, but the agreement signed in Montreux in 2014 (also not an easy year for Russia) is still valid and is yielding fruit. The only thing that has changed is the name of our partner – now it is The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey; it still is a major world-class think tank in nuclear nonproliferation. So, two world-class universities and PIR Center combined their efforts to implement a program unrivaled in terms of academic quality. They provide their expertise and faculties, their knowledge and materials to develop this unique program. Over these years we have got to know each other better, which is especially important for universities giving a dual degree. It is a two-year master's course, with one term at MGIMO, Russia, and two more in Monterey, California. Some call it Monteparadise as it is a most beautiful place on the Pacific coast. The fourth term is the most exciting one as it involves internships across the globe: at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rosatom, the UN Headquarters in New York, the Institute for Disarmament



Meeting with Rafael Grossi, IAEA Director General, in Vienna

Research in Geneva. Some American students get internships at the US Department of Energy, the State Department... We are training practice-oriented people for practice-oriented organizations – ministries and expert institutions of Russia, China, Mexico, Ireland, the UK, the USA and others. We are keeping up our teamwork, with Russians, Europeans and Americans collaborating for one simple goal – to avert nuclear war, to competently use our knowledge about nuclear weapons preventing it from spreading. We are also looking into ways to develop nuclear energy. Despite the aggravation of the international situation, the Middlebury Institute, after consultations with PIR Center and MGIMO, decided to continue the program. I must admit we are bracing ourselves for certain logistical challenges that the arrival of foreigners from the West may involve. I believe we will cope, as we did during the pandemic. And even now, despite the monstrous visa problems, our Russian students are studying in California.

**MJ: Now a question to an expert: how high has the risk of nuclear war grown in today's complicated situation?**  
Unfortunately, the question is natural as many people are concerned about this risk today. It has really increased, the European continent being far from peace and calm, but I'd like to point out that over the past decades quite responsible practices of dealing with nuclear weapons have been developed. Even when there is no dialog between the US and Russia on other issues, the dialog on nuclear threats is still on. The risks are certainly increasing, but remember this issue is responsibly controlled as the very survival of humanity depends on nuclear weapons as well as the fate of the whole world. This issue is viewed as a separate problem requiring maximum accuracy from the military, diplomats, and politicians, as well as from journalists, who sometimes provide sensational, distorted coverage of events. For instance, they focus mainly on Europe, but in fact the risks of the use of nuclear weapons or nuclear proliferation are higher in three other regions – South Asia, in North-East Asia and the Middle East. It is where the tension is really serious. For our students to be able to understand this, we also provide them



**On the MGIMO premises we have joined the Priority 2030 program, we are going to join the consortium that is being created within the program.**

insights into the regional aspects of nuclear nonproliferation.

**MJ: What is your forecast?**  
The use of nuclear weapons in the special military operation is unreasonable, unnecessary and not considered. Limited use of nuclear weapons is impossible as it will end up in a total nuclear war and total annihilation. As to risks that I see, there may be some. Suppose common sense of the US, our potential adversary, fails, we will have to carry out a counterstrike.





But I hope Washington has no insane or suicidal people. Another risk is very serious – accident. I do not mean someone pushing some wrong button by mistake, it is unlikely. However, misinterpretation of information (remember we are at information war with the US) is possible. So, it would be irresponsible to say that there is no risk at all. Nonetheless, I

**Responsible practices of dealing with nuclear weapons have been developed. US – Russia dialog on nuclear threats is going on.**

would conclude that the probability of the use of nuclear weapon is low. Sooner or later the acute military phases of conflicts end, diplomacy and arms control will continue. There will simply be other formats and a completely different architecture of contracts – some will disappear, new ones will be made. It may take quite a lot of time, and we will actually have a chance for a stunningly interesting, although emotionally challenging analysis of the prospects and contours of the new arms control architecture, which in fact we are already doing today.



2022. On the Andaman Sea shore

**MJ: The Priority 2030 program is large. As PIR Center is going to participate in it at MGIMO, how are you going to contribute to its implementation? What are your plans?**  
Not just plans. We have already started their implementation. For me the key feature of our partnership is close cooperation of science and education. Moving on from the educational aspect to the scientific one, PIR Center is analyzing the prospects of nuclear nonproliferation, US – Russia dialog in this field, potential risks. The research results are set forth in our reports and in a monograph which PIR Center prepared in cooperation with MGIMO. It is to be released in English this summer by Palgrave Macmillan, which is part of Springer Publishing Company. Most of the authors are fresh graduates of our dual degree program and PIR Center workers – a synergy of promising youth and the experienced generation. The introductions were written by Anatoly Torkunov, MGIMO Rector, and William Potter, Professor at Middlebury Institute of International Studies, foreign member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Just

**PIR Center is constantly analyzing nuclear nonproliferation prospects and risks that may emerge.**

a year ago my colleague co-editor Sergey Semenov was our master’s student and in this short period of time he has made remarkable progress. I really enjoyed working with him on the monograph, but I must admit he had to work like a dog. Our standards are really high. We run international schools on global security. We have already had 21 schools – training courses for target audience, not necessarily students: young diplomats, postgraduates, military, intelligence and security officials. PIR Center provides this exclusive tailor-made training in cooperation with MGIMO. What makes PIR Center schools so exclusive and

renowned? For 25 students there are as many teachers, if not even more. However, our teachers are not just lecturers, they participate in the dialog with students. Our students are young Russian specialists from MGIMO and other Russian universities. Though teaching is in Russian (it is our principle, we are proud that Russian is a language of international communication, of the UN, an important language for global security issues), our schools traditionally have young specialists from abroad: from the USA to Syria, from Finland to Kazakhstan, from North Macedonia to the Donetsk People’s Republic... Every year the geography changes, but what is unchangeable is that Russian students will never have to test concepts and ideas on themselves and convince themselves that they are right. The learning environment will not be sterile! The rule of PIR Center is to develop the students’ critical thinking in constant discussions, workshops, foresights, case studies – it is really hard work. The school has long been a brand, which even our competitors admit. If you ask someone in, say, HSE University about the school, they are sure to answer that it is a reputable product.





# SUSHENTSOV: “OUR SCHOOL IS THE COUNTRY’S NATIONAL POINT OF PRIDE”

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Drobyshev

At MGIMO, deans of the School of International Relations were traditionally homegrown – not so long ago, only an MGIMO graduate who preferably graduated from the School itself, steeped in the institution’s traditions, could fill the position. Andrey Sushentsov is the first dean to have graduated from a different university.

**MJ: As a graduate of the Faculty of History of Moscow State University (MSU), you have, so to speak, broken this longstanding tradition. But the task is to develop the School while preserving its traditions. How do you plan to tackle this challenge?**  
We keep in mind that the School of International Relations was established at MSU as its 13th faculty (school). Many of MGIMO’s first professors came from the MSU Faculty of History: Evgeny Tarle, Alexei Efimov, Alexei Narochnitsky, and others. If we look at the curriculum offered to the first students in 1943, we will see that more than half of the courses were devoted to historical disciplines, the history of the country and the region, political systems, foreign policy, world history, the history of international relations, etc. This allowed the training of a new generation of Soviet diplomats – the first MGIMO graduates who eventually became key figures in complex negotiations on arms control, détente, and regional crises. Their training, rooted in a solid foundation of historical courses, allowed them to absorb the essence of the principle of historicism and identify cause-and-effect relationships in the flow of events, as well as find patterns in history to then apply them in foreign policy. Therefore, I perceive my leadership at the School of International Relations as a revival of traditions and a return to the origins of what MGIMO initially was. What makes our university special is that historical knowledge here is of an applied character; we offer education in applied humanities. Our graduates view history as a laboratory of experiences from national elites who encountered various problems in the past and sought solutions to overcome them. It is important to remember that the language spoken by the political elites of leading countries is not the language of money, institutions, or laws, but the language of history. Political elites view their own strategy in the context of long waves of development of their countries. And at the same time, they often look to the future, wondering, “What will our descendants say?”, and they seek guidance from their ancestors, asking, “How would they judge us?” I believe that this is the main starting point for making decisions on key issues of national development.

**MJ: You mentioned that modern Western elites attach great importance**

**to what their ancestors might have thought about their actions. It means they also must be guided by the principle of historicism. However, the quality of Western elites has declined so much over the past few decades that it seems there is no room to talk about historicism or even common sense in the usual everyday meaning of the word.**  
That’s true. Speaking of the principle of historicism, I believe it manifests itself greatly in the Russian strategic and foreign policy traditions. President Vladimir Putin’s address on the eve of the announcement of the special military operation was essentially a history lecture, during which he explained Russia’s perspective on the situation and the logic behind the decisions made. The president emphasized that we are addressing the

**Rector Torkunov formulated the task succinctly: make the School more modern, while preserving the key traditions of the university.**

historical task of preventing Ukraine from turning into an anti-Russia, an anti-Russian stronghold. We are working to prevent the formation of a counterweight on its territory, which would constantly divert our attention, draw resources, and hamper development. This historical decision was not made spontaneously; it was not based on some last-minute calculations, but on a strategic understanding of our country’s role and place on the world stage and its long-term interests, as well as a sober assessment of the significant negative consequences that this decision would entail. Many of our strategic interests will be severely affected, as this is not a choice between a good and a bad option, but between a bad and a worse one. Looking at our Western colleagues in this context, it becomes clear that not all countries emphasize historicism in their long-term planning. Instead, it is mostly the leading nations that have a strong link with their past experience of great power

politics, where the use of force is viewed as another means to accomplish political objectives. This has become a defining criterion to determine who the leaders are today. I believe that our negotiations with the US will take place significantly earlier than with the EU, as there are no countries in the EU that could make a big bet in this game. They are, so to speak, not betting “anything of their own”. The principle of historicism and a long-term perspective are superpowers for analysts and diplomats, which help to save a lot of energy and resources. Our country, of course, is forced – due to its more limited resources compared to the United States – to more actively use this principle of rational strategic goal-setting.

**MJ: Returning to your background, so to speak—why did you choose MGIMO for postgraduate studies after graduating from Moscow State University (MSU)?**  
I’d like to answer in a manner that could benefit future postgraduates. After graduating from university, I entered the postgraduate program at the Faculty of History, but I really felt like dropping out. You see, it is important for a young person to see the prospect of developing their talents and abilities. Today, life offers graduates many opportunities to find themselves in the real economy, in public service, in business, and the temptation not to follow the path of an educator and researcher is quite substantial. It is a narrow and difficult path, and few embark on it. And I was ready to leave it. But I was lucky; in 2005, I met Alexei Bogaturov, the Dean of the School of Political Science at MGIMO. He was a brilliant analyst who amazed and impressed me with his insightfulness and ability to analyze current events on the spot with a deep historical understanding of reality. He was very convincing, and his analysis was always absolutely top-notch. I saw in him a model scholar, whom a researcher may aspire to become if they work hard in their field. So I decided to change my specialization and focus on contemporary international relations. At the time, Mr. Bogaturov was working on creating the Department of Applied Analysis of International Problems and had already begun to gather a promising young team. I received an invitation as well. And I must say, in the following years, I greatly enjoyed working in the wonderful intellectual environment that was the Department’s hallmark.



**MJ: Since 2006, your career has been linked with the University. Can you call yourself a MGIMO person? What have your positions at MGIMO given you, professionally and personally?**

I think each new generation of professors, researchers, and administrators adds something new to what it means to be a MGIMO person, and I hope that my work, life, research, and teaching at MGIMO will also be meaningful in this sense. MGIMO is like a universe. The experience gained from working at the University is invaluable. Firstly, it's the teaching experience. When I started teaching in 2006, working with students was initially quite difficult for me. However, this experience ultimately proved to be invaluable: the student community is very skeptical and critical of faculty members, especially young ones, and the necessity of winning students over, demonstrating one's competence, offering them new knowledge, and helping them improve is, of course, a serious challenge. Secondly, there is research. At first, it was a very long, difficult, but interesting work on my Ph.D. thesis under Mr. Bogaturov's supervision, then I had my own research projects, grant-funded research, and finally, my own students and postgraduates.

Then, I had to be quite active in research diplomacy and expert dialogues. With foreign research organizations, we discuss pressing issues of international security, stability, international order, and this dialogue continues even under the current crisis conditions. MGIMO also provides extraordinary opportunities to participate in organizing a wide variety of events, conferences, and round tables. But that's not all I did. I also coordinated the Russian-French master's degree program in International Relations, and after winning a grant competition, I headed the MGIMO Laboratory for the Analysis of International Processes. When our Rector invited me to head the Institute of International Studies, I took it as an important challenge, a new chapter in my career, which turned out to be extremely difficult but exciting and captivating. And now, the School of International Relations, an entirely new challenge and set of tasks, significantly different from what I did at the Institute of International Studies. More than a thousand students and several hundred faculty members, as well as completely different problems and

issues for me to address as the Dean – all of this blends in a unique experience. Finally, another important and challenging aspect of my work is offering my expertise in the public domain as a speaker and expert for Russian and foreign media. Here the task is to present one's analysis in a systemic, persuasive, and, if possible, metaphorical way. I greatly appreciate MGIMO for the extraordinary sense of camaraderie and support that I get from my colleagues. We all draw inspiration from this wellspring of intellectual prowess at MGIMO, a quality that only a select few universities possess.

**The basis of our foreign policy tradition is a strategic understanding of international relations. This approach is manifested in a reasonable assessment of our own interests and where they stand in terms of priority.**

**MJ: How did you receive the invitation to become the School's Dean?**

I did not see it coming. When the Rector invited me and asked me directly if I was ready to head the School of International Relations, I immediately agreed. I felt honored and understood the immense responsibility that came with the role. After all, MGIMO's School of International Relations, without sounding too pompous, is our country's national point of pride, a school renowned for preserving Russian foreign policy tradition and training diplomats and analysts. Our departments were founded by professors and researchers, some of whom signed the UN Charter. We offer an unprecedented number of languages and deep fundamental training in the humanities. This makes MGIMO absolutely unique not only in Russia but also across the world.

**MJ: What tasks did the MGIMO Rector set for you?**

He formulated the task succinctly: make the School more modern, while preserving the key traditions of the University. The Rector and I are discussing the School's development program. As the School's graduate, he is very involved in its life, follows all issues, including staff decisions, and knows all important research projects. Perhaps the main challenge and concern for us now is the revival of our teaching and research tradition, preparing a new generation of educators and researchers for the School. The thing is that only we can prepare them for ourselves. Language training, along with the specialized and applied nature of teaching historical and diplomatic disciplines, necessitates the MGIMO approach. I believe my primary task is to work thoughtfully and painstakingly to attract the best of our alumni, including recent ones, who now occupy important positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidential Administration, and other structures, as well as to provide in-depth training for our students, primarily master's students, those who are ready to link their lives to the School. So that they can follow the path that Mr. Bogaturov once offered to young employees of his department, who later formed a team of outstanding educators and administrators, who today make our university stronger.

**MJ: You mentioned the MGIMO tradition. How would you define it?**

In my opinion, MGIMO is the main keeper of our country's foreign policy tradition and the institution that reproduces it. It is our graduates (about 70% of whom go into public service) who make up the backbone of our foreign policy service and the foreign policy departments of the Presidential Administration. When I visit them, we always discuss their experience of studying at MGIMO. Each time, it feels like we're on the same wavelength, speaking the same language – that of applied history and the applied historical process. I think that the basis of our foreign policy tradition is a strategic understanding of international relations. How is this approach manifested? In a reasonable assessment of one's own interests and they stand in terms of priority. If we are talking about vital interests, you are ready to fight for

them; if it is secondary and there is room for compromise, you may give it up in exchange for something. It is also important to know how you back up this foreign policy objective with resources, whether you have enough of them or not, what kind of action plan you choose to pursue this objective, and whether it has any alternatives. Such a reasoned approach to achieving a foreign policy goal is a product of our exceptional education. And I see my task in renewing its foundations.

**MJ: An important question that applicants and senior students are probably already asking you. In a situation when international relations are collapsing, primarily with NATO countries, who are expelling dozens of our diplomats, arresting Russian property abroad, freezing embassy accounts, what are the prospects for those who choose a career in international relations, in diplomatic service?**

The profession of a diplomat is experiencing a rebirth today. Speculations about its crisis existed even before the events related to the Ukrainian crisis. For some time now, European countries have been training diplomats as another kind of bureaucrats, so to speak. As a result, conflict resolution, tough negotiations with uncompromising opponents, and other such matters have been disappearing from the arsenal of these countries and their diplomatic traditions. In Europe, there was a feeling that learning foreign languages was not that important (with English being the lingua franca of our time), and there was no need to offer training in regional studies. Why study subjects that would allow them to develop empathy towards opponents? In my opinion, it is evident that in the West the profession of a diplomat is growing hollow. Due to the fact that there were no vital security threats in Europe after World War II, they are taking, so to speak, a vacation from strategic thinking. They behave passively in foreign policy, not like great powers. They often work in a mode of emotional reactions and diplomatic flash mobs. It is the US who ensures their security. Hence degrading diplomatic skills. Unfortunately for Europe. And, in a way, for us, because we no longer see them as counterparts with whom we can come to a sobering conclusion that we have a shared



**The School of International Relations is our country's national point of pride, renowned for preserving Russian foreign policy tradition and training diplomats and analysts.**

result, in the West they will study Russia much more deeply and thoroughly – the Russian language, history, traditions, and foreign policy. And we, on the other hand, will need to prepare diplomats for this new dangerous environment with much greater diligence. During the open doors days I have held this year, I saw a very high demand for our programs. Applicants still want to devote themselves to the noble mission of international relations experts and diplomats. I am encouraged by the fact that our best graduates, who are now completing their studies, continue to aspire to foreign policy careers in the public sector. This proves that our foreign policy tradition will live on and produce new generations of analysts and diplomats. 

interest – to prevent a major war in Europe. However, every such crisis inevitably awakens the true spirit and essence of diplomacy. And I am convinced that, as a



Photos by: Vladimir Salamatov's archive

# SALAMATOV: “FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ESG”

Last year, the MGIMO Academic Council took the decision to transform the School of Applied Economics and Commerce into the Institute of International Trade and Sustainable Development. Historically, the School has offered two programs: International Business and Trade, and Ecology and Wildlife Management. In recent years, the horizons of the School’s development have been steadily expanding. This year, according to Vladimir Salamatov, the Institute’s Director, “the focus will be on climate change and carbon regulation, because by 2060 Russia should become carbon neutral.”

**MJ: So, the trendy ESG issue is also yours?**

Yes, it is. There are three major ESG tasks: the ecological one – environmental protection, the social one – maintaining a positive social environment, comfortable working conditions in the production and service industries; and the third task is to ensure proper management of business processes. Nowadays companies in many countries voluntarily provide information on implementation of these tasks. While choosing goods and services, customers are becoming increasingly particular about the company’s performance of these three tasks. Business and the government are currently making a lot of effort in order to reduce the negative impact of human economic activity on the environment: future generations should have clean water, fresh air, and the very possibility of existence. Sustainable development has become a global trend: production, maintenance, trade, transborder transport operations and other services are currently measured by the degree of harm they can do to the environment.

**MJ: And you managed to integrate all this into the curriculum, didn’t you?**

Certainly. These trends determined the content of our bachelor’s and master’s courses. There is also digital transformation, which is being applied in all spheres.

**MJ: Have you launched a course in digital trade?**

Yes, we have. Last year we launched a master’s course in Ecosystem in International Trade. By an ecosystem we

mean the digital environment in which transborder transactions are performed. At the same time, we look at all aspects of consumer demand analysis based on the study of big data, trade statistics, the priorities determined by consumers’ demand. Simultaneously, we are launching a bachelor’s course in digital commerce within the framework of International Business and Trade program, which is also in line with the current trends. A

**Sustainable development has become a global trend: production, maintenance, trade, transborder transport operations and other services are currently measured by the degree of harm they can do to the environment.**

great number of marketplaces have been launched across the globe, including this country, trade through these networks is growing. At the same time, a whole range of tasks are fulfilled associated with control over safety of goods, their transportation, which is directly related to trade transborder transactions. We expect that due to the relevance of our new courses and majors they will be in great demand among students.

**MJ: Russia is currently expanding cooperation with ‘Asian tigers’. Will the Oriental direction be reflected in creating and updating the courses?**

It is a very important aspect. Two new languages are to be taught at the School – Turkish (“International Trade”) and Chinese (“Ecology and Wildlife Management”). I’d like to highlight that the interrelation between three directions – ecology, climate and trade – is very close. Today, international trade is impossible unless it meets the principles of sustainable development and ESG. Accordingly, any climate agenda is implemented with a clear understanding how environmental protection is performed in trade relations.

**MJ: How is the ecology block represented in your curriculum?**

We are beginning to train specialists who will understand the climate impact on international trade relations as well as environmental security in general and key principles and systems of the regulation. In my view, it is of major importance. Companies interested in international markets must have specialists in this field. Such specialists must be able to produce voluntary reports and to apply international standards which describe the company’s inner processes so that it meets best ecological, social and managerial practices with a view to achieving the maximum economic effect – in transborder transactions as well as inside the country in production and service industries. Another important major we offer – technological cooperation and high technologies. Today, it is important to







apply the world’s best practices in order to use these new technologies. We offer a master’s degree course in Management to train specialists to analyze international scientific development, possibilities of applying high technologies, mechanisms of interaction with companies producing and consuming such technologies.

**MJ: What other courses in Management does the School offer?**

Currently we have two master’s degree courses in Management: Management in Military Technological Cooperation and High Technologies, and Management of Sustainable Development. We also offer a course in Trade – Ecosystem of International Trade, with a second enrollment this year, and a course in Ecology – Climate and Carbon Regulation, in cooperation with the Russian Hydrometeorological University in St. Petersburg. Next year, we are planning to launch a new master’s major – Transborder Trade and Trade Administration. But today these issues are already highlighted in the educational process. We would like to focus on

**M**aster’s degree courses focus on real case studies in trade, industry, economic relations under the guidance of lecturers with hands-on experience.

equipping the students with an excellent command of foreign languages to meet the demands of digital transformation in these fields and on training specialists to understand today’s global processes. MGIMO set up the Sustainable Development Center to provide comprehensive analysis of these processes. There is another new MGIMO laboratory to study digital logistics and customs practices focusing on the current

international trade trends. We are to study emerging transborder trade directions – countries of South-East Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, which are interested in establishing stable partnerships with us.

**MJ: All the courses at the School are mostly applied. Are they taught by lecturers with practical experience?**

Of course. It is certainly important for a university to have theorists as faculty members. But many of our lecturers have hands-on experience in developing legal framework for international trade, logistics and implementing major projects. They occupy responsible posts in major companies, have extensive experience in business. Master’s degree courses focus on real case studies in trade, industry, interstate economic relations under the guidance of lecturers with huge experience in negotiating. We have launched a specialized course in doing business in different countries focusing on customs, traditions, local particulars of negotiating. Successful business is impossible without such knowledge. ☐



**MJ: In the 1990s Belarus was a kind of sanctuary, wild capitalism did not rage there, unlike in neighboring Russia where it turned everything upside down, including secondary education.**

We managed to preserve many of the Soviet secondary school traditions, which were successfully complemented by local educational innovations. As a student of the Belarusian State University lyceum, I majored in history. We were lucky to have university professors and lessons conducted according to the university patterns. Perhaps that is why my adaptation to MGIMO’s requirements was smooth. I was lucky to choose the International Law School, though I can’t say I dreamed of a lawyer’s career as a schoolboy, but the International Law School curriculum interested me a lot. I made the right choice. The education provided here is different from that of law schools elsewhere. It involves high-quality training in foreign languages for specific purposes, in-depth study of foreign and international law, and development of soft skills.

I have the best memories of lectures in history of state and law of Russia and foreign countries with Professor Isaev and in international law with Professor Golitsyn – by the way, later he headed the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

**MJ: What did you dream of as a student?**

As an undergraduate I took an interest in juridical science and teaching. The choice of field – comparative constitutional law – was largely determined by my future academic advisor Maxim Isaev, a major specialist in the field.

I especially appreciate his methodological approach to studying state and law

# MOLCHAKOV: “FINDING BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITIONS AND INNOVATIONS”

Photos by: Nikita Molchakov’s archive

Nikita Molchakov, the new Dean of the MGIMO International Law School, is one of the youngest MGIMO deans. Moreover, he is the same age as new Russia – he was born a day before the August 1991 Coup. “Yes, the August 1991 events in many ways predetermined Russia’s further development, and my life, too. I was born in the USSR, in Belorussia, grew up in the ancient town of Polotsk. But my childhood and school years already happened to be in the sovereign Republic of Belarus.”



phenomena, which involves first building a certain theoretical model and then confirming or refuting it through the analysis of the legislation and law enforcement practices in various states. I adopted this approach in my thesis “The Concept of a Regionalized State and its Implementation in the United Kingdom

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” and consider myself Professor Isaev’s follower. I have always wanted to be an adherent of the MGIMO comparative constitutional law school, and this dream is gradually coming true. The most important thing is to maintain a high level of academic

research effectively integrating the research results into educational process.

**MJ: What was your path to today’s peak – the position of the Dean at your School?**  
Just eighteen months after enrolling for a postgraduate course at the Department



**T**he university years shaped many personal qualities and gave me loyal and reliable friends as well as shaped me as an international lawyer.

of Constitutional Law, even before defending my thesis, I started teaching at the university. After defending my thesis Gennadii Tolstopiatenko, the School’s Dean, invited me to take the position of Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs. In March 2022, the University’s Academic Council elected me Dean.

**MJ: What qualities and skills do you find important to be an effective dean?**




The key skill which administrative work at a university helps to develop is the ability to effectively build interaction and communication with colleagues and students. In turn, it requires non-standard approaches, on the one hand, and on the other – to think through and work through each solution, assessing its pros and cons comprehensively. We are currently upgrading our master’s degree courses. On the one hand, the new curricula meet employers’ changed requirements for graduates; on the other hand, they are aimed at expanding the optional component in education, which allows the master’s student to choose their own educational trajectory. We are strengthening cooperation with other MGIMO schools and Russian universities. For example, for the master’s course at the School of Economic Relations we developed a block which is in effect an additional professional training course for economics students. This academic year, the School has started to teach Arabic and Turkish in the respective language groups. The Department of Middle East Languages developed courses adapted to training

**A**natoly Torkunov decided to appoint me acting dean, and six months later in March the University’s Academic Council elected me Dean. I have always wanted to be an adherent of the MGIMO comparative constitutional law school, and this dream is gradually coming true.

students of international law. It is certainly impossible to be a specialist in these regions without studying their history, economy, culture and law. So, together with country studies departments we developed

special courses in history, economy, cultural and religious traditions of Arab countries and Turkey, their legal systems and some institutions of Islamic law. I am convinced that our main tasks are continuity in administration, maintaining a high level of teaching foreign languages and legal disciplines, developing the scientific potential of the university’s law schools and competently integrating elements related to the digitalization of state and legal phenomena into the educational process.

**MJ: You represent a new generation of MGIMO administrators. What are their distinguishing features?**  
As I see it, new generations always contribute something new, have a different vision. However, their success largely depends on how these new visions and approaches are integrated into the existing management structure. Besides, the quality of new people largely depends on how ready they are for continuity. I believe, a good administrator must be distinguished by moderate conservatism and ability to find balance between tradition and innovation. 





# ABRAU-DURSO – ENOGASTRONOMIC RESORT

Boris Titov, a MGIMO alumnus, is the Board Chairman of the Abrau-Durso Group; so, sparkling wines of this brand are invariably served at any MGIMO graduates' event in Russia and abroad. Abrau-Durso is the most titled winery in Russia, but little is known of Abrau-Durso as a tourist brand.





“The heart of our tourist center is the Russian Wine House,” says Marina Strukova, Deputy Director of the Abrau-Durso Tourist Center. “But our nature, Lake Abrau along with our capabilities allow us to run various tourist projects. Today we are promoting Abrau-Durso as an enogastronomic resort. Enogastonomy (‘eno’ is translated from Latin as ‘wine’) is the art of choosing wine for a dish. We were the first to popularize Black Sea cuisine, especially fish. Our brand chef Sergey Alshevskiy knows it inside out; being a local, he reinvented fishermen’s recipes and created original dishes. Black Sea anchovy has a separate menu.” Last year the company launched a major

**A**brau-Durso is being promoted as an enogastronomic resort. Enogastonomy (‘eno’ is translated from Latin as ‘wine’) is the art of choosing wine for a dish.

project – “Abrau-Durso – an ecotourism center”, presenting a walking route to wineries; the guests set off from Abrau-Durso on foot towards Gelendzhik, visiting

three wineries where they taste wines and familiarize themselves with the art of their creation. The tour also includes accommodation. Interestingly, previously Krasnodar Kray wineries were not eager to share their secrets but today they understand the importance of developing tourism on their premises. Tourism efforts of Abrau-Durso were praised abroad. For several years running the Russian Wine House has been recognized as the most visited winery. At the end of 2020 Tripadvisor, an online travel research company, rated the Abrau-Durso historical complex as the best tourist attraction. Marina Strukova spoke at the Sochi Conference “Russian Universities as International Tourism Sherpa” at the

invitation of MGIMO. “I seized this opportunity to speak about our company and problems of the industry; this year the most acute one is shortage of well-qualified personnel. Krasnodarsky Kray with its Black Sea resorts is the most visited place in Russia; however, there are no universities that provide training in tourism, except Sochi and Southern Federal ones. Although we, employers, could participate in the educational process directly, we would be happy to tell students about the benefits of working in the resort industry. After all, one does not have to go abroad and work in hotels, developing foreign territories, one can have a lot of opportunities here in Russia, and not only in Abrau-Durso.” MGIMO and Abrau-Durso are

**M**GIMO and Abrau-Durso are successfully cooperating within the framework of MGIMO’s Executive MBA visiting module.

successfully cooperating within the framework of MGIMO’s Executive MBA visiting module. “During their latest stay a group of MBA students visited our facilities – vineyards, the Russian Wine House, the Gelenjik Golf Resort club. They

also visited Lefkadia valley and tasted wines with Georges Blanc, Abrau-Durso chief enologist. At the meeting with the management of our tourist center the MBA students had a chance to ask any questions, get any information about the successful business, get inspired by this success. They were told how radically Boris Titov changed the approach to running the business, as well as the success story of turning a small tour agency into a tourist center, which today receives about 200,000 guests a year. When students see with their own eyes this enormous work – from growing grapes to corking bottles which then end up on the table – they get to understand how product prices are formed, as well as how a brand is created.”







# SOCHI: THE ‘SHERPAS’ OF RUSSIAN TOURISM. WHO ARE THEY?

Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, Igor Lileev

There was no higher education institution in the country that would train specialists in tourism in the Soviet period. And tourism itself was peculiar – it was centralized, in other words, it flowed through several different organizations: trade unions, the Intourist system, etc. Just having taken advanced training courses, graduates of any university could be employed in the industry.

No one talked about the need to somehow develop the industry until an episode in the late 1980s. Once visiting Sochi after a vacation in Bulgaria, Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov asked the local leadership, “Listen, why is there tourism service in Bulgaria, and at a fairly high level, but there is none in Sochi?”





And the matter got off the ground. The Center for Tourism Training was created, which included a vocational college and higher education programs as well as an advanced training institute. There were even plans to build a major 50-hectare campus in the resort area of Dagomys, and the first student enrollment in the Institute of Tourism and Resorts also took place.

However, the development of the project was hindered by the disintegration of

of Russian tourism” (the Priority 2030 program), which the University has actively promoted in the regions.

And so Sochi hosted the first inter-university conference “Russian Universities as the ‘Sherpas’ of International Tourism” – a joint initiative of MGIMO, Sochi State University (SSU) and Russian International Olympic University (RIOU).

The conference, held in the Pullman Hotel, became a manifestation of synergy

between a youth approach to solving urgent problems to promote the Black Sea region and an expert debate on industry development to position Russian regions with representatives of universities, employers in the tourism and hospitality industry, government agencies and organizations engaged in promoting, among others, industry-specific, or niche, tourism.

Artem Malgin, Vice-Rector for Strategic Development – Chief of the Rector’s



the Soviet Union. After the 1990s, which failed on all fronts, and the fat 2000s, when being replaced by money new ideas were not in demand, people involved in the industry only recently began to view tourism differently: not as a tour operator activity meant to move people from one territory to another, but as a business focusing on selling impressions.

The industry entered a fundamentally new stage of development when COVID-pandemic subsided and new breakthrough ideas emerged, one of these being MGIMO strategic project “International ‘Sherpa’

**Malgin: “MGIMO is a Eurasian educational hub that channels the best educational practices. It is a touchpoint where business and government interact”**

Office, Galina Romanova, Vice-Rector for Strategic Development of Sochi State University, and Nikolay Peshin, RIOU Vice-Rector for Research and MGIMO visiting professor, opened the conference. The President of the Southern Federal University Marina Borovskaya was the moderator.

Artem Malgin spoke in detail about the Priority 2030 program, which is primarily aimed at increasing the scientific and educational capability of universities and amassing the resources of universities in order to achieve national development goals.

“MGIMO is a Eurasian educational hub that channels the best educational practices. It is a touchpoint where business and government interact. The creation of circles of competence, consortia, of which educational institutions employers, partners, and heads of regions are a part, is another prerequisite of the program.”

MGIMO strategic project “International ‘Sherpa’ of Russian Tourism” (headed by the Director of the School of Business and International Competences Angelika Mirzoeva) within the Priority 2030 program is aimed at promoting Russian regions as subjects of international inbound tourism by involving regional universities capable of discovering recreational, cultural and investment capacity of regions and providing training to augment regional attractiveness. “We invite them to become network partners for cooperation in promoting territories and unlocking their potential,” Artem Malgin emphasized.

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The conference comprised two discussion sessions: “Tourism and Hospitality. Employers’ Expectations and Universities’ Opportunities” and “Branding of Territories and Niche

**P**riority 2030 program is primarily aimed at increasing the scientific and educational capability of universities and amassing the resources of universities in order to achieve national development goals.

Tourism”.

Vice-Rector of Sochi State University Galina Romanova spoke about priorities of the university, which is considered to be the leader in training for the Service and Tourism program since 2015. Sochi State University is an innovative platform of the Ministry of Education and Science in its projects “Business Incubator of the University as a Driver to Generate Innovations for Tourism Industry”.

RIOU Vice-Rector Nikolay Peshin spoke about the transformation of “the university as humanitarian heritage of the Olympic Games” into a full-fledged actor in shaping a new educational environment, as well as training professionals in specialized modular and long-term educational programs, including event-driven.

Interesting presentations were made during a discussion session on niche tourism by Oleg Salagai, Deputy Minister of Health of Russia, Euryale Chatelard, President of French Tech Moscow, Marina

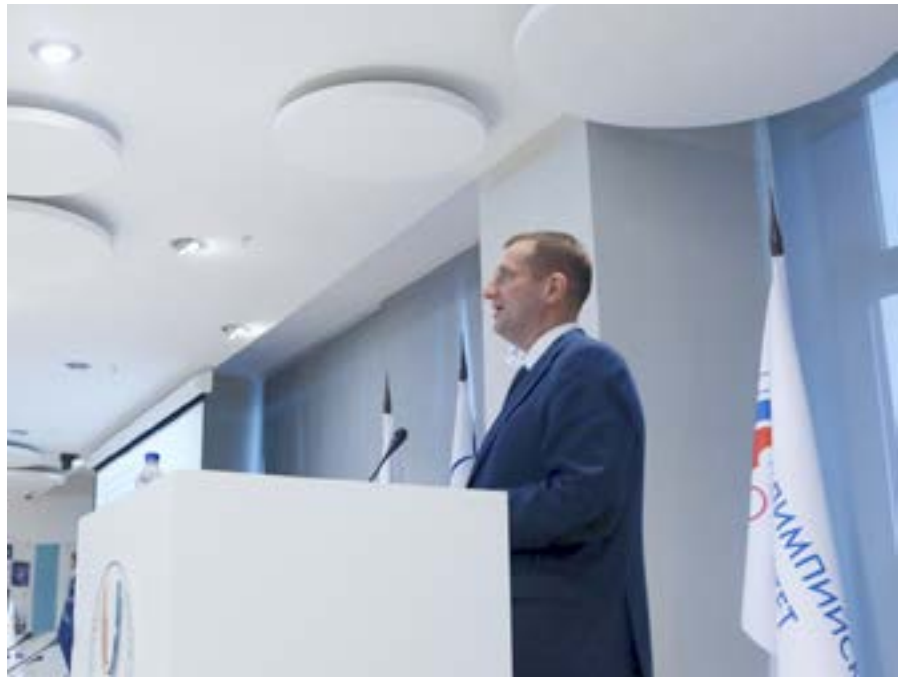






Strukova, Director of Tourism of Abrau-Durso Wine Tourism Center and others. “Tourism for me is not just an industry of happiness and pleasure,” said Euryale Chatelard, an organizer of meetings of French and Russian startup entrepreneurs, “but also an industry of openness and understanding of others. It is an opportunity to make people meet culturally and see and appreciate differences in culture and business traditions. That is why we have rolled out

**E. Chatelard: “Tourism for me is not just an industry of happiness and pleasure, but also an industry of openness and understanding of others»**



**GALINA ROMANOVA**  
*Vice-Rector for Strategic Development of Sochi State University*

**MJ: What opportunities has the signing of the agreement with MGIMO opened up for you?**  
MGIMO is a brand; the university is a leader in the field of international relations, and tourism is in many ways an international field. Given the global competition that exists today in the field of tourism, countries such as Turkey and Egypt are competing for Russian tourists. To survive in this fight, we must be well aware of international trends, and the role of MGIMO as a leading international educational and scientific center in Russia is invaluable. After all, today it is not enough to know about international relations only at the level of diplomacy; one needs to be an expert in oil and gas, agribusiness and many other areas. MGIMO is good at grasping trends, and if the potential it has is multiplied by the achievements of Sochi State University, we can actively develop the sphere of tourism in our region.

**MJ: What are your expectations from the trilateral agreement with MGIMO and Olympic University that you signed?**  
Established only in 1989, our university is still very young. Nevertheless, we have already managed to win leading positions in many areas, and the agreement that we signed with MGIMO and Olympic University will certainly allow us to make a new step forward in the educational field, I mean primarily joint double-degree programs. We are also planning to hold summer or winter schools. One of these school programs, I think, will focus on the development of digital technology in tourism; otherwise, it would be simply impossible to compete at the international level. And it would be interesting to see in these future schools those who have taken part in this competition. It would be especially interesting to see MGIMO graduates who are not directly related to tourism, although tourism is present everywhere – be those business meetings, events or incentive tourism, which is a combination of business and leisure in attractive areas, and many other types of it. Tourism is also the sphere of diplomacy, a phenomenon of the 21st century, a messenger of peace, just like sports, because the role of tourism is to change people’s perceptions of other people, and that ultimately changes the world.





a project of regional meetings between businessmen and startup entrepreneurs; the first such meeting was held in Yekaterinburg in 2021. I hope that we will arrange a meeting dedicated to travel industry, maybe even in Sochi.”

The participants of the conference were unanimous in one thing: human resources are the most important element. There is an extreme shortage of people. Job fairs, all kinds of online platforms are needed, and it would be a good idea to let even those students who have just received an introduction to their specialty come for an internship.

Olga Pirogova, President of the Academy of Tourism and International Relations from Yekaterinburg joined in on the problem of

**“The creation of network-centered educational ecosystems, i.e. programs integrated into a single ecosystem that will incorporate all the best practices, is enshrined in Russia’s national development goals»**

personnel shortage. “There are 380 higher education institutions in the country today that train staff for travel industry, and even if each of them graduates a hundred people, this will not cover the need for workforce. Digitalization opens up great opportunities, but it demands that staff be able to work with a lot of information, a lot of data, possess new algorithms of search, virtual customer support, etc. New professions are emerging in the travel industry: a territory architect, a robotics concierge, an augmented reality designer, etc.”

The conclusions of the conference were summarized by Marina Borovskaya, President of the Southern Federal University, Chairperson of the Council of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions of Southern Russia. She began, however, with a warning, “The planet is running out of people; there will no longer be that bulk of cheap workforce that we focused on.

“Young people want a qualified, interesting, well-paid job. And information technology shapes their mentality in a different manner – they want self-expression, creativity, while technological solutions around us free up energy for this... And our region is also running out of people: all the creative and active people left for Moscow and St. Petersburg a long time ago. This is why it is very important to talk about human resources now.”

Marina Borovskaya particularly mentioned the role of science-based technologies. “Science should immediately get into industry-relevant education – it is the driving force of development. There is a resource in the industry that we want to study (and it will find reflection in science): why, for example, a person develops love for travel, how a psychological or physiological need for sports is formed, etc.”

Marina Borovskaya spoke about mechanisms to achieve global and national sustainable development goals, approaches to territorial and sectoral regulation through sustainable development of scientific and educational ecosystems. “The creation of network-centered educational ecosystems, i.e. programs integrated into a single ecosystem that will incorporate all the best practices, is enshrined in Russia’s national development goals. We hope that we will be able to work together on the platform of the MGIMO strategic project.”





# LOMIDZE: “WHERE IS CHEREPOVETS LOCATED?”

Photos by: TASS, I. Lileev

Staff shortage – this is how Maya Lomidze, Executive Director of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR), defines the situation in the tourism industry in Russia. “There is a huge shortage of people at all levels; the most acute one is at the lower and middle levels, from room maids to booking managers. There is also a serious lack of people at the managerial level, especially of those who are able not only to manage and administer, but also understand the subject and have analytical skills.” This is exactly the kind of professionals that the Tourism and Hospitality Industry master’s program, which the MGIMO School of Business and International Competences rolls out in September within the framework of the Priority 2030 program, can train, Maya Lomidze believes.

**MJ: What was it in this project that attracted you?**  
First, the fact that it was MGIMO in question (I was immediately interested!) and, second, the comprehensive approach to learning, which I learned about from Vice-Rector Artem Malgin. And when I asked: “What about geography?” He replied: “We teach not just physical geography, but also political and economic geography...”

arousing an emotional desire to go there), but the managers at all levels must know this as well. An integrated managerial approach is extremely important when we talk about tourism. Just as there are no several scenarios for interrelation between two cogwheels, there is no single scenario for interaction between, say, tour operators and transport companies. Interrelations in tourism are flexible and mobile; besides, they are different and work differently

in different territories of Russia. There are 86 regions and 86 views on tourism development. One of the problems that the travel industry faces is that there are many managers who come from other industries. There is a common perception (and it is not unfounded) that if one can manage an enterprise in a certain field, one can manage a similar enterprise in another. But this is not entirely true in tourism.

**This program attracted me by, first, the fact that it was MGIMO (I was immediately interested!) and, second, the comprehensive approach to learning.**

**MJ: As well as two foreign languages, regional studies and other subjects that form an educated, cultured person...**  
And I thought then: “God, finally!” It sounds like a paradox, but so many people do not know the geography of our country. When we began traveling through the regions and inspecting routes, we asked this test question: “Where is Cherepovets located?” Only one in ten knew that this is a city in the Vologda Region... Obviously, not only a tour operator must know where a particular city or a tourist attraction is and what highlight it has (only this way will the tourist operator be able to, so to speak, sell this place to the client



**MJ: That is true. Now we need other type of professionals – those able to ensure that recreational, cultural and investment potential of the regions be unlocked to the maximum.**  
Yes, I agree. And MGIMO is not just a top-level university and not only a forge of diplomats (although diplomatic skills are also very useful in tourism), but still a university that trains, by and large, executives. And a graduate of MGIMO Tourism and Hospitality Industry program will have an opportunity to master a comprehensive approach. If such a graduate comes to manage a particular enterprise, cluster, region, or comes to the federal level, he or she will possess an understanding and knowledge of the industry, and will perceive it from the point of view of three dimensions at least. And understand the specifics of the territory or enterprise he or she manages. Such people are, I repeat, in great lack right now.

**MJ: Graduates of the program will have to develop a tourist product taking into account the features of the territory whose potential they need to unlock.**  
Any product is something that has a market dimension. Demand creates

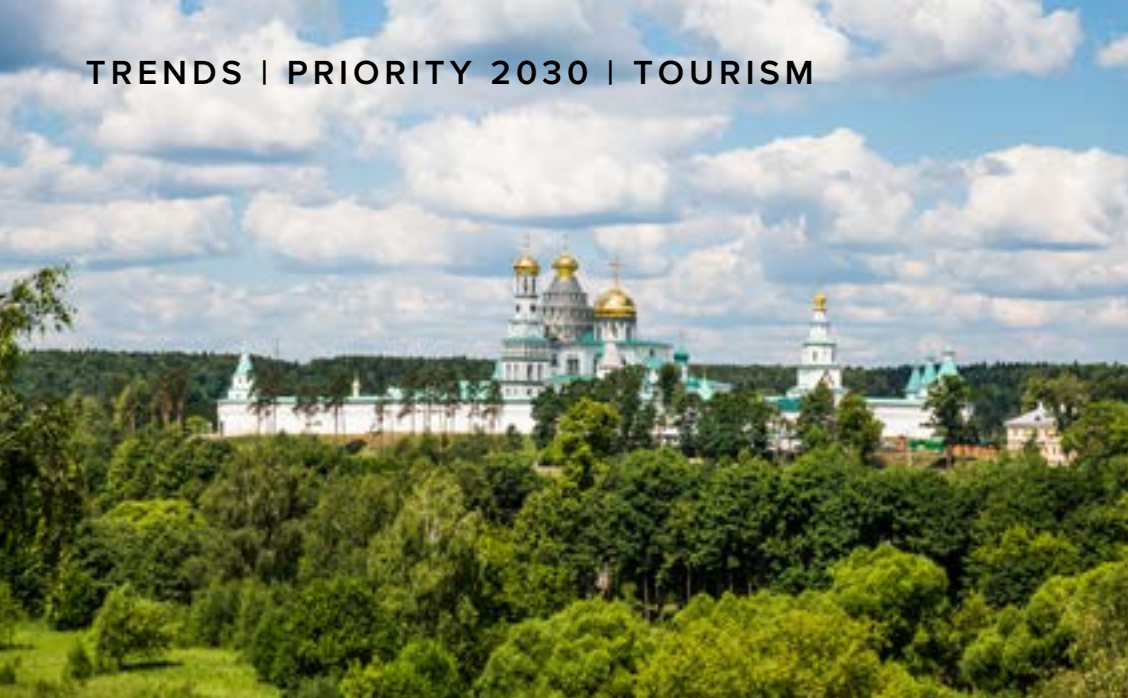
**The MGIMO program will produce professionals who are in short supply, i.e. those who are able not only to manage, but also understand the subject and have analytical skills**

supply that a territory can offer. But there is another, more up-to-date approach: you can generate demand, make an object fashionable, make a limited group of people watched by millions aware of it... – there are many different tactics. What matters is the willingness of tourists to vote for the product with their money. Every product has its own life cycle. It would be a mistake to think that a product that was created ten years ago can still sell well if no changes are introduced. It has to be upgraded, otherwise it will die. The concept of the tourist product as a set of components has not changed since

the beginning of the 20th century. These are transportation, accommodation and what the tourist is after, i.e. the purpose of the trip: sea, mountains, adventure, museums, partying or, on the contrary, complete tranquility. These components will never change. As far as the substance is concerned, changes to the content are difficult to predict: tourism, as discussed above, is a very dynamic and fluid industry.

**MJ: Tourism, both inbound and outbound, has shrunk, and no one knows when it will start rising again. And MGIMO is an international university, and it is internationalists in various fields that are trained here.**  
Everything comes to an end at some point; this crisis will subside too. In my opinion, it would be wrong to focus on the domestic market only. It is imperative to take advantage of this break, pump up one’s capabilities and by the time recovery begins figure out what the main priority will be. Countries with specific languages – Farsi, Arabic, Hindi, Thai – will most probably prove to be that priority at the very least. These are the markets that are definitely on the way, and MGIMO has a lot of things to do in the field. 🇷🇺





# MOSCOW REGION: DOMESTIC TOURISM IS ON THE AGENDA

The Moscow Region is like Russia in miniature. There is probably no other region with such diverse areas of tourism: from traditional to the most modern – rural and eco-tourism.





Photos by: ANO "Center for Tourism Development of the Moscow Region"

# TIMOFEEVA: “HOSPITALITY BEGINS WITH LOVE FOR ONE’S NATIVE LAND”

Two main structures that develop travel industry in the Moscow Region – the Committee for Tourism and Autonomous Non-Commercial Organization (ANO) “Center for Tourism Development of the Moscow Region” – signed a cooperation agreement with MGIMO after the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine had been launched. The wave of sanctions that hit Russia overnight made the concept of “inbound tourism” largely outdated. Obviously, it proved impossible to isolate Russia, but the projected revenues in the industry will significantly shrink in the coming years.

It is domestic tourism that is on the agenda. In that case, what is the point of having agreements with the Moscow Region? After all, MGIMO trains internationalists, professionals to work with foreigners. But the head of the Center Maria Timofeeva sees a reason for optimism: “This dark period will end one day; foreigners will come back sooner or later. Do you know what we are going to use this time for? To learn to love our homeland, to understand how great it is! In all its vastness and diversity. For it is near and quite accessible! Each region has its own unique and distinctive history, which can be studied. Only when you yourself come to love your homeland and remember your genetic code, in any language of the world will you be able to make any foreigner fall in love with your land. Hospitality begins with the love for one’s native land.”



**MJ: Still, talking about cooperation with MGIMO, with the flow of tourists being mainly from the East, perhaps we should put more emphasis on studying Chinese and other Oriental languages?** Indeed, in terms of tourist interest the Chinese love Russia, say, more than the Russians do. And I believe that this pattern has to be radically changed. But let’s be honest: it is our fault, too. For quite some time trips to Turkey and

Egypt were much more affordable than trips to Lake Baikal. But I would not say that we have spent all this time in vain; no, we used it to develop the necessary infrastructure. And now that everyone has traveled to Europe, visited Eastern countries, in other words, got an idea of how the world lives, we need to use this break to fill the gap, awaken an interest towards our homeland and remind all of us that we are all privileged to be Russian,



**O**nly when you recall your Russian genetic code, will you be able to make any foreigner fall in love with your land.



**N**ow that everyone has traveled to Europe, visited Eastern countries, and got an idea of how the world lives, we need to use this break to fill the gap, awaken an interest towards our homeland and remind all of us that we are all privileged to be Russian, to live on this land.



to live on this land. Traveling to Baikal has become more affordable now, there are low-cost airlines, and thanks to new technologies there are effective domestic booking systems. New routes are actively being developed, for example, in the southern regions. Dagestan and Chechnya are some of the most interesting destinations today.

**MJ: That is surprising.** You know, while we were all looking for cool interactive routes and creating museums in central Russia, the tourism ministries of Dagestan and Chechnya began to create an industry of hospitality at home. Locals were taught how to welcome guests properly, and then they made an impressive PR move

and said: come to our land! And those who go there come back deeply in love with southern hospitality: every house, every courtyard is glad to see you there. Residents love their land so much that it is impossible not to fall in love with it yourself! And we could not but notice it. And now, in the midst of a crisis, we have the time and opportunity to remind Russians that this is their land and they should know it well. If it were up to me, I would force schoolchildren and students to go on excursions.

**MJ: Talking of the background of your relationship with MGIMO, how did it develop?** After a MGIMO branch in the Odintsovo district was set up, your university began





to cooperate very closely with the Moscow Region government. And thanks to the Priority 2030 program, of which tourism is a part, MGIMO has become interested in domestic tourism in the Moscow Region. I am the head of the only subordinate center for the development of tourism in the Moscow Region, so it was logical to turn for advice to me. And since Artem Malgin, Vice-Rector of MGIMO, who is responsible for this program, and I had already met at various discussion fora, I introduced him to the leadership of the Tourism Committee of the Moscow Region. The region is now actively engaged in the development of domestic tourism, and the MGIMO leadership was interested to learn about the steps we take as part of our program. Then we – the regional government

**Implementing this new program implies that the training should be inextricably linked with practice on the ground.**

represented by me and MGIMO – held a seminar “The Tourist Potential of the Moscow Region and Central Russia”. It was a new format for MGIMO in the sense that we offered our most popular museum New Jerusalem in Istra as a venue for it. I believe that it is a very good format for the travel industry – to

conduct a seminar not within a university department, but at the site itself. With a cultural site revealing itself to you, you perceive the subject in a completely different way. And indeed, it turned out that many of the participants had never been to the museum, although it is the leader among the regional museums of Russia. And an excursion was arranged to a unique exhibition – “The ABC of a Masterpiece” – after the seminar.

**MJ: Will you say a few words about this museum?**  
First, it is close to our main shrine, New Jerusalem. It is a tourist cluster, quite secular itself, which is open not only for pilgrims. It is within walking distance – just a 200-meter walk along

## DULYOVO

The leading Russian factory producing tableware, sculptural and souvenir gift items made of faience and porcelain is located in the town of Likino-Dulyovo in the Orekhovo-Zuevo district of the Moscow Region. It was founded in 1832 by merchant Terenty Kuznetsov in the Dulevo heath. Since 1887, the factory has been a part of the Partnership for the Production of Porcelain and Faience Products created by Matvey Kuznetsov. Legend has it that many of women-painters working at the factory at the time were named Agafya; they often used a finger, not a brush, to create images of roses on porcelain. Hence, the drawings became known as “agashkas” (a short form of Agafya). By the end of the 19th century the Kuznetsovs managed to create a porcelain empire, which became a supplier to the Court of His Imperial Majesty.

To make his ideas come true, Kuznetsov invited famous Russian artists, such as Mikhail Vrubel, to work with him. The factory produced insulators, pharmaceutical and hospital ware during the Soviet times and the years of war in the 1940s.

By the end of the 1950s, the Dulyovo painters gradually switched to a manner of painting, which started to take shape in pre-war years, with a much stronger decorative and emotional emphasis.





the riverbank. The museum is quite new, very advanced, and has repeatedly ranked first among regional museums in Russia. There are several permanent exhibitions there, but they also bring in new and unique exhibitions which even Moscow does not see. “The ABC of a Masterpiece” exhibition brought together 120 works by great Russian painters – Bryullov, Kustodiev, Malevich, Kandinsky and others. We brought these paintings from museums from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, and they are organized not according to an epoch or direction, i.e. only landscape artists or only avant-garde artists, but rather according to the alphabet, which was a creative idea by the

curators. Some paintings were included into this kind of exhibition for the first time ever. For example, no one has ever taken out Kustodiev’s “Russian Venus” (“In the bath”), a piece more than 2.5 meters in height and 1.5 meters in width, because the insurance coverage would not allow it. But we took liability for all the risks and included it in the exhibition. Some paintings have never been brought to other regions, but here you could see – and this is an unprecedented case – say, works by Malevich and Kandinsky in the same room.

**T**h region is huge and unique! It is like Russia in miniature: I am sure there is no other region with such diverse areas of tourism.

**MJ: How did the cooperation develop after the seminar?**  
We realized that we had to meet more often when implementing this new program and develop its specifics, which is that training should be inextricably linked with practice on the ground, as they say. The fact is that, collecting information for my ministry, I regularly travel around the region and know what



**GORKY  
LENINSKIYE**

The estate Gorky had been owned by the Spasitelev family for several centuries and then it passed to the Durasovs. At one time it belonged to Alexander Pisarev, who during wars against Napoleon was a lieutenant general. Millionaire Zinaida Morozova and her husband, Moscow mayor Anatoly Reinbot owned the estate in early 20th century. Vladimir Lenin, the Soviet leader, lived here from the winter of 1921-1922 until he died in 1924. The estate has largely preserved pre-revolutionary interiors with the furnishings dating back to Morozova’s times.

The Gorky estate including memorial setting of the Lenin times is a part of a museum-reserve complex.



**ZHOSTOVO**

Road signs leading to the village of Zhostovo (Mytishchi urban district of the Moscow Region) are made in the form of large painted trays, and even building numbers in the main street are depicted on such trays nailed to the fences. Zhostovo is the oldest center of the Russian folk art handicraft, which is decorative oil painting on metal trays. “The Vishnyakov brothers’ factory of lacquered metal trays, breadboxes, pallets, papier-mache jewelry boxes, cigarette cases, tea caddies, albums” – this is how the Zhostovo decorative painting factory was advertised in 1825. That year Philip Vishnyakov, who was a serf of Count Sheremetev and who worked as a carter at a local factory in the village of Fedoskino, came to know the technology of lacquerware production there and opened a lacquer workshop in his village of Zhostovo. A school of metal tray painting was established soon after, with the name “Zhostovo” chosen for the folk craft itself.





FEDOSKINO

It all started with the production of papier-mache visors set up by merchant Korobov in the Danilkovo estate outside Moscow at the end of the 18th century. Learning the technology of producing lacquerware from Stobwasser, a German artist, Korobov opened one of the first snuff boxes production centers in Russia in 1795.

At first engravings were used, and later snuff boxes began to be decorated with paintings. The heyday of the factory came in the 1840s and 1860s, when it began using gold foil, mother-of-pearl and ivory. A special glow is an attribute of lacquer miniatures. Their secret lies in



the multi-layer painting, mother-of-pearl inlay, metallized base and craftsmanship passed down from artist to artist. The Fedoskino Factory of Miniature Painting continues today the ancient production of lacquer miniature paintings in the village of Fedoskino near Moscow.



makes the lives of our tour operators, what the needs of tourists and visitors to cultural sites are. Therefore, from the very beginning the idea was to help MGIMO to properly structure the training program. The university knows how to teach, and we know what kind of product the industry needs, what professional requirements it will have for personnel, and what the vector of its development will be in five years when students graduate and come to work for us.

We have a lot of work to do, we need new blood. And my task is to reveal the region to the students to the maximum, make them interested in its tourist attractiveness, and I am sure they will come to love it.

And our region is huge and unique! It is like Russia in miniature: I am sure there

The industry needs new blood. And my task is to reveal the region to the students, make them interested in its tourist attractiveness, and I am sure they will come to love it.

is no other region with such diverse areas of tourism. From traditional to the most modern – say, rural tourism and eco-tourism,

even though the Moscow Region is not considered an agricultural one. But we have many urban districts that support this idea, with many small private berry farms and cheese factories opening there; there is an ostrich farm, an alpaca farm that recycles the wool of these animals and makes things from it. We have husky villages, which began as kennels and grew into a point of attraction: people come with their whole families to spend time with these very cute dogs, to ride on dog sleds – this is such fun therapy – and at the same time to buy organic food. There are also numerous nature sites, which are traditionally very popular. They are designed for a whole day family trip, for example, the huge Prioksky bison reserve, which is a unique territory, the only one in Russia where bisons and buffalos are bred.

KOLOMNA KALACH

Kalach in central and northern Russia is a type of high-quality white bread baked in the form of a kettlebell with a massive lower part and a “handle” on its top. There are different types of kalach depending on the method and place of making: grated, mixed, pounded, grained, boiled, Moscow-style, Murom-style.

Kalachnaya museum (14, Zaitsev Street, Kolomna, Moscow region) revived the old city craft of kalach production. After all, kalach is baked here according to the recipe of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.







## KOLOMNA PASTILA

Pastila (pastille) is an old Russian delicacy made of sour apples, honey and syrup. Pastila has been produced in Russia since the Middle Ages. It was a good method of preserving the harvest. Apples were stewed in the oven, mashed, spread on planks, dried in the sun. And then they were consumed as a delicacy until a new harvest. It took centuries to develop the preservation method (bake – whip – dry). Kolomna, which has long been famous for its royal and bishops’ apple orchards, came up with its own special pastila. They used to say: “Kolomna pastila is as white as foam, three fingers thick and worth admiring.” And foreign travelers told legends that in Kolomna only monks were aware of the Kolomna pastila recipe and only they knew how to turn an apple into a cloud.



In the Moscow Region one can find sports for all tastes, we have both winter and summer sports, one does not have to go to the Crimea or the Caucasus for that. In the north of the region, in Dmitrovsky urban district, we have nine ski resorts, and in the south we have the biggest glades for glamping, camping and water sports. There are great golf courses. By the way, the region leads the country in popularity of this sport, it ceases to be

**The specifics of this industry is that people come to tourism not for the money, but out of love; the industry is sophisticated, you can't make much money in it, you need to love it.**



elitist, it becomes more affordable – it is a family pastime. If before one had to give a couple of millions to pay the membership fee, it is no longer so now. There are about 800 hotels in the Moscow Region – from hostels without stars and

campings to five-star all-inclusive hotels with swimming pools, aquaparks and well-developed animation. We have about 20 health resorts of various types: from an elite health resort, the Verba Mayr health and spa center, which

belongs to an international Austrian chain, to sanatoriums of a more Soviet style. And that is the beauty of the region. There are English stables, kremlins (from the smallest, in Zarskoye Selo, the only one that was not subjected to destruction, to the Kolomna Kremlin), as well as many monasteries. There are even cinema towns!

**MJ: What would be your advice to future students in the program?**  
The specifics of this industry is that people come to tourism not for the money, but out of love; the industry is sophisticated, you can't make much money in it, you need to love it. I can tell from my own experience. I came into tourism only recently, four years ago; before that I had no connection with it. Now I know – it is an industry where people work for an average of 10-15 years, everyone knows each other. So I would like students to have more field trips where they could get into the circle of people who came into the profession out of love, understand at once what the life of the industry is and what experts think about its development. Only through offsite meetings, hackathons, and seminars can students earning their basic education see how they could apply this in their future profession. [1]





# MGIMO – TORKUNOV: 30 YEARS TOGETHER

Text by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, Anton Novoderezhkin

For Anatoly Torkunov, 2022 is the year of landmark anniversaries: 55 years have passed since he entered MGIMO, 50 years – since his graduation in 1972.

These are his personal milestones, which are certainly of great importance, but this year we also celebrate our common anniversary: 30 years since Anatoly Torkunov became the MGIMO Rector. From 1992 to 2022 thanks to his own efforts and the efforts of the MGIMO community he leads, the institute managed not only to survive during very hard 1990s, but turned into a full-fledged university, one of the flagship Russian higher education institutions. MGIMO has become an international brand. But over the years the Rector himself has become a brand. The Torkunov brand is based not only on thirty years of daily work. It is rich in students and graduates.

Shortly before the anniversary, we managed to gather former students of the early 1990s who studied when Anatoly Torkunov was just starting his career as the MGIMO Rector and who are now well-known in Russia.

A friendly conversation with the Rector took place in the world-famous TASS news agency, now headed by the 1993 MGIMO graduate Sergey Mikhailov who acted as a welcoming host of the meeting. Other guests of the event included Vladimir Legoyda (International Journalism, 1996), Head of the Department for Church's Society and Media Relations (Russian Orthodox Church) and Acting Head of the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Rinat Dosmukhamedov (International Journalism, 1992), Deputy General Director of Inter RAO Engineering; and Yaroslav Skvortsov (International Journalism, 1989), Dean of the School of International Journalism.



**Sergey Mikhailov:** Dear Rector, apart from 30 years of your rectorship, this year marks 50 years since your graduation. Does your class still meet to organize kapustniks (*amateur comic shows for classmates – MJ*)?

**Anatoly Torkunov:** Yes, out of classes of that time it is our class and the class of 1970 whose graduates include Yuri Ushakov (*Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Russia – MJ*) that happen to still meet. By the way, the class of 1970 has gathered recently.

We also would like to meet but all depends on our Minister Sergey Lavrov who is to choose a day, as others have more free time, with most of the classmates being retired. It is only the Minister and Gennady Gatilov, our Permanent Representative in Geneva, who are now still in the service at the MFA.

**Sergey Mikhailov:** Amazing! Unfortunately, our class of 1993 does not meet, we are not that close-knit.

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** Your amateur students' shows are another story. I watched old records of the parties you had taken part in, and I have to say that our Rector is a natural artist, he is very comfortable on the stage, he plays with all his heart... He likes, knows and understands theatre. He is also known in theatre, including in the Alexandrinsky Theatre that I once headed.

**Anatoly Torkunov:** By the way, thank you for offering to hold the MGIMO Day



S. Mikhailov and A. Torkunov



V. Legoyda and R. Dosmukhamedov

**The Torkunov brand is based not only on thirty years of daily work. It is rich in students and graduates.**

in Saint Petersburg, in the Alexandrinsky Theatre. It was not that long ago!

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** Yes, three years ago. I think it was a heartwarming event.

**Anatoly Torkunov:** Indeed, we had a wonderful celebration of the 75th anniversary of the University in Saint Petersburg, gathering MGIMO graduates and friends in the historical building of the theatre, while in the Russian Drama Museum we learnt a lot of interesting facts about the oldest drama troupe in Russia.

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** I am proud that I have made a contribution to the cultural part of the anniversary. Do you remember the early 1990s, when we were students? The cultural life of MGIMO apparently was in decline.

**Anatoly Torkunov:** True, it was flickering out... But today students' activities are at an unprecedented level! I have recently attended the Battle of Schools and I was struck by how professionally freshmen can sing and dance. They can feel music so well, they are so sharp-witted... Unfortunately, the COVID-19 did not allow us to hold the MGIMO Day last year and the year before that. This year, within the framework of the Day, we organized a session of the Russian International Studies Association and a cultural program, including a university concert, a very good operetta show.

**Sergey Mikhailov:** Mr. Torkunov, just to clarify, when did you become the Rector?

**Anatoly Torkunov:** In 1992. But in fact, I started to perform rector's functions in 1989, when I became the First Vice-Rector under Richard Ovinnikov and later under Andrey Stepanov. They both were first-rate diplomats and amazing people, but they knew little about the university.

There is a funny story about my appointment. At the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when Mr. Stepanov's ambassadorial appointment to Bern was approved, Minister Kozyrev asked, "And who is going to be the Rector?" Mr. Stepanov replied, "We will choose a worthy person, someone who is well-known in Russia and abroad."

But at the MGIMO Academic Council, Viktor Anfilov, our distinguished professor, told Mr. Stepanov, "We would like a decent substitute appointed to the position of Rector. That is why I suggest that today the Council vote for this person. I propose to elect Anatoly Torkunov in advance as Rector." And everybody supported my appointment, voting for me. I wrote a letter to Mr. Kozyrev, and he gave his approval.

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** Yes, such freedom reigned in the country – the work collectives could choose their leaders. And what freedom reigned at MGIMO! I am surprised to hear from today's students that they can't get through to the Rector. That means that they just do not want it that much. I remember how I just knocked on the

front office's door and walked in – that is how much I looked forward to implementing my crazy idea to establish an association of journalists. The Rector just said, "All right, go ahead with creating it, and we will help you."

**Sergey Mikhailov:** The Komsomol Committee allocated 10 thousand rubles to us at that time!

Anatoly Torkunov: Yes, there were a lot of you, students, at that time. Now, I also meet freely with them, but it happens in a more organized format.

Yaroslav Skvortsov: Rinat, you would not believe it, but there are universities (and I have visited a lot of them) where even a dean cannot meet the rector, let alone students.



A. Torkunov and V. Legoyda

**A friendly conversation took place in the TASS news agency, now headed by the MGIMO graduate Sergey Mikhailov who acted as a welcoming host of the meeting.**

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** True, and I became the President of the Association. What I want to say is that at that time students could freely walk into the Rector's Office.

**Vladimir Legoyda:** Our Rector represents a new type of leaders. His approachability is a trait of character, an indicator of democracy, real caring about people. It is not only because he worked at every level at the institute: he was a lecturer, a dean, a vice-rector. He feels the internal need to have not just broad, but comprehensive social circle.

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** Anyway, for us the Rector was not a celestial being, as it was the case in the Soviet times, but a very earthborn person who was always ready to help. You didn't say: cool idea, guys, go play around with your association. You provided us with a large room of 200 sq.m. Where can you find now, or then, an area of 200 sq. m. for free? I would like to say that when today somebody starts telling me about reforms and innovations, I usually





A. Torkunov



V. Legoyda and Y. Skvortsov

**Anatoly Torkunov (raising his glass): “Let’s drink to your youth and my maturity. And have a good day!”**

ask, “Do you have a penny for that?” And everybody suddenly goes silent. At MGIMO, nobody talked idly.

**Anatoly Torkunov:** But you also did not talk idly. You created and headed one of the first PR agencies in Russia, actively working with Tatarstan (*the largest Russian region – MJ*), and the first fee-paying students came to us to study this area. Thanks to you we were the pioneers who cultivated relations with Russian regions.

**Rinat Dosmukhamedov:** You know what has always struck me about our Rector? He still produces an impression of a young man in every aspect: his ideas, approaches, assessments, judgements. He reasons like a modern, progressive person. I don’t think that heads of other universities can suggest ideas similar to the ones Mr. Torkunov generates. And he is still generating them!

I remember our conversation in roughly 1993 about your vision of the MGIMO’s future, when you told me about your dream to introduce mathematical analysis in international relations. At that time, few people could consider this idea. In the end, has this idea worked out?

**Anatoly Torkunov:** It has, we are introducing it. I have reached an agreement with the Ministry of Education that the degree in international relations should include mathematics as a core subject. Yesterday, I met with our students from the new degree program in big data at the School of International Relations to which we admitted students who passed an exam in mathematics.

**Sergey Mikhailov:** It is absolutely the right decision! Mathematics changes the way you think.

**Anatoly Torkunov:** Recently, I have participated in yet another episode of the Rectorat show on OTR channel together with lawyers; among those present were the SPSU Rector Nikolay Kropachev, the



S. Mikhailov



R. Dosmukhamedov

**Sergey Mikhailov: “Dear Rector, apart from 30 years of your rectorship, this year marks 50 years since your graduation. Does your class still meet to organize kapustniks? Amazing!”**

academician Taliya Khabrieva and the new Rector of Kazan University Lenar Safin. When I told them about this idea, they literally grabbed hold of it, saying that they also needed to do the same for programs in law. Mathematics should be obligatory for the applicants. I agree with Sergey that it makes your thinking more structured.

**Sergey Mikhailov:** Dear Rector Torkunov, as the host of our meeting, allow me to raise my glass in a toast for you! There is a joke. “I wish you a long life and to turn 120.” “I am already 120.” “Well, then have a good day.”

**Anatoly Torkunov (raising his glass):** Let’s drink to your youth and my maturity. And have a good day! 🍷



Alexander Voloshin is not one to be in the spotlight, but his role in Russian history is well known. As Chief of the Presidential Administration at the turn of the millennium, in a unique transitional period, he helped ensure the continuity of power in Russia. Less is known about Voloshin’s successful career as a businessman. But what we are more interested in is his role in education: for the last five years, he has been at the helm of the board of directors of Skolkovo, one of Russia’s leading business schools. And who better to speak about the tremendous 30 years that Anatoly Torkunov has given to MGIMO as its perennial rector than Alexander Voloshin.

**MJ: You majored in international relations at the Academy of Foreign Trade. Perhaps you dreamed of becoming an ambassador or even a foreign minister?**  
No, I never dreamed about this.

**MJ: And when you left your office as Chief of the Presidential Administration in 2003, were you not asked to take up the position of ambassador to some country? Your government rank allowed it.**  
No, I wasn’t. And it wasn’t something I wanted either. You know, even though

**A**natoly Torkunov invited me to MGIMO several times, most of the times to some ceremonies, and I remember a couple of times I gave diplomas to graduates.

I love to travel, I’ve never wanted to go anywhere for long. Even if we speak about long-distance domestic work trips, it was quite a long time ago too, when I worked in a student construction team at the BAM. So, I never really left Moscow, my hometown, for long. Moscow is my favorite city. Returning to the question, I have always held great respect for ambassadors; their work is incredibly interesting, important, creative, and at times, dangerous. As a Kremlin official, I had the chance to meet with foreign ambassadors as well as our own diplomats. There are many outstanding people among them. Anatoly Torkunov, of course, is front and center in this sense.

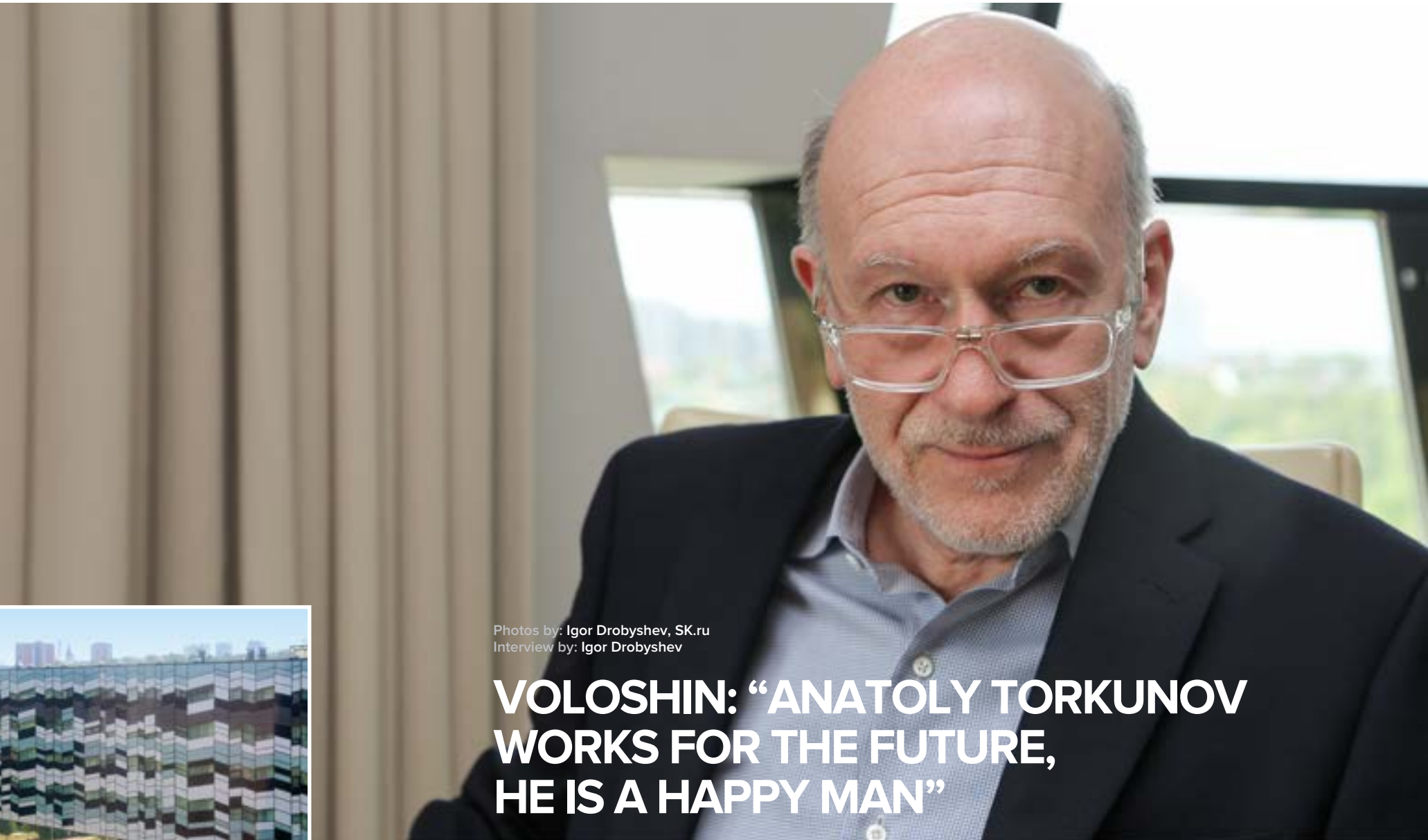
**MJ: And when did you meet him?**  
In the late 1990s, I was already working in the Administration by that time. I have a strong feeling that it was 1999. I don’t even remember under what circumstances we met. He invited me to MGIMO several times, most of the times to some ceremonies, and I remember a couple of times I gave diplomas to graduates. Outside MGIMO, we crossed paths at some formal or informal events we both attended. I can’t say we constantly kept in touch; neither he nor I had enough time for it.

**MJ: So, you’ve known him for more than 20 years. That’s a long time.**  
Yes, enough to say that the Rector is certainly a remarkable, outstanding person, with an extraordinary way of thinking. This makes him an interesting interlocutor and the heart of any company. Unlike, for example, me. I’ve always considered myself a private person and I don’t like being in the spotlight. You know, there are people who struggle because they’re introverted, and that does not apply to him. He is sociable and open, and he loves to share his thoughts, and does so in a captivating manner. What is crucial for an educator, a teacher – he has a knack for keeping his audience engaged. This is obviously a huge advantage for a manager who is in charge of such a prominent educational institution as MGIMO. The rector understands the faculty, and I have witnessed how easily he gets on with these people, who can be difficult. There is a camaraderie at MGIMO; there is no veneration of rank. Everyone respects their superiors, but not in the sense of



“I’m the boss, you’re the fool” or “You’re the boss, I’m the fool” as it happens sometimes.

**MJ: Most importantly, he uses these qualities in his work in order to manage the university effectively.**  
Not only to manage, but also to develop. Anatoly is open to new things. If I’m not mistaken, MGIMO is the first non-tech university to launch a master’s program in artificial intelligence. This is definitely innovative. Talking to him, I saw how passionate he was about the idea of using big data mathematical statistics in management,



Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, SK.ru  
Interview by: Igor Drobyshev

**VOLOSHIN: “ANATOLY TORKUNOV WORKS FOR THE FUTURE, HE IS A HAPPY MAN”**

in forecasting international situations. Although just ten years ago, for most of us (except for those specializing in AI) this idea was rather abstract, a field of the future. Now thanks in part to Anatoly, who some time ago became interested in artificial intelligence, this future is today’s reality, and MGIMO is ahead of the curve when it comes to interest in new trends. Perhaps this trait is a hallmark of the entire Foreign Ministry and foreign policy community to which MGIMO’s rector belongs. On the one hand, members of this community are conservative in a good way, they are bearers of tradition and even a certain inner inertia, which is probably important for this profession, but on the other hand, they are receptive to everything

new. And it is in the combination of these two principles that Anatoly Torkunov’s talent lies. He is able not just to see and hear everything, but to immediately start looking for opportunities to implement these new trends at MGIMO. That’s what he does – with energy, vigor, talent, and great managerial skill.

**MJ: This openness is characteristic of many MGIMO graduates, especially in Anatoly Torkunov’s generation. They studied at MGIMO in the 1960s and 1970s when the university was considered an island of liberalism in the ocean of ideological conservatism; they could discuss things that would cause uproar elsewhere.**

Of course, we were a closed country, but people who worked at MGIMO traveled and saw a lot, experienced life “abroad” with all its pros and cons. People with a broad outlook, they set a certain standard for freethinking, encouraging discussion and freedom of thought. I think Torkunov and his fellow students, the most famous of whom is Sergey Lavrov, absorbed this culture, adding their own talents and personal qualities to it. That’s how the combination of these factors leads to an interest in innovation. Generally speaking, as someone who understands a thing or two about management, I believe there are two most difficult and at the same time most fascinating areas in terms of management:



healthcare and education. It seems to me that being head of a large university is much more difficult than running a factory, no matter what it manufactures. At a university, you deal with people, and also with a fairly complex product that, on the one hand, is subject to standardization for quality assurance purposes, and on the

something that was required yesterday or today – we need to train people so they thrive in the world of tomorrow! It’s a never-ending challenge. There’s a saying that goes, “if you stop, you’re five years behind, but if you move too slowly, you’re already falling behind!” The education industry always has to



**I think MGIMO-Med is a very interesting and useful endeavor. If you wish to advance your medical career and be at the top level, you have to go international.**

other hand, has to be customized. Talented educators, professors are not the easiest people. And you don’t just have five or ten of them, but dozens or even hundreds. To retain, manage, and guide them is an incredibly challenging task. And the students? They are all very different – with their ambitions, critical thinking, not always tolerant. Add to that a plethora of purely financial tasks since the financial situation must be stable. Ensuring this equilibrium is crucial if you want to establish a balance between public funding and generating income. Finally, the education industry is very prone to changes.

**MJ: Today’s knowledge becomes obsolete in a few years.** That’s just it! You don’t teach a person



change, to be a little bit ahead of the curve compared to global progress. It requires an innovative approach, a sensitivity to new things, a vision. It seems to me that MGIMO Rector fully meets this requirement; it is an important component of his success.

**MJ: By the way, MGIMO and Mark Kurzer’s company, Mother and Child, just opened a medical school, MGIMO-Med. It will train medical doctors, competitive in the global market, whose command of English will allow them to communicate with the international community. So here we have the merger of two, according to your version, most challenging industries.** I think this is a very interesting and useful endeavor. This industry is very dynamic, the information is constantly updated. If you wish to advance your medical career and be at the top level, you have to go international. Today, we see a lot of breakthroughs at the intersection of various industries, and professionals who have all the hard skills of their industry combined with

software skills, such as AI, in addition to their competencies in healthcare or international relations, are very popular with employers.

**MJ: The education industry really has changed dramatically in 30 years. Nowadays, successful universities follow trends and introduce interdisciplinary programs, but back in the 1990s you just had to survive. With Anatoly Torkunov, MGIMO powered through all the hardship with dignity, remaining an academic institution. Although many universities have lost their essence, began to sell diplomas,**

**I think Torkunov and his fellow students absorbed this culture, adding their own talents and personal qualities to it.**

**began to rent out, turning into business centers.** You know, after all, universities are here to stay. Epidemics, revolutions, and wars do happen, but they remain because no matter the odds, you have to teach people. In that sense, being head of a university is a rewarding mission; you feel that you invest your energy and efforts into something long-term that won’t just disappear. I believe that Anatoly Torkunov and others who work in education are happy people.

**MJ: The 1990s were a romantic time. On the one hand, those were difficult years, but on the other, these were the years that shaped managers in politics, government, business, media, culture, education (all of these spheres were taking shape too) in an environment of entrepreneurial and creative freedom. What do you think Anatoly Torkunov’s place is in this? As a manager who took MGIMO, and the entire Russian higher education with it, to a respectable level?** It is clear that Anatoly Torkunov is both energetic and passionate – he has been always very involved in MGIMO’s development. In the end, he is a visionary – a man who can foresee the new, see its first sprouts, a man who knows to look beyond the horizon.



Certainly, this is his personality – he is curious and open, bold and determined to try out new things without fear. After all, you don’t have to do that – it’s always easier to continue moving by inertia. Finally, it’s the thrill, something every ambitious person is looking for. But it is not enough, and the rector proved that he is not just remarkable, he’s a skilled manager, resourceful, and intelligent!

**MJ: What would you like to wish Anatoly Torkunov on the occasion of his milestone 30th anniversary?** Our careers and fates are different. I know people who have had several dramatic pivots in their lives and have been successful in different areas, and sometimes they have been successful in some areas and not in others. Thirty years ago, Anatoly Torkunov consciously or unconsciously chose the work that would become his life’s calling.

This is very good for both MGIMO and the country. It is important that he continues this successful work, without losing this wonderful openness to new things, changing in this changing world, finding solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems. Obviously, in the current difficult international environment, MGIMO will have many such problems. MGIMO is an international institution. And today it is quite difficult to maintain the quality of internationality. But remember what we talked about above? Universities are here to stay. I am confident that MGIMO will find its new internationality in this changing world and remain successful, a trailblazer, a leader, and not only in Russia, but in the international arena too. This task does seem like a serious challenge, but it also very exciting. And I would like to wish Anatoly Torkunov success in this endeavor. 🍀





# FILATOV: “SUCH PROFESSIONALS AS TORKUNOV ARE RARE. MGIMO IS LUCKY TO HAVE HIM!”

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, archive of Sergey Filatov

Sergey Filatov became head of the Russian President’s Administration in 1993. A month earlier, the MGIMO labor collective elected Anatoly Torkunov as the Rector of the Institute. It was a hard year for both: in October, there was an armed confrontation between the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) and Boris Yeltsin.

**MJ: Had you known Torkunov before that meeting?**  
Yes, I think we met that year. We attended the same events, and I closely followed his speeches, understood that we shared the same views.

**MJ: What topics did you discuss with him? Did you touch on the problems and prospects of education in Russia?**  
We did. But since I am not an expert in this field we talked more about the development of the country and its political system. Anatoly has his own vision. But we share a view that it is wrong to build a political system controlled by only one decision-maker at the head.

**MJ: So, it should not be a strong presidential republic, shouldn’t it?**  
A strong presidential republic is fine, but the other branches of power must be strong like in the US, for instance. At the time we had a system with the president and the Supreme Soviet virtually controlled by him. I do know how it was formed for elections: individually, by name. The president always had a majority. With the support of a controlled Supreme Soviet he could do whatever he wanted.

**MJ: Managed democracy?**  
By the way, it is what is happening in the US now. It is where it all started. The President is unstoppable, there is no deterrent. On the contrary, lawmakers are trying to find decisions to substantiate what he has done. With the current global crisis under way, it causes concern.

**MJ: On the other hand, a situation where there is a strong president and an independent parliament can end up in shooting, as it was the case in Moscow in October 1993.**  
This is what Russia was like then. The standoff between Mr Yeltsin and the



When the President showed me the decree, I read it and said, “I wouldn’t do it. This move requires careful preparation.”

Supreme Soviet, or better to say, with its head, Mr Khasbulatov, resulted in dual power. The two totally lost the trust in each other. Boris Yeltsin secretly started to prepare his move. He summoned the regions’ leaders and voiced his decision to dissolve the Supreme Soviet. And he did it by Decree #1400. The events took a scary turn.

**MJ: You said you were against that decree as the head of the administration, an influential official. How democratic was it inside the Kremlin?**  
When the President showed me the decree, I read it and said, “Mr Yeltsin, if we implement it, it will bring about major difficulties. I wouldn’t do it. We are not prepared for this move; it requires careful preparation.”

**MJ: But he wouldn’t listen.**  
The President summoned his close circle and asked to speak their mind. I had called them in advance, and they agreed that



years, received a USSR State Award in science and technology. I even help Cuba to build steel industry at the José Martí metallurgical plant. By the way, I told Anatoly about it.

**MJ: Could you tell us about it, too?**  
The Soviet Union built plants abroad, and they needed specialists. In 1966 I was summoned to the Director’s Office of “Serp and Molot” and was asked if I would like to go to Cuba to work. I happily answered “Of course!” My family’s reaction was funny. My wife Galya was so nervous that she started asking silly questions. For some reason she was worried about the flight across the ocean, which is swarming with sharks. She asked me: “Seryozha, do they give some powder against sharks on board a plane?” My mother was anxious: “Seryozha, do not accept it. They send abroad unneeded workers.”

the decree was premature, and that it was better to wait a little. They all kept silent. Only Kozyrev supported it enthusiastically, “These bastards must be crushed!”

**MJ: He was the then Foreign Minister, a diplomat, he could have found a more polite way to put it. You proved to be more diplomatic than the Foreign Minister. Have you ever thought of studying at MGIMO?**  
No, never. I have always been a tech guy. I graduated from Moscow Power Engineering Institute, worked at Moscow Metallurgical Plant “Serp i Molot” for forty

**MJ: Did you build the plant from scratch?**  
No, the plant had already been built by the Americans. It produced reinforcement bars as a lot of construction was under way in Cuba at the time. But the construction plans were so big that the plant could not produce enough. So, the Cubans decided to increase the number of Martin furnaces from two to six. I was an adviser on electrical equipment, and I had Eugenio, the Cuban senior electrician, in my care. In Moscow we were warned that the conditions in Cuba were tough, and we might have very poor accommodation. So, we were advised to take along bedclothes,



kitchenware and so on. Fortunately, we happened to have excess baggage and I threw away bedclothes, pillows and pots at the airport; the accommodation was luxurious: an enormous apartment (a 120 sqm living room, a 20 sqm kitchen) in a three-storied house with an individual elevator. Under Batista the mansion belonged to a rich German Jew who fled from Germany. There was a garage, a yacht, a library with books in four languages – he was an extraordinary person.

**MJ: What recollections do you have?**  
First of all, it was incredibly beautiful there: nature, architecture, American Cadillacs on the roads. And in contrast – extreme poverty of the population. We,



**I have always enjoyed conversing with Mr Torkunov: I liked his calm, thoughtful manner, his face and voice.**

Soviet people, helped the Cubans as much as we could. The relations between our nations were truly fraternal. We were pleased to see with what warmth Fidel treated our country, everything depended on it. Let me give you an example. When there was a riot in Czechoslovakia in 1968, Czechs and Slovaks working in Cuba threw away all the toys that our children gave them as presents and protested in the center street of Havana. The most unpleasant thing was that the Cuban authorities allowed them to stage the protests. Our embassy made their own conclusions and told us to pack and wait for Fidel’s speech in the evening. The plenum of the Central Committee was broadcast on TV. Fidel said three important things: “What if the forces of imperialism provoked what happened in Czechoslovakia in Vietnam, would the Soviet Union come to their rescue?” Stormy applause. “What if it happened in North Korea, would the Soviet Union do the same?” Stormy applause again. “What if it happened in Cuba, should the Soviet Union come to help us?” All rose and applauded showing support for Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. Being a lawyer by education, Fidel made a reservation: “From the legal perspective, the Soviet Union



a bottle of milk and a package of some food, “otherwise they won’t live to the next food stamps day.” This is how we got to know the lifestyle and manners of the Cubans. They are free people with no complexes, very kind and pure souls.

**MJ: You could make a good ambassador. Would you go to Cuba, for example? I am sure the MGIMO Rector would advise you if you wanted to consult him.**  
Oh no, I have never thought of being an ambassador.

**MJ: What would you like to wish Mr Torkunov, who has crossed the 30-year**

did a wrong thing, but politically – and it is the most important thing – we certainly support it.”

**MJ: So, your most important impression of Cuba are people?**  
Certainly. We arrived in Cuba late in November, and in December they celebrate Christmas. Fidel banned it, but every year the government allowed to celebrate it. All the Cubans stopped work at Christmas. Eugenio invited us to his place. Galya and I entered their block of flats. The doors of all flats were wide open, everybody was dancing, drinking beer or something, it was incredibly noisy. We were invited to the table. When we sat down at the table, beside us we saw there only Eugenio and his wife Sarita and their parents. We realized that Cubans invite to the table only relatives and guests. All the others were dancing and singing around or sitting along the walls or in the corners. The food was scarce, of course. When we were leaving, we invited them to our place on 2 January. It was a real problem to find food for a party in Cuba: shops were empty, we had food stamps which we weekly used to get products at the embassy. Somehow, we managed to lay the table. The guests were arriving. Eugenio and Sarita were the last to arrive, and by that time almost everything had been eaten. We were in panic. Luckily, we had a lot of booze and our guests were happy: they started to sing, dance, sat in the corners. Suddenly the door opened, and the head of our group came in. He was passing by and heard the noise from our flat, “What’s going on?” Our flat was full of cigarette smoke. Eugenio understood everything and began to usher the guests out. The next day our head asked the other Soviet specialists to give us



**Anatoly and I share a view that it is wrong to build a political system in Russia controlled by only one decision-maker at the head.**

**milestone as the Rector of MGIMO?**  
I wish him longevity – both in life and in work. He has a very good character: calm, businesslike, open. MGIMO is very lucky to have a rector who has such traits! Mr Torkunov is a real gem, professionals like him are rare. After all, we had only a few people who were really engaged in education in the difficult 1990s. One of them was Anatoly Torkunov. I have great respect for these people, because education is the future of our country. ☐





Photo by: Nika Prize

## SHABDURASULOV: “ANATOLY TORKUNOV IS A HERO OF OUR TIME”

Igor Shabdurasulov, Vice-President of Sistema Public Joint Stock Financial Corporation, and a former high-ranking official of the Government of the Russian Federation, believes that “the epoch of Anatoly Vasilyevich is the time of four Russian foreign ministers, whose support he has relied on both to preserve the Foreign Ministry higher educational establishment and to restore MGIMO’s former standing and create a fully-fledged university.”

**A**s a man whose children and grandchildren have nothing to do with MGIMO – they’ve never entered it, been registered as students or graduated from it – I have a rare opportunity to speak sincerely about our relationship with Anatoly Torkunov. You know, there is a saying that when friends set up a business together, and especially when it brings money, the friendship ends. Anatoly and I have no business together – the only thing we share is mutual respect and liking for each other, as well as common friends and acquaintances that have no vested interest in this relationship. All this let us meet from time to time, give each other a friendly hug and even enjoy a glass or two for a reason or without such...

But wait, I’ve just fibbed, we do have a common business. This business is the Time we live in together (recall the Chinese saying ‘May you live in interesting times!’).

A very long time ago, thirty years ago, to be precise, it so happened that the two of us found ourselves in the halls of power – Anatoly Torkunov became the rector of MGIMO, a top Soviet university, and I started my work at the Government of the Russian Federation where I held several positions dealing with cultural issues, education and the media.

The epoch of Anatoly Torkunov is the time of as many as four Foreign Ministers of Russia – Kozyrev, Primakov, Ivanov and Lavrov – whose support he has relied on both to preserve the Foreign Ministry higher educational establishment and to restore MGIMO’s former standing and with time create a fully-fledged university. Under Sergey Lavrov, who is a living legend himself, Anatoly Torkunov has turned the alma-mater of all Soviet diplomats into a foreign policy “mother of dragons” – young, creative, impeccably educated specialists whom the country needs badly, especially in these troubled times.

I climbed up the career ladder, while Anatoly pursued creative goals having to work towards almost insoluble aims every day and to look for imaginative solutions. Although my work in the Government of

**W**e do have a common business with Anatoly Vasilyevich. This business is the Time we live in together (recall the saying – ‘May you live in interesting times!’)

the Russian Federation under Gaidar and Chernomyrdin, then at Presidential Executive Office and finally at television is not, I must admit, a box of chocolates.

Thirty years passed by all too quickly. Anatoly Vasilyevich and I are still working in our fields and don’t meet too often. But as the Director General of Nika Award I have the following idea: we are all looking for heroes of our time, for a new or a lost ideological pivot of Russia – so why not make a documentary for today’s audience under the title *About One Rector at the Time of Change?* 🦅







# IGNATENKO: “MGIMO AND TORKUNOV ARE THE TWO BRANDS THAT RUSSIA IS PROUD OF”

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Lileev, Vitaly Ignatenko’s archive

Vitaly Ignatenko remembers well when in the early 1990s his friend Anatoly Torkunov was elected Rector of MGIMO against the will of the establishment of the time. “It goes without saying that the only university in the country that was training diplomats, and a very ideologically-charged one, had to be headed by some retired ambassador, a man with a diplomatic background and a severe, withering look. And then, all of a sudden, a handsome, charming, and quite a young man becomes rector of the key educational institution in the country! For many it was like a revolution.” Thirty years have passed, the proverbial ‘time to gather stones’ has come, and since the beginning of the last year on Public Television of Russia (OTR) there has been broadcast a Rectorat show hosted by MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov. The initiative was launched by his friend, Vitaly Ignatenko, the Director General of OTR.

**MJ: Anatoly Torkunov has made a lot of televised remarks. What’s the topicality of this project?**

You see, there is a well-known saying by Socrates, “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” These words are the epigraph to our project the Rectorat. And these words, I’m sure, might be considered the epigraph to Anatoly Torkunov’s life and work. In this program he gathers his colleagues – the heads of Russian universities as well as interesting guests from various fields of work – to discuss everything they are concerned about. And this invaluable experience of an academician, a scholar, a manager that he has gained over the thirty years of being a rector gives special sense and weight to his judgments.

Thirty years ago Anatoly Torkunov was unanimously elected Rector of MGIMO by the university’s staff because people believed that he was capable of raising the institute to an entirely different level of development. They were not mistaken; he has welcomed differing views. Owing to the young rector other people have come to MGIMO lecture halls; the institute has become a true center of thorough training for the people of new time – democratic, open-minded, ready to examine different vectors of political movements existing in this complex world that opened to us in the watershed 1990s.

**MJ: It was the time of change, this time itself brought new people to the forefront.**

There is no doubt in that! Anatoly Torkunov was a child of Gorbachev’s perestroika, that’s why the authorities



“There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” These words by Socrates are the epigraph to our project the Rectorat. And these words might be considered the epigraph to Anatoly Torkunov’s life and work.

didn’t dare go against the unusual decision of the university’s staff. At the same time, important people occupying top positions in the country, including those who graduated from MGIMO, realized that this university was a unique crucible to raise the people that would accomplish major political and state tasks. But the university had to be reformed so as to make it suitable to meet the challenges that Russian society was undergoing at that time. And Anatoly Torkunov managed to carry out that reform. When the need for highly professional and at the same time well-read people of democratic views arose, I understood that Anatoly, the then Vice-Rector of MGIMO, would make an absolutely phenomenal diplomat of our time. Back then, we were young people taking our first steps in big life and politics. And Anatoly Torkunov was an outstanding representative of





meetings nobody paid attention to the recommendations of the authorities – the best people were promoted to the top positions.

**MJ:** You also belong to those who burst into upper spheres and made dazzling careers at those times. At the end of the Soviet period you were Gorbachev’s assistant, and in the 1990s held the position of Vice-Prime Minister. Didn’t Anatoly Vasilievich turn to you for help, by the way? The University lacked money back then, the infrastructure was in shambles, and academic staff left university for business...

Indeed, all those problems were a heavy burden for the young rector, but he managed to solve them brilliantly. To give him credit, Anatoly Torkunov has

**I realized that Anatoly Torkunov as an outstanding representative of his generation would make an absolutely phenomenal diplomat of our time. The generation to which Sergey Lavrov belongs, too. It was a new type of a man: those people were well-versed in literature and music; they wrote poems themselves and were in the know of all premiers of groundbreaking producers of the time.**

that generation. The generation to which Sergey Lavrov belongs, too. It was a new type of a man: those people were well-versed in literature and music; they wrote poems themselves and were in the know of all premiers of groundbreaking producers of the time. It was not by chance that at the staff



never been a victim of his own petitions to the powers that be. He has always tried to solve the problems on his own. And even in those hard times he managed to ensure at least a minimum in terms of scholarships, salaries and medical service that allowed MGIMO to survive and to develop without losing its status and high standing.

It is thanks to his leadership that a number of MGIMO graduates stuck by the alma mater and helped it out. At the same time, the heads of large state corporations started cooperating with MGIMO, and as a result there appeared whole new departments and student programs, while top public officials became university lecturers and loyal MGIMO friends. The reason was that they understood that today’s students would become their future employees. Take me, for instance. I am a Professor at the School of Journalism at MGIMO, and during my lectures as well as in the course of internship that students do (it used to be at the Russian News Agency TASS and currently it’s at television) I see whom I will hire. When a MGIMO graduate from the School of Journalism comes to us to do a test to apply for the job at television, I tell my assistants to pay attention to him / her, because a MGIMO diploma is a standard of excellence. And, indeed, these graduates make good correspondents or presenters, and sometimes work for other channels as well – it is quite a natural thing for such talented people.

**MJ:** When big changes occurred, what helped Anatoly Torkunov stay on top, in your opinion? Many of those who got to the top have already fallen into oblivion. What does Torkunov’s phenomenon consist in?


I think, it is personal magnetism, sense of purpose and clear understanding that being a MGIMO Rector is his destiny. These qualities of him have always produced a powerful impression on everybody. Anatoly Torkunov has never been just a rector who holes up in his office. On the contrary, he has always been extremely open, approachable and personable.

**MJ:** Do you have any wishes for your friend who has just cleared another bar professionally?

I do want to wish the following: let MGIMO and Anatoly Torkunov be always together. MGIMO used to be a brand in itself, but these days its Rector



**This invaluable experience of an academician, a scholar, a manager that Anatoly Torkunov has gained over the thirty years of being a rector gives special sense and weight to his judgments.**

has become a brand himself! Both the university and its rector give credit to each other by staying together. Every 1 September, on the Day of Knowledge, when I see Sergey Lavrov come to MGIMO to make his annual speech to MGIMO students and together with Anatoly Torkunov appear on the stage, I think how lucky those students are, how happy they must be to realize the uniqueness of the moment when the two former fellow students and now the Foreign Minister and a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences address them as future colleagues. 





**MJ: Please, forgive me my irony, but what do they do in a committee on education for peace, democracy and human rights?**

The Committee was an interesting one, very busy. It was designed to promote a culture of democracy and peace at the global, regional and local levels. And, I must say, the MGIMO Rector strictly stuck to the mandate of the Committee, focusing on the educational component. He could convey to other members of the Committee what the 1990s Russia meant by the education “for peace, democracy and human rights.” Anatoly Torkunov explained to his foreign colleagues that a culture of peace, democracy, respect for human rights cannot be imported from abroad, cannot be introduced by a law or a presidential decree. It can only be cultivated by carefully supporting concrete manifestations of civil participation, adopting the experience and best practices of other countries. And he showed using MGIMO as an example how this work was being done in a renewed, democratic Russia. After the meetings, at dinner, he spoke bitterly about the enormous difficulties faced by the Russian higher education system, which was undergoing a radical reform at that time. I remember that during one of these dinners at the residence of the Permanent Delegate at Rue de la Tour, we discussed with him the draft Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. We needed to find a way to refute the claims of domestic experts who maintained that there was no

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photo by: Mikhail Fedotov’s archive

## FEDOTOV: “AT UNESCO, TORKUNOV HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POPULAR PERSON”

Anatoly Torkunov and Mikhail Fedotov first met in person over 30 years ago. It happened in May 1989, when MGIMO hosted the discussion of a participatory draft Soviet legislation on press and other mass media. One of its authors was Mikhail Fedotov. The First Vice-Rector at that time, Anatoly Torkunov was sitting among the students, watching the debate with interest. “Without him, nothing would have happened. I mean this public discussion, as the authorities had, to put it mildly, a rather negative attitude towards our initiative,” says Mikhail Fedotov. “Considerable courage and historical foresight are necessary not only to give the green light to such a discussion, but also to take part in it. We got to know each other better in a few years, in Paris, where I was serving as a Permanent Delegate of Russia to UNESCO.

“And I must admit, we immediately switched to a first-name basis: our acquaintance quickly grew into a friendship. Then our meetings in Paris became regular: for example, he came to participate in the meetings of the International Advisory Committee on Education for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights. His election to the Committee was, certainly, an act of recognition of his own authority and Russia’s role in affirming the ideals of UNESCO.”



shocked as you were when I learned that in Europe they kill more people than they can eat.” As in any good joke, here there is a grain of truth in it.

**MJ: Has Anatoly Torkunov told you about the problems the Institute faced in the 1990s, primarily the financial ones? Could UNESCO help?**

Certainly, I knew about the problems of our higher education not only from

**Every visit of Anatoly Torkunov to UNESCO was a major event. At UNESCO, Mr. Torkunov was a popular person. Many people knew him, respected him and wished to discuss various issues with him.**

such word as “tolerantnost” (“tolerance” in English) in the Russian language, and therefore we needed to talk about “terpimost” (which is also translated as “tolerance” into English). Anatoly and I agreed on a common position, which I sent to Moscow via a code cable: the Russian delegation should not insist on replacing the word “tolerantnost” in the Russian version with the word “terpimost”, since the latter has a double connotation in the Russian language, including one related to brothels.

I have to admit that our discussions with Mr. Torkunov have never been strict, rigorous, or academic. As they usually took place during friendly meals, they had the relevant style, which, however, did not make them less serious. I remember when speaking about the discussions in the Committee, the Rector recalled the following joke. Two delegates to UNESCO meet. One represents a European country, the other represents an African country. The European diplomat tells the African one, “You know, Your Excellency, I was shocked when I recently learned from a newspaper that you still eat people in Africa.” The African diplomat replies, “Yes, Your Excellency, it happens. But I was as







Anatoly Torkunov, but also from other rectors who often came to UNESCO. No one was happy or satisfied with their lives. It is understandable: at that time, the country experienced radical transformations. But UNESCO could not possibly provide Russian universities with any significant financial assistance, since it was not the aim of its creation with its annual budget amounting to the budget of an average American university. But UNESCO's assistance in providing expert, methodological and organizational support for our universities, in helping to strengthen the prestige of Russian higher education was invaluable. And what kind of financial support for Russian universities could be expected at a time when Russia was in arrears of contributions to UNESCO? I perfectly remember what the Director General Federico Mayor said, "Russia is of great value for us not because of its contributions to the budget, but because of its contribution to world culture, science and education."

**In general, the attitude of UNESCO toward Russia was highly benevolent at that time, there was no politicization, confrontation, manifestation of bloc thinking. We lived as one great human family.**

That is why it was so important to have outstanding figures of Russian science, culture, education as participants in the life of UNESCO. In general, the attitude of UNESCO toward Russia was highly benevolent at that time, and, which was especially pleasant to me, there was no politicization, confrontation, manifestation of bloc thinking, no black-

and-white world understanding. We lived as one great human family, striving to solve common problems together. Certainly, our mission knew about the challenges MGIMO was faced with in those years, and, feeling the entire Russian diplomatic service's responsibility to the alma mater, we tried to help using our modest capabilities. One of the initiatives was to create a UNESCO Department for Human Rights and Democracy at MGIMO. Such a structure, by definition, could always count on the support of the Organization. The agreement on the establishment of the Department was signed on 21 June 1994. This UNESCO Department exists to this day, conducting research, developing and implementing special training programs on human rights and democracy. And the great credit for the fact that the Department still exists and successfully develops goes not only to its staff, but also to the Rector. I should note that not all UNESCO departments, established in the mid-1990s, survived to the present day.

However, the example of MGIMO was contagious and largely thanks to that, a wide network of UNESCO departments managed to appear in Russia. Every visit of Anatoly Torkunov to UNESCO, whether he was to participate in the General Conference, the session of the Executive Council or the Committee on Education for Peace, was a major event. At UNESCO, Mr. Torkunov was a popular person both among Russian and foreign diplomats. Many people knew him, respected him and wished to discuss various issues with him. It's not by chance that during his official visit to Moscow in 1997, Federico Mayor gave an open lecture at MGIMO. The Rector introduced him to the audience, and then the flags of tolerance were raised in front of the MGIMO's main building. I wonder where they are now.

**MJ: I haven't seen them. What do they look like?**  
They are very colorful! These are six flags with various images, symbolizing not only the six continents, but also the diversity of the human spirit. For instance, one of them depicts a map of the planet Earth in the shape of two hearts together forming the outline of a butterfly. Though its author, Robert Rauschenberg, saw in his work not a butterfly, but a reference to Michelangelo's masterpiece, the image of the Creator and his Creation on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. This flag got the name of The Spiritual Globe. Other flags of tolerance are even more abstract, which is well reflected in their names: The Breath of Fraternity, The Earth is Our Skin, The Balance of Life, The Path of the Infinite, Harmony and Evolution. They were approved by the General Conference of UNESCO on 16 November 1995, together with the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. The Rector and I, like other members of the Russian delegation, of course, welcomed this decision, seeing in these images primarily the desire to unite people around universal human values rather than just non-conformist aesthetics.

**MJ: What would you like to wish our Rector, who is celebrating 30 years in his position?**  
I wish him not to change anything. If it ain't broken, don't fix it, you shouldn't improve something if it works well. Leave well alone. The more stable the operation



**In 1997, Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor gave a lecture at MGIMO. Anatoly Torkunov introduced him to the audience, and the flags of tolerance were raised in front of the Institute.**

of MGIMO is, the better our diplomatic service will be. The diplomatic service has existed for many centuries, and the older it gets, the more it values loyalty to traditions. Traditions are a great thing! The fact is that there is always a great temptation to adopt new trends, to move to a new style in international relations. It doesn't resonate with me, I am a conservative in this sense.

**MJ: It is unusual for a liberal to call himself a conservative.**  
Yes, I'm a conservative. Primarily, because I don't change my liberal views. ☑



# BATURIN: “ANATOLY TORKUNOV BUILT A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE CALLED MGIMO”

Yuri Baturin and Anatoly Torkunov have warm and friendly relations. “We are almost the same age,” says Baturin, a prominent figure of Russian President Boris Yeltsin’s team in the 1990s. “I am a year older, so we went through the same times and ages in our lives. That’s why when we met in the early 1990s, we pretty quickly switched to first name basis.”

**MJ: Did you meet for work?**

Yes, we met for work in the early 1990s, but we saw each other for the first time under, dare I say, historic circumstances. In May 1989, MGIMO hosted the discussions about a draft Soviet legislation on press and other mass media, which was adopted a year later, on 12 June 1990.

Then, at the height of perestroika, vivid discussions were held everywhere, on various platforms. Alexander Borisov, Dean of the Institute’s School of Journalism, invited us, authors of the draft law – Mikhail Fedotov, Vladimir Entin and me – to MGIMO. A lot of people came to the meeting,

Interview by: Igor Drobyshev  
Photos by: Igor Lileev, Yuri Baturin’s archive

not only those studying journalism, but students from other schools, as the topic of the abolition of censorship concerned everybody. Anatoly Torkunov also came as he was the MGIMO First Vice-Rector and had to attend the meeting by virtue of his position: he had to check who came to the university,

**I am fascinated and impressed by the scale of Anatoly Torkunov’s activities during these 30 years at MGIMO. And he does not rest on his laurels!**

what they were campaigning for and if they were proposing something counter-revolutionary or gibberish. Alexander Borisov introduced us, it was own first in-person meeting.

**MJ: What was your position at that time?**

I was an ordinary research fellow at the Institute of State and Law. Then came the 1990s. I found myself first at the Office of Georgy Shakhnazarov, aide to the President of the USSR, then the August Coup happened. In December, the Soviet flag was hoisted down, the Gorbachev’s administration was disbanded, and I found myself down and out, for some time I didn’t have any idea about what to do. In a short while, they called me from a TV channel and made me an unexpected offer to become the editor-in-chief of one social and political show. I was in charge of the episodes’ content: I was looking for experts on social and political topics, writing lead-ins, texts, etc.



**MJ: How did you become Yeltsin’s aide?**

Here is the story. When I couldn’t find an expert for the episode, I participated in the show myself. That’s how general public got acquainted with my look. But what’s more important, I appealed to the service of presidential aides, and they recommended my candidacy to Yeltsin. But there was a stumbling block: Yeltsin had a negative attitude towards people who worked under Gorbachev. However, the aides insisted, and I first was invited to join the Presidential Council, and later I was called in by Yeltsin himself. We talked, he offered me to become his aide on legal affairs. I said that I needed to think it over. At that time, I was obsessed by television, I was even considering making my own show. Yeltsin said, “You can think it over, but be fast.” I considered the offer, I had additional questions, and I asked to organize another audience with the President. “You must be crazy,” they told me in the Kremlin. “There are ministers who have been waiting for a year to meet him, and you saw him a month ago and want yet another meeting!” Nevertheless, they organized the meeting. I asked the President several questions, I was happy with his answers, but most importantly he easily accepted a condition which was crucial to me: no one could make any changes to documents after me, in other words, my visa would always be the last. I also said, “I would describe the situation to you as it is, without any embellishments, even if you don’t like it. If I bore you with it, just tell me and I will leave.” Yeltsin agreed again, and on 2 June 1993, I became the Presidential Aide on Legal Affairs; in early 1994, I also assumed the position of the Aide on National Security.

**MJ: It is exactly in 1993 when Anatoly Torkunov started his mission as the Rector.**

Yes, I learned about it from newspapers. I was happy for him, though we hadn’t had an opportunity to meet until I, as a presidential aide, needed the help of experts in international relations. We were preparing various speeches for Yeltsin, and if the topic concerned international relations, especially when we were preparing presidential addresses in which international issues were a special focus, we involved experts, including those from the MFA and MGIMO. That’s when Anatoly Torkunov and I started having business meetings. It is customary for us

to be on a first-name basis. At that time, we agreed that he would call me Yura, and I will call him Anatoly.

**MJ: Did you learn anything from him as an expert?**

Yes, I’ll tell you what I learned from him. Then (and now) I express my ideas as a journalist, in a more harsh and acute manner. Anatoly Torkunov chose more diplomatic ways. Right away he could see a word in the text which, as he would say, can be offensive or vexing. Or a wording which can be misinterpreted, which has a different meaning, depending on the context. He would warn us, “Here we can’t

**The MGIMO Rector belongs to a powerful cohort: today, his classmates are the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the most prominent diplomats of our country. I am also impressed by his work as a researcher. But most importantly, I believe he is a very nice person.**

generalize,” and suggested another option. I understood that it was not very hard for him, he did it effortlessly, meaning that he was so professional and convincing. Being a diplomat, he immediately produced a good impression in work communications.

**MJ: How often did you work together?**

When we were preparing some important materials, we could work on the texts for hours. I can’t remember anything special, it was usual routine. But at some point we started seeing each other more frequently: Alexander Borisov invited me to lecture at his School, and for several years I would come to the University once a week to meet the students and after classes I would give the Rector a look-in. Primarily, because the protocol required it: I was the aide to the President, not just a regular visitor, and it was necessary for the head

of the organization to know that there was such a high official on the premises. But I also was keen on giving him a look-in, saying hello, talking for five minutes with a pleasant man.

**MJ: What would you like to wish Mr. Torkunov as he celebrates his 30th anniversary as the Rector of MGIMO in 2022?**

Certainly, I am fascinated and impressed by the scale of his activities during these 30 years at MGIMO. And he does not rest on his laurels! His efforts turned MGIMO into a completely different university, a full-fledged one.



Anatoly Torkunov belongs to a powerful cohort: today, his classmates are the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and the most prominent diplomats of our country. And that is a most suggestive fact. I am also impressed by his work as a researcher, by his papers. But most importantly, I believe he is a very nice person. May he enjoy strength and creative energy to successfully expand and make more attractive for young people not just MGIMO University, but a whole world of knowledge called MGIMO he built! I would also like to wish Academician Torkunov to remain Rector until the time when his students head the Russian diplomatic corps and proudly call him their teacher. This is a true happiness for a man who devoted his whole life to passing on knowledge to the younger generation. 🇷🇺





Photos and text by: Igor Drobyshev, mgimo.ru

# KYRGYZ ATLANTIS

MGIMO University launches MGIMO lyceum classes in Kyrgyzstan as part of the Russian International School (RIS), a project MGIMO runs as part of the Priority 2030 development program. Every now and then, teachers from MGIMO's Gorchakov Lyceum come to Bishkek, to the Lomonosov School, a partner of the Lyceum, and offer guest intensive courses in Russian, literature, mathematics, social studies, and English for students of lyceum classes. MJ publishes trip story about MGIMO's new initiative, the people, and the unique places of Kyrgyzstan.



The language training program of MGIMO lyceum classes involves an in-depth study of English, so during the guest sessions, teachers offered intensive activities for students to work in small groups and prepared individual recommendations to help each class prepare for the final examination aligned with Russian standards. The teachers walked students through the principles of the Russian state exams and broke down different

focus on preparation for state exams) and modern material presentation methods. One of the outreach educational sessions also included an additional professional training program, the Tutoring Guidance Model for lyceum classes, offered by Anastasia Kuzmina, Deputy Principal of the Gorchakov Lyceum. The Lomonosov School’s management and teachers also attended an online session dedicated to practices and tools used by the team

of the Gorchakov Lyceum. The quality of individual curriculum learning is directly linked to the development of tutor competencies in teachers working with children. A tutoring model at the MGIMO Lyceum Model of MGIMO intends for every teacher to have a tutee. By combining the roles of teacher and tutor, the teacher can choose the most effective teaching tactics for each student. The experience of the Gorchakov Lyceum shows that the educational process becomes more productive and humanized.

In September last year, Elena Kozlovskaya, head of MGIMO’s Odintsovo branch, and Lomonosov School President Nuria Turdakunova signed a partnership agreement on curriculum design for grades 8–11, adopting a list of subjects and the scope of the curriculum, taking into account applicable Russian



The children praised the professionalism of the Gorchakov Lyceum team: they gave a standing ovation to social studies teacher Andrey Novakov.

exam assignments. They made students practice tasks that seemed most challenging, the oral part of the Russian language exam for 9th graders, and the essay for 11th graders. Students showed a keen interest in social studies classes: at the guest course wrap-up, 11th graders gave a standing ovation to the Gorchakov Lyceum’s teacher, Andrey Novakov. The children, the toughest critics, praised the professionalism of the Gorchakov Lyceum team.

“I’m eager to learn more,” students wrote in their feedback, and this means that in a short period of time, the teachers succeeded in bringing out the most important, intellectual curiosity, which is the key to successful learning.

An essential part of cooperation is the training of the partner school’s staff. Each teacher of the MGIMO Lyceum held methodological consultations for the Kyrgyz colleagues on their subject (with a







standards. The Russian International School project offers lyceum class students both Russian and Kyrgyz certificates upon successful completion of the program and passing the Basic and Unified State Exams.

The Russian International School project is one of the five strategic projects MGIMO implements under the state support program for Russian universities, Priority 2030. The project is a response to the urgent need of Russian-speaking citizens and foreigners for quality secondary and additional education outside of Russia.

**The school hopes to gradually reach a level where it will be safe to say that students of the lyceum classes graduate from the Gorchakov Lyceum while physically based in Bishkek.**

2022 saw the opening of the first two schools in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and now work is underway to open a school in Turkey. The plan is to open at least 15 Russian International Schools abroad by 2030.

\* \* \*

The streets of Bishkek are filled with students: groups of young women and men spend time in green parks surrounding the universities – studying together, snacking, and chatting.

Life is as vibrant at 175 Dzhunusaliev Street, where the Lomonosov School is located. In the yard, children run around and wage battles at the ping-pong table. It's hot. A sprawling poplar and the school's building offer welcome shade.

MGIMO lyceum classrooms are on the third floor. You could say that this is the only school that offers Russian education in Kyrgyzstan.

There is also Slavyanochka, a private school at the Yeltsin Slavic University. But the latter is a multidisciplinary university, one of the largest in the country. Slavyanochka is a regular school that does not go beyond the local educational standard. And the Lomonosov School is constantly looking for ways to comply with the law and educational standards of Kyrgyzstan while bringing in elements of the Russian education system. Such program synthesis is a breakthrough. In this sense, a private school has more flexibility. Although many disciplines that are present in the education standard of the Russian Federation are not taught here for obvious reasons, such as geography of Russia, history of Russia, and other subjects.

Anyway, when the Ministry knows that the curriculum is based on MGIMO's licenses, it is even easier to work. Over the past year or two, the school staff has been working with their Moscow counterparts on the program and curriculum and have fully synchronized them.

All the bottlenecks were addressed by the teachers of the Gorchakov Lyceum. The crash courses they held were valuable for the students and the teachers. The main prerequisite was for the school's teachers to give their lessons and the Gorchakov team to attend them. Afterwards, they gave methodological recommendations and conducted a series of trainings. This will happen once every quarter: an educator from Russia will conclude the course and refine it with the

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## NURIA TURDAKUNOVA

*President of the Lomonosov School, Bishkek*

In 2019, when Nuria Turdakunova opened the Lomonosov School, Kyrgyzstan's first private school, with instruction in Russian, many questioned her actions. "I was called a traitor, a vatnik, accused of 'being in Putin's pocket'," recalls school president Nuria Turdakunova, "although all these people understand very well: Instruction in Russian is the most accessible for our children, they already know Russian, and any child can speak Russian as their native language.

"Bilingualism is our big advantage. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia where Russian is an official language. So we started working in that direction. And then MGIMO got interested in us. 'We, too, are trying to open Russian-language schools,' they said, 'let's join forces.' And so we did and became partners."

**MJ: What did you like about MGIMO's approach?**

First, an incredible vision that Vice Rectors Artem Malgin and Roman Kotov have, which is nothing short of inspiring. Secondly, mobility, which I don't really see anywhere else today. They immediately set about implementing our common idea. I liked it, and the students' parents didn't expect it to happen so quickly. When you see that your partner is reliable and supportive, it is reassuring.

We are very grateful to the leadership of MGIMO for the fact that in a short period of time we were able to draft and negotiate an agreement, select the children, and train the teachers. So far, we have opened pilot classes at the Lomonosov School, but in the future we see them evolving into a separate school. I am even sure that two or three Russian International Schools will be opening in Kyrgyzstan this year with the help of Russian educational technologies.

**MJ: What did Russian-speaking schools lack before these technologies came along?**

You know, for a long time I worked at the general secondary education department of the Ministry of Education and knew the situation from the inside. We have 6 million people, and 2.5 million of them are school-age children. The total number of schools is 2,200, of which 235 are private. But the problem is that the education they offer does not meet the requirements of, for example, Russian universities, which most graduates of our schools try to get into. Parents have begun to understand that, too. Gone are the days when they were eager to send their children to a private school because it was an elite institution with special conditions for children behind beautiful walls. It came to be understood that artificially overprotecting students, indulging their whims, and throwing fun pajama parties is not what they need. And



what they need above all is knowledge. And so far, nothing better has been invented than classical fundamental education. Parents understand this and are willing to pay for a competency-based approach. Having received a classical foundation, children can then develop their command of foreign languages, especially English, and other skills, becoming well-rounded individuals.

**MJ: So English is the second most popular language in Kyrgyzstan?**

English is no competition to Russian in Kyrgyzstan. In order to properly instruct a child in English, you need an English-speaking environment, which we do not have. Therefore, with 2.5 million schoolchildren, there are none who will understand mathematics in English, nor are there teachers who can teach it in English.





Students of the MGIMO lyceum classes

**bring up citizens.**

Quite right. Patriots of their country, who will preserve and increase the traditional cultural values of Kyrgyzstan. And in this sense, the format of a Russian gymnasium, admitting bright children and giving them quality education, suits us.

That's why we partner with the management of MGIMO's Gorchakov Lyceum. I like that they offer a fundamental education and the teaching format of classical knowledge, and teaching a child is quite a challenge!

But the Gorchakov Lyceum offers instruction that engages children and does not make it difficult for them to take in the material. MGIMO also assists in the training of our teachers, and professional development is an absolute necessity for us. I am grateful to MGIMO for the fact that four of our teachers were able to get into the master's degree program in educational design on a state-sponsored basis. They

**S**o far, nothing better has been invented than classical fundamental education. Parents understand this and are willing to pay for a competency-based approach.

Therefore, as I said, the languages of instruction in Kyrgyzstan are Russian and Kyrgyz. This is the most reasonable option, no matter how much the opponents of our cooperation with Russia may resent it, because there is both an environment and a tradition for it. After all, this way we resolve the question of access to the world's knowledge. If you only know Kyrgyz, you have 20 percent access; if you also know Russian, it's 60 percent. If you learn English, 90 percent of the information and knowledge accumulated by mankind is accessible to you, and if you learn Chinese, then it's 100!

**MJ:** But, as I understand it, it's not enough to bring up consumers, no matter what they consume – information or hamburgers. It is also necessary to





are trained in new material presentation methods and formats. I have seen the result of this work and am very happy with it. The teachers are happy, too.

**MJ: How competitive is the environment in Kyrgyzstan in which MGIMO now works alongside you?**

We are quite aware that we are in a strongly competitive environment, that's why we turned to an institution such as MGIMO for support. Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge schools all work in Kyrgyzstan. We also have Chinese and Turkish schools, the latter are the biggest network of private schools in the country called Sapat ("quality"). But I can't really call them serious competition: their language of instruction is English.


**MJ: How did parents feel about the fact that their children would be taught**

**according to MGIMO standards?**

The MGIMO brand has been known since Soviet times, and many parents believe that since we opened MGIMO lyceum classes, MGIMO is the only future option for their child. But our mission is to give children a good education, to prepare our students well enough for them to get into any university, MGIMO included.

**MJ: Through the education of our young people in Russian universities, the ties between our countries are more likely to grow stronger, which is especially important for Russia now, against a challenging backdrop of an armed confrontation with the West in Europe. Kyrgyzstan and the entire region also live waiting for a crisis to begin: the neighboring Afghanistan is in turmoil. Under**

**these conditions, we have to stick together. It can be done through education.**

I totally agree. We have been using the Russian language for the last hundred years; our society is bilingual and that is our wealth. In our country, every year about 200,000 people finish school; for such a small country like Kyrgyzstan, that's a lot. Therefore, we believe the potential for our development lies in the education of our children. Our young people are incredibly keen to learn new things, and they're talented with languages. Kyrgyzstan and Russia are neighbors; we are integrated, and we share economic prospects, including economic migration of our citizens, all this generates demand for the Russian language. That is why we are very interested in implementing the Russian International School project together with MGIMO. 



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teachers during masterclasses. The school hopes to gradually reach a level where it will be safe to say that students of the lyceum classes graduate from the Gorchakov Lyceum while physically based in Bishkek. There are a total of 60 students in the Gorchakov program across four grades: 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th grades – 15 people each. It is not that many, but there are plans to open a separate school in 2023. The Lomonosov School does not yet have any ties with the MGIMO Lyceum in Tashkent, which opened last year. Perhaps in the future, when the classes in Bishkek turn into a full-fledged lyceum, the two schools will establish such ties, exchange

**And so far, nothing better has been invented than classical fundamental education. Parents understand this and are willing to pay for a competency-based approach to their children's education.**

best practices and experience since both institutions are part of the same program, the Russian International School.

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The decision to open the Lomonosov School came following a forum of university heads of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation, held in Bishkek in 2019. The objective of establishing the school was to give children fundamental knowledge and help them grow into educated, versatile people eager to acquire new knowledge and skills. To do this, it was important, as they say here, to put children "in a well-rounded environment that reveals the intellectual and personal potential of a child." The school's work is based on the best pedagogical practices of MSU University Gymnasium, and teachers, specialists, and experts come here to share their experience and best practices. Thanks to quality teaching methods, students



**SUPARA ETHNOCOMPLEX MUSEUM**

The museum displays items from the personal collection of Tabyldy Egemberdiev. The museum consists of sections devoted to horse tack, agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, hand mills, and supara, ancient crafts, musical instruments, hunting supplies, and jewelry. Finally, the exhibition tells the story of the Great Nomadic Migration (Uluu-kech).







can better prepare for admissions and studying not only at this university but also at other universities in Russia and beyond. They win national and city-wide Olympiads.

In the two or three years that the Lomonosov School has existed, about 30 of its students got into universities in Kyrgyzstan and abroad, many of them on a state-sponsored basis.

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If you plan a trip around Kyrgyzstan, think at least a month of traveling. But if you only have three days, make sure you spend at least one of them outside of Bishkek, at Lake Issyk-Kul (180 kilometers long, 70 kilometers wide, and 700 meters deep). Issyk-Kul means “Hot Lake” in Kyrgyz. This lake, one of the largest in the world, doesn’t freeze over in winter. Hence the name. Another of its wonders

**B**ecause of its shape, the lake is sometimes referred to as the “eye of the Earth”. Some say that it was cosmonaut and artist Alexei Leonov who gave Issyk-Kul this name: during his spacewalk in 1965, he was struck by the lake’s resemblance to a blue eye.

is that the lake is endorheic: about 80 rivers flow into Issyk-Kul, and none flow out, yet the water level remains unchanged.

There are many legends about the lake, but there is one that is especially popular, not with tour guides but with the Kyrgyz themselves: the legend about a great city, which, like Atlantis, was consumed by waters after a terrible earthquake. And from time to time, artifacts are washed ashore from the 700-meter depths of the lake.

Because of its shape, the lake is sometimes referred to as the “eye of the Earth.” Some say that it was cosmonaut Alexei Leonov who gave Issyk-Kul this name. Either during his spacewalk in 1965 or during the Soviet-American Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975, he was struck by the lake’s resemblance to a blue eye.

Three-quarters of Kyrgyzstan’s territory is covered with mountains, so the road to Issyk-Kul is a mountain track, and the lake itself is surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, mesmerizing snow-capped peaks of the Tian Shan. The mountains protect Issyk-Kul from cold winds and sukhoveys. Under the scorching sun, the lake’s surface is silent, and with a haze on the horizon, the mountains are like a mirage in the desert.

The water is incredibly pure, its color ranging from soft blue to dark blue-green, sometimes emerald. Several times less salty than seawater, it is refreshingly cool on a hot day. The finest sand on the beaches is so hot it could be used to make coffee in a cezve. Once out of the water, you bury yourself in the sand and feel the heat of the sun penetrate your bones.

And then to the restaurant, to savor shashlik and manti, and of course, ashlyan-fu with pirozhki, a signature dish of the lakeside town of Karakol, which is a vegetable salad with cold noodles and beef in a sour and spicy broth. It was brought long ago from China by the Dungans (a Muslim people). Karakol is also home to a unique Dungan mosque, which was built without a single nail at the end of the 19th century.

Next door is the Petroglyph Museum, a huge field with boulders as if scattered by some giant sower, on which are carved ancient images, scenes of mountain goat and deer hunting with dogs. The drawings date back to the 2nd millennium







only a select few could visit the center, inaugurated in 2002, but a few years later the entry policy was revised and now anyone can visit.

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It is quite common in Kyrgyzstan for a businessman, driven by a spiritual impulse that is religious and cultural in nature, to invest his wealth in the creation of a place to share his spiritual experiences with the public. For example, Tabyldy Egemberdiev, president of the Shoro company, nurtured the idea of creating the Supara Ethnocomplex for a long time. But no matter which renowned architects he invited, none seemed able to carry out his idea. Egemberdiev, a businessman with no prior architectural experience, had to search for and find the right visual and structural solutions himself.

**T**he water is incredibly pure, its color ranging from soft blue to dark blue-green, sometimes emerald. Several times less salty than seawater, it is refreshingly cool on a hot day.

BC. Driving along the northern shore of the lake, you cannot but stop by the Rukh Ordo Chingiz Aitmatov Cultural Center, named after a Kyrgyz writer, diplomat, and academician. Located in the city of Cholpon-Ata, Rukh Ordo (translated as Blessed City) is an open-air cultural heritage site founded by Tashkul Kereksizov, a well-known Kyrgyz in the country. Using his financial resources, he brought to life the idea of the history and culture of different peoples united in one place. The complex includes museums and five chapels, each representing one of the world's faiths – Islam, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Buddhism, and Judaism – thereby embodying the idea of the unity of God. The House Museum of Chingiz Aitmatov, the Hall of Kyrgyz Art and Culture, the Paintings Gallery, and the Treasury of Knowledge are also part of the Center. Interestingly, originally







same land and turned a muddy stream into a spring of clean water.

In total, there are seven yurts: in one of them, the entire dome is covered with rock paintings of Saimaluu-Tash; in another, the interior is decorated with tush kiyiz (wall hangings) from the 1940s–1950s. There is also a hand-forged, deer-shaped fireplace with a leather ribbon, ornamented with drawings telling the history of the Kyrgyz people. The center is also home to the largest yurt in the world, accommodating 230 people. It took almost a year to find a name for the ethnocomplex, and dozens of different names were considered. The word supara came up at the last moment, a week before registering the site. Supara is an ancient leather tablecloth.

Supara is a luxurious restaurant of Kyrgyz cuisine. Dining there, I could not restrain myself – I ate and ate until I

**I**t is quite common in Kyrgyzstan for a businessman, to follow a spiritual impulse and invest their accumulated capital in the creation of a place to share their spiritual experience with the public.

The very idea of an ethnocultural center did not allow for modern materials to be used in its construction – there was room only for natural materials, known to the ancestors. Those were stone, clay, wood, straw, reed, needlegrass, and leather.

Egemberdiev’s plan was for the site to represent the nomadic lifestyle of the Kyrgyz, their everyday routine, culture, and traditions. In other words, to serve as a part of the spiritual heritage that tells the story of Kyrgyzstan’s past – of yurts and hearths, horses, hunting, and special hospitality, a mastery in accommodating guests.

Tabyldy combined all of this into a single concept.

On a hectare of vacant, but unattractive, swampy land, he became a foreman, designer, and architect all in one. With the help of carpenters and blacksmiths, he built houses from stones found on the





realized I was no Chichikov. Chichikov is Gogol’s character, who ate like a bird – just a piglet was enough to fill him up at breakfast. But I was served several boards of horse meat (dried and boiled), yak meat, lamb innards, lamb breast with skin, and all kinds of soups, noodles, and beshbarmak. In the menu, you can also find game meat roasted on slate stones (tash-mangal was the traditional hunters’ way to prepare dinner and then warm themselves up by the slate stones as they cooled off).

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Objects from Tabyldy Egemberdiev’s personal collection, which he collected all over the country, are on display in the interactive museum of the ethnocomplex. The museum consists of sections devoted to horse tack, agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, hand mills, and supara, ancient crafts, musical instruments, hunting supplies, and jewelry. Finally,

**The Kyrgyz society’s desire to revive historical memory is a good example for the Russian world, which is rediscovering its true identity.**

the exhibition tells the story of the Great Nomadic Migration (Uluu-kech). What makes this museum different from others is that it is interactive: visitors can touch the exhibits to study them more closely and perhaps feel the energy of the ancient masters. You can also learn to play traditional games, such as top-tash, toguz-korgool, chuke, and upai. Tabyldy Egemberdiyev deemed it important to foster patriotism in young people by educating them about the traditions and handicrafts of Kyrgyzstan so that the link between generations is not broken. Apparently, that was what he feared... Russian society experiences a similar moment of truth when, with the beginning of large-scale battles with the Western Moloch in Ukraine, it is yet again sucked into the unrelenting millstones of trying times. The Kyrgyz society’s desire to revive historical memory is a good example for the Russian world, which is rediscovering its true identity. 🇷🇺









# PRONICHEVA: FROM JEWISH MUSEUM TO TRETYAKOV GALLERY

Photos by: Elena Pronicheva's archive

Elena Pronicheva is proud to have been admitted to the MGIMO Political Studies School in 2000 (it was its second enrollment). “I finished school with a gold medal and had a choice of best universities. When I found out that MGIMO had launched a new major I got interested in the career of a political scientist. The political system in Russia was just shaping at the time, and I found the idea of studying those processes promising.” However, Elena never got to work as a political analyst. Today Elena Pronicheva is one of top managers in the museum business. She has wide experience as a museum manager: she developed the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center for eight years, headed the Polytechnic Museum for two years. In February she was appointed Director of the Tretyakov Gallery, a center of world culture.

**MJ: Surely the knowledge you gained at MGIMO proved useful, didn't it?**

Certainly. The qualifications of a political scientist provided a wide range of opportunities for further application of professional knowledge. You could make a career in political journalism, in diplomacy, in social studies. Perhaps few people understood then (and understand now) the essence of a political scientist's work. If you look at the top political analysts, you will see that few of them graduated from a political studies school: some are philosophy graduates, others are historians or lawyers. But I am grateful to the School of Political Studies and Andrey Melvil, its creator, to all the teaching staff for the knowledge and care they gave us. We were the School's first students, so we were taken great care of, studying in a personalized learning environment, as the School was small. Besides, 30% of the students were expelled after the first end-of-term examinations, and in-depth personalized learning began.

**MJ: Do you feel nostalgic about the early 2000s?**

It was a unique time of the formation of the school, when, for example, we did not have a list of textbooks and used the books published by major world universities, which were stored at the department in a single copy. We translated them ourselves and used them in seminars. It was a unique way of learning; so, relations with professors were different, as well as interest in the subject.

**MJ: How did you get to know students' life?**



**We were the first students of the Political Studies School, so we were taken great care of, studying in a personalized learning environment.**

I hardly had time for that. I started combining work and studies rather early. After the first end-of-term examinations I decided that I need professional experience

and found a job in the State Duma. I worked as an assistant to an MP in the Committee on Budget and Taxes.

**MJ: Did watching real political life complement your theoretical knowledge?**

You know it would be an exaggeration to say that at the age of 19 I was eager to grasp how the new political system and parties are being formed. Even as an MP's assistant I did only technical things: printed out documents and arranged committee meetings. I can't say I had an opportunity to apply my theoretical knowledge, but that experience helped me understand, at least in general terms, what sort of work may await me after graduation.







**MJ: How did you happen to engage in the museum business?**  
Once I was offered to develop a few projects at the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (VDNKh), and when I implemented some of them, I became noticed and was invited to work at the Jewish Museum.

**MJ: The museum is quite special, it is not the Tretyakov Gallery or the Hermitage Museum as it deals with a sensitive issue – the Holocaust. And you were invited to immerse into it...**  
It is not a museum of tragedy, as many see it, it is not exclusively about the Holocaust. It is a museum of history and traditions of Jewish people, of their contribution to the history and fate of the Russian state. The main exposition of the museum focuses on the participation of Jews in important events of Russian history in various periods. One can't say that Jewish people in this country had a history that was different from that of other ethnicities, we were citizens of the same state, we shared common history. The fact that the legendary radio announcer Yuri Levitan who told the nation about the victories of the

**When the rise in attendance became evident, it showed that we were going the right way.**

Red army was a Jew does not prevent you from associating his voice with the Great Patriotic War. Once again, it is not a museum of tragedy, I was not afraid of the specificity. The only real challenge I faced was lack of knowledge. I needed quite a lot of time to immerse into the material, understand the specificity, study traditions, the religious component, which is somehow part of the museum structure. But it is a routine professional approach to business – the need and ambition to study new topics. The standard project implementation period is 1000 days. Probably it was enough for me.

**MJ: When did you realize that you have**

**a passion for the museum business?**  
When there were first results. Any cultural institution with premises of its own is usually assessed by attendance, by the demand from the audience. When the rise in attendance became evident, this KPI showed that we were going the right way.

**MJ: Which of the projects you were engaged in would you highlight?**  
Out of projects that would be interesting for the MGIMO audience I would single out things we did in cooperation with the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO – projects on tolerance and intercultural dialogue. To be more specific, we did a lot of educational and cultural projects on adaptation of migrants. For example, we developed a system of educational projects on perceiving the image of a migrant for UNESCO-associated schools in 180 countries. At the premises of the Tolerance Center, which is part of the museum, The Federal Research and Methodology Center for Psychology and Tolerance Education was established, with such areas of expertise as civic identity and patriotism.

**MJ: What experience did you gain in this job, what did the Jewish Museum enrich you with?**

To begin with, it was my first experience of a major administrative post, and, by and large, it shaped my managerial skills. Secondly, it may sound banal, but the museum taught me tolerance.

**MJ: What did the work as the General Director of the Polytechnic Museum equip you with?**  
When I got the offer from the Ministry of Culture, it was rather unexpected; to head a state museum would mean civil service instead of work in a private sector. But on reflection I accepted it. At the Jewish Museum I supervised program and exhibition activities, whereas in two years at the Polytechnic Museum I gained wide experience of shaping the concept and the strategy of development of a major federal museum and was responsible for their implementation. Though the historic building of the Polytechnic Museum is still closed (its opening is scheduled for the period up to 2025), the museum's collection is open to the public at other premises. The museum holds temporary exhibitions, implement a lot of projects at partners' premises, including VDNKh, there are plans for regions, so the strategy is gradually shaping up.

**MJ: What was the core idea of your**

**concept?**  
The key mission of the Polytechnic Museum consists in maximal accessibility of the museum's unique collection, which has been built for 150 years, in enhancing the capacities which none of museums in this country has. So, an idea emerged to create a branch chain in partnership regions and joint project activities at various regional venues. Moreover, this country has certain priorities in industry development which the museum is prepared to somehow fit into its projects. In these terms it is going back to basics to become an exhibition space of modern technologies and achievements of

**The standard project implementation period is 1000 days. Probably it was enough for me to understand that I immersed into the Jewish Museum subject matter.**

Russian science rather than just a "historical museum with exhibits". Remember that originally the museum was established as a successor of the 1872 All-Russian Polytechnic Exhibition devoted to the anniversary of Peter the Great. Besides, the Museum has the Polytechnic library – one of the biggest Russian libraries in science and technology. It provides endless opportunities for both popularization and development of science.

**MJ: You didn't happen to work for 1000 days, though.**  
No, I didn't. It so happened that early this year I was offered to head the Tretyakov Gallery.

**MJ: It is a high level.**  
Very high. And very responsible, too. In terms of structure and functional content a state museum differs significantly from a private cultural institution, such as the Jewish Museum. Thus, the tasks that the Gallery faces are of a national scale.

**MJ: I am sure that at your new post the expertise you gained both at the Polytechnic and Jewish Museum will be useful. Could you tell us about your achievements in a couple of years?**  
Certainly. I promise.





Photos by: Mareta Keligova,  
Kristina Krasnyanskaya's archive

# KRASNIANSKAYA: “A GALLERIST, TOO, CANNOT DO WITHOUT ACCOUNTING”

Before her appointment as Executive Director of the Jewish Museum, Kristina Krasnyanskaya (MGIMO, 2002) believed that its Center for Tolerance was created to combat anti-Semitism in Russia. “However, I discovered that it was not,” she says, “it functions as an expertise center on extremism and xenophobia, concerned with issues faced by migrants, social bullying, and domestic violence regardless of the nationality of the harassment victims. And today we're working to strengthen that.”

**MJ:** Don't you think you'll soon have to dedicate an entire section to Russophobia? Since the start of the special operation in Ukraine, attacks on

Russians living abroad have become so frequent that they feel like they are “Jews of today.” And if this continues, Russians, like Jews seeking the

**Promised Land, may “make aliyah” to their historical homeland, Russia.** Yes, this scenario is quite possible. Given today's hostility in the West against people holding Russian passports, aliyah, a return to one's homeland, makes perfect sense. Unfortunately, unjustified sanctions against Russian citizens (freezing accounts of individuals and companies who have done nothing wrong simply on the grounds that they have Russian passports; seizing real estate and other assets) undermine the foundations



**A**t MGIMO, I received a good education and acquired skills, which have proven to be useful in the gallery business. Behind the pretty picture of this business hides the routine: management, accounting, marketing.

of global democracy and human rights. After all, the idea of having assets in the West was a form of insurance in case of economic or political instability in Russia. In the current situation, Russia seems to be one of the safest places. So, yes, the Russians will start coming home. Even in the West, they write that sanctions are likely to have the opposite effect – they







you are going to write anyway. The trick is to know what to write about.” I am very happy that I received a good education and acquired skills at the School of International Economic Relations, which have also proven to be useful in the gallery business. After all, it is not like the gallerist sits around doing nothing, and the artwork, beautifully hung all around them, sells itself. Behind this pretty picture hides routine and completely down-to-earth skills: management, accounting, marketing.

**MJ: Did you ever have a job in the field you studied in?**  
I was with a subsidiary of Gazprom for a while, our team worked with Ruhrgas (I graduated with German as my foreign language), and it was a very routine job in a big system. So soon I was happy to switch to our small family business, a woodworking company in Karelia. But four years later, I got married and no longer had the physical ability to carry on with this project.

**MJ: The woodworking business is no accident, for wood is, after all, the material used for frames. Did you become any good with wood types?**  
Yes, I did, and I also gained a pretty good mastery of wood processing techniques. The books are still on the shelf... But one day, my husband asked me a logical question: “Did it make sense to study at MGIMO to then get into such a mundane business as woodworking?” And we sold the company. I had more time on my

hands, caught up in the wave of interest in art, I began to visit exhibitions, art fairs, and galleries – I liked it all very much. It was a completely different world. A world that had no boundaries, where you were constantly growing, developing, and every day expanding your own boundaries of perception – intellectual, aesthetic, and of the world. I earned a second degree in art history and opened a gallery. I started off with the artists of the first wave of Russian



will unite Russians under the national flag. That is a mentality that is specific to Russians and is difficult to understand.

**MJ: What made you pursue a career in art after receiving a degree in International Economical Relations?**  
Before I got into MGIMO University, my father suggested that after high school, I study art at Sorbonne. It was the time the art market in Russia started to develop. But I did not really feel like giving up on my fun Moscow life and my friends. And then I did not quite see the prospect, I joked I would become a “museum rat.” MGIMO University was somewhat of a family dream: my father could not get in at the time because, in the Soviet Union, it was considered a closed university, not really accessible. But in 1997, when

**To succeed in mastering the German language required not only hard work but also a strong character.**

I enrolled, it had already opened to the general public. Why International Economic Relations? Frankly speaking, my plan was to study journalism, as I considered myself a humanities person, I wrote articles, poetry, prose... But during a family discussion, my wise father said, “You need to get into some kind of applied field. If you have the urge to write,



emigration and ended up with collectible design, and it was thanks to the design, the Soviet design specifically, that the gallery became known in the West. We were the first Russian gallery to showcase Soviet design at Design Miami Basel, the largest design fair, for seven years. I have assembled a unique collection, the core of which is rare Soviet, mostly designer, furniture from the 1920s-1960s.

**MJ: Are you a collector yourself?**

Sure. It's impossible not to become one when you are in the art business. I have different objects: I started with first-wave Russian émigré artists of the 1920s – 1930s, and then I added contemporary art and collectible design.

**MJ: What is collectible design?**

These are furniture pieces that can be either vintage or modern, unique or part of a limited series, and necessarily designer. These are objects featured in museum and gallery exhibitions,



**D**id it make sense to study at MGIMO to then get into such a mundane business as woodworking? And we sold the company.

exists with a modern armchair. Pretty quickly, I realized that the design market was just as fascinating as the art market. In 2011, in Russia, these were uncharted waters. The niche was empty. I got into it very seriously, brought the best pieces from the West, and exhibited rare Soviet objects at Western fairs. A large titled Soviet Design: From Constructivism to Modernism 1920s–1960s at the Shchusev Museum became the pinnacle of my fascination with Soviet design. It was very popular and was prolonged three times. Then, with Scheidegger & Spiess, a Swiss publisher, I published a hefty book under the same title, which is to date the only and, perhaps, unique guide to the history of Soviet design. The book explores how Soviet design evolved after the revolution, provides the first timeline classification, and gives a comprehensive description of such styles as Soviet Art

designer objects purchased for investment purposes, auctions, and collections. The main criterion is authorship and limited reproduction.

We held our first exhibition devoted to collectible design at my gallery in Moscow in 2011, and it was called Dialectics of Interior. The exhibition's opening brought together all the finest connoisseurs – collectors, fashion decorators, and

members of the art community. Thanks to Gazprombank's support and guarantees, we were able to secure unique objects from two world-renowned French galleries – Didier Aharon and Yves Gastou. The exhibition comprised the best quintessential examples of twentieth-century design and antique furniture. Moreover, the exhibition clearly showed how beautifully an antique dresser co-

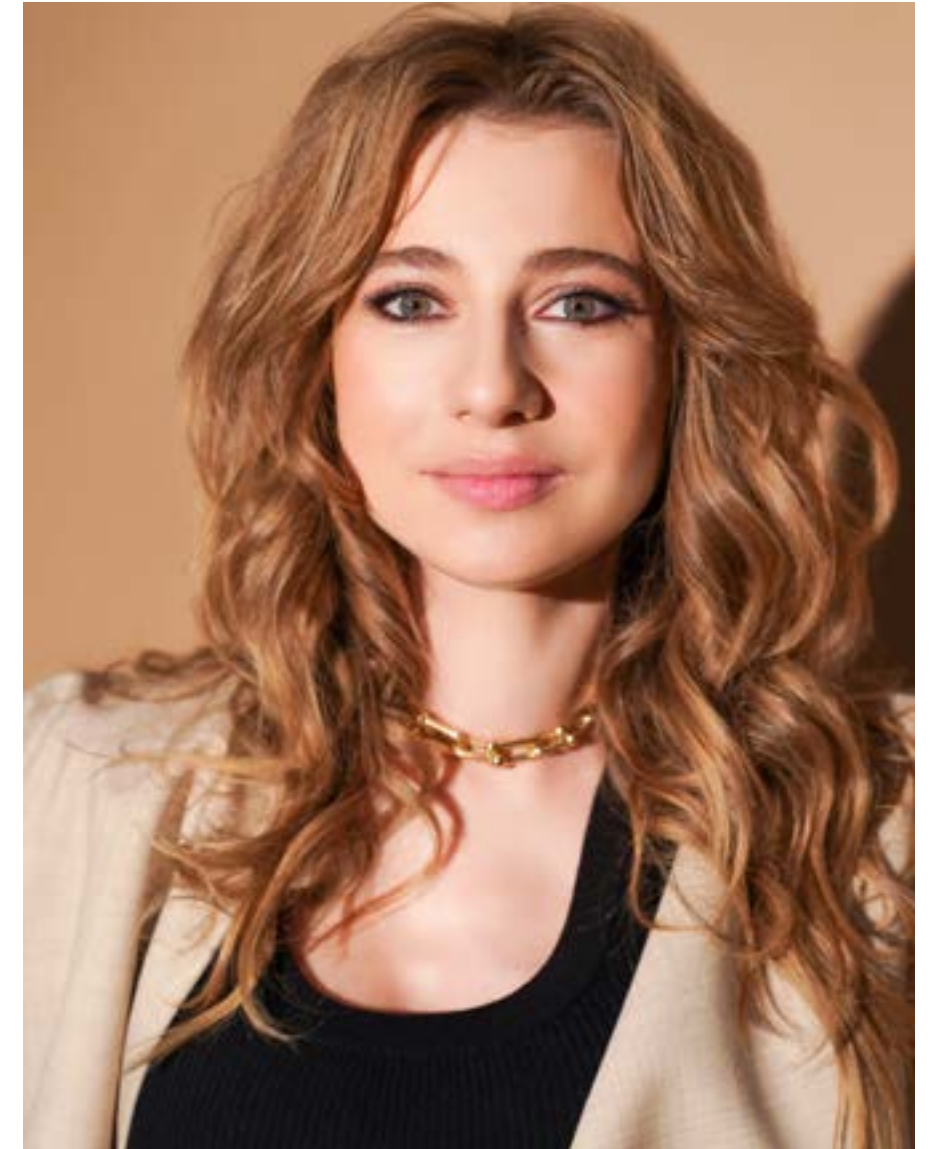
Deco, Stalinist Empire style, the golden age of Soviet design, that is the 1960s, what is known as Soviet modernism. Three museums participated in the preparation of the book: the Bakhrushin Museum, the Shchusev Museum, and MOMus' Costakis Collection in Thessaloniki. What this book has really achieved is that thanks to it, Soviet design has finally found a face.

**MJ: In 2021, you took over as Executive Director of the Jewish Museum. Have you lost interest in the gallery?**

No, I have not lost interest in my gallery. We did more than 100 exhibitions, including museum exhibitions. We were the only Russian gallery that participated in all the major international fairs. Before coming to the Jewish Museum, I had already been head of the board of trustees of the Costakis Collection in Thessaloniki, which is part of the MOMus Group, for five years. This museum houses the collection of the famous Soviet collector of Greek origin, George Costakis. In the 1970s, he gathered a unique collection of the Russian avant-garde, part of which he left to the Tretyakov Gallery upon his leaving Russia – about 800 works. The remaining 1300 works were purchased by the Ministry of Culture of Greece from his daughter in 2000, after his death. Today, this is probably the largest collection of authentic Russian avant-garde outside of Russia.

The museum's director, Maria Tsantsanoglou, wanted the museum to be more than just a place from which the world's museums would borrow works for major exhibitions but to become a landmark in its own right on the museum map of the world. So, we decided to launch a program to reinvent the place. I wrote a strategy, successfully pitched it to a number of collectors, who then joined the board of trustees and began to develop the museum, and I brought in avant-garde experts from Russia to systematize the collection. We have held some powerful exhibitions. The first one was aptly called Restart and featured the museum's best objects, followed by a large exhibition by “the Amazon of the Russian avant-garde,” Lyubov Popova. That one was followed by Ivan Kliun's exhibition, which was previously postponed due to the pandemic...

This was when I received an offer from the Jewish Museum. Interestingly, I had decided a couple of years before



**T**he Jewish Museum is a private cultural institution, which means there is more freedom and ambition. We rely on sponsors and donations, similar to American museums, and are entirely privately funded. And I do not regret it one bit.

that I would not take a director's job at any museum... Nevertheless, the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center interested me.

This is a fairly young, ambitious, youth-oriented museum. Alexander Boroda, the Director General, immediately set the task: to organize blockbuster exhibitions at the museum and create an international identity for the museum, that is, to do what I know how to do.

Another advantage is that this is a private museum, which means there is more freedom and ambition. We rely on sponsors and donations, similar to American museums, and are entirely privately funded. Anyway, I could not help but take on this new and exciting, aspirational project. And I do not regret it one bit.



# DYMSHITZ: “SENSE OF BELONGING GAVE ME STRENGTH”

Photos by: Nina Dymshitz’s archive

Nina Dymshitz (MGIMO, 2011) has worked for the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center for five years. “I held the position of Communications Manager over the first year, then my head resigned, and I was offered her place, the one of Director of Communications.”

Nina received an entirely different education at MGIMO: first, she studied at the School of International Relations to do a BA in regional studies, and then completed an MA course in world politics. At the university Nina studied Polish, English and Ukrainian. She developed a true interest in Poland, but didn’t like the Polish language at first. “It was really hard over the first half a year or a year, but everything improved when I did an internship at the University of Warsaw, and at the end of my

no other way. Judge for yourself: being a Jewish herself she studied the Polish language at MGIMO and developed interest in Poland, infamous for the tragedy of Jews during WWII. And a few years after graduation she started her work for the Jewish Museum whose permanent exhibition reflects that tragic chapter of Jewish history. “Well, it looks like a coincidence, but it isn’t one. I studied the history of the Jewish community in Poland quite well during my university years. Indeed,

the education I received at MGIMO and my relations with Poland gave me an opportunity to delve deeper into my work at the Jewish Museum. The topic is very close to me: I am both Jewish myself and I know the region well, thus emotionally and professionally the museum was my place.” Nina Dymshitz began her work in the field of communications at Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design. “The beginning of the 2010s was a period of urban renaissance in Moscow – there opened new development institutes,



studies I got an excellent mark at the state exam. We worked with the Polish language a lot, translated conference materials and research papers which started to be published in different journals when the Russian-Polish group on Difficult Matters was launched. “There was a dramatic moment too. After the air crash of President Kaczyński’s plane, my fellow students translated during the identification procedure for the relatives of victims of that terrible catastrophe.” Nina has to believe in destiny, there’s

**E**ducation I received at MGIMO and my relations with Poland gave me an opportunity to delve deeper into my work at the Jewish Museum.

museums, and I felt I was interested in cultural projects, I wanted to work at some modern museum. Then a friend of mine sent me an advertisement that the Jewish Museum in Moscow was looking for a PR-manager to work at its Tolerance Center.” Nina’s department specialized not only on communications but also on organizing large events and digital projects. “All of them were challenges – both creative and intellectual. New Israeli Sound – a festival of modern Israeli music – is one of the most cherished projects for my team and

me. Israeli performers who were not the most popular ones, but who would interest Russian and international audience, took part in it. In fact, we discovered them for Russia.” When asked what the museum and the center gave her during the five years of work there, Nina said, “From a professional perspective, the museum gives plenty of opportunities for development and self-fulfillment. Alexander Boroda, the Jewish Museum Director General, trusts his employees, is not a micromanager at all, supports lots of ideas whose implementation makes you grow professionally and reach a new level – as an organizer, manager, communicator and PR-specialist.” When Nina Dymshitz began her work at the museum, she soon found out that its Executive Director Elena Pronicheva had also graduated from MGIMO. “We worked

**I** fell in love with Warsaw; it’s a very pleasant city. The only place I found hard to be at was the territory of a former Jewish ghetto.

very closely together, and I have the very best impressions about that cooperation. Of course, we didn’t discuss the fact that we had one and the same alma-mater as such, but she knew that I had graduated from MGIMO, and it might have been felt on a non-verbal level. All the more so as we did a big joint project together with MGIMO University in 2017. It was an exhibition devoted to the Évian Conference, which was held on the eve of WWII to discuss the issue of saving Jews in Europe. Sadly, the conference failed as the participating countries were not prepared to solve this issue.” The Jewish Museum is located in a constructivist building of Bakhmetevsky Garage designed by Konstantin Melnikov. This Soviet avant-garde building was restored by the Jewish community. “Every day you go here and there without paying much attention, but then at some moment you just stop, look up and realize what building you are in. I don’t work at the Museum any longer, but I still remember the sense of belonging experienced at those moments that gave me strength.”







# THE BREAKTHROUGH WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Text and photos by Igor Drobyshev

For any international forum, a quarter of a century is an important milestone. However, but for the pandemic and thus cancelled SPIEF 2020, St. Petersburg International Economic Forum would have celebrated its 25th anniversary last summer.



Well, the pandemic is over, but the experience we've got through it turned out to be useful. The country has summoned up its resources, the long-forgotten discipline from the Soviet times has returned, the people have united around those in the medical profession. It seems to be a good time for a breakthrough which the country needs.

More than a hundred MGIMO alumni gathered for a party on the eve of SPIEF. The party was somewhat more modest than the one last year when MGIMO graduates met at the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo (a state museum, in fact), and took place at a 19th century mansion in the centre of St. Petersburg on the bank of the Moyka River.

The MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov opened the meeting. In his speech he emphasized the importance of such gatherings and the unique character of the format itself, as it unites MGIMO graduates who live and work in St. Petersburg and alumni from all over Russia who have come to the largest economic forum in the country. "All of you have such different pathways! At times, I go on the Internet and accidentally find out that it is a graduate of the School of International Journalism that acts in some TV series. For instance, I watched a movie recently in which a MGIMO graduate starred as Catherine the Great – you see what gifted

graduates we have! We are proud that so many careers, professions, aptitudes and interests are represented in our community!"

Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council Konstantin Kosachev also greeted his colleagues. He said, "We must be thankful to our Rector for helping us keep in touch. We are all united by the education received at MGIMO University. There is an opinion that our diploma gives us the right to force some doors open, but I sincerely believe that a diploma from MGIMO University is an obligation rather than a right. However, it is our top-level education as well as the science of life that we are taught at the University that ultimately let us open certain doors."

Artem Malgin, Vice-Rector for Strategic

**Alexey Chekunkov:**  
"I hope that we will build some kind of constructive, sovereign, socially-oriented system that will enable us to ensure a decent standard of living for our children."



Development and Chief of the Rector's Office, MGIMO, took advantage of the relaxed atmosphere of the meeting (created by a glass of champagne) and made an undemanding presentation (so as not to ruin the festive mood of those gathered) of MGIMO Development Program realized as part of Priority 2030 – the largest federal academic leadership program over the last 30 years. He spoke about five strategic projects that had already been realized at the University for a year. Artem Malgin said, "Key changes at the University are related to digitalization, recruiting new staff and strengthening ties with the regions. The principle is simple enough: we've been given money and now we have to share it with those who are either as professional as we are in the given

sphere or even better than us. This is the condition for creating consortiums, and we already have several of them... One of the consortiums we are proud of has been created together with Ivannikov Institute for System Programming of the RAS. From this year on we are going to have two new Master programs at the School of International Relations and the School of International Economic Relations which will give a new digital perspective to traditional MGIMO educational programs. Probably, the program we are presenting today will give you some ideas you'd like to share, so feel free to come here to the microphone and speak."

Alexey Chekunkov, the Minister of Development of the Far East and the Arctic, was the first to come to the

**Artem Malgin:**  
"MGIMO has been given money and now we have to share it with those who are either as professional as we are in the given sphere or even better than us. This is the condition for creating consortiums."

microphone. He said, "As a graduate of the School of International Economic Relations who is used to working with numbers, I see certain numerology here: SPIEF celebrates its 25th anniversary and 25 years ago I came from Minsk to Moscow to enter MGIMO. At those times we were taught in keeping with market liberalism and I must say that over those 25 years we've managed to build consumer capitalism... However, today it has become evident that the latter isn't working, so we are going to build new society. I hope that this time it will be some kind of constructive, sovereign, socially-oriented system that will enable us to ensure a decent standard of living for our children. The time of major challenges has come, but this is what



we were geared up for at MGIMO... Since the time I started my work at the Ministry of Development of the Far East and the Arctic, I've accumulated more than 2 million miles on my Aeroflot account that the airline's bonus loyalty program no longer covers. But the numerological series goes on: after two million miles, five waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and six sets of Western sanctions, I've come to the forum to debate with my colleagues during a session titled "Turn to the East 3.0". Funny, isn't it? What does this 3.0 mean? Does it imply the success or failure of the previous two versions?"

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In the Forum's Cyber café, the orders for ice-cream and coffee were taken by a naturally-looking woman, which turned out to be a rubber humanoid robot cashier Dunyasha. The



**Anatoly Torkunov:**  
“Our foreign students didn’t want to leave; an Italian student cried at my office saying that they were forced to leave. And many of them disobeyed: 60 per cent of students that were pressed to leave opted to stay, and are currently waiting to get their diplomas.”

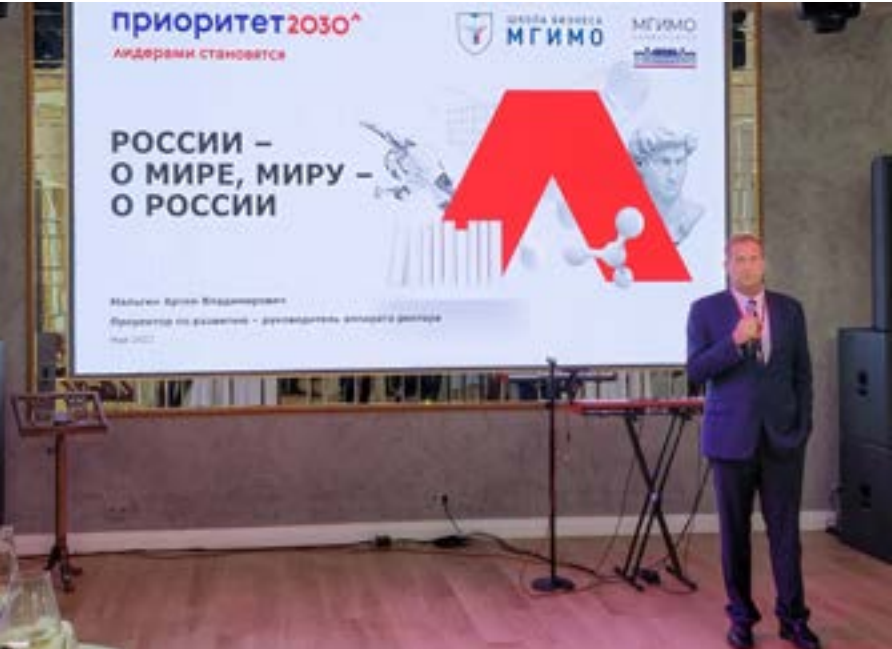
robot’s designers claim that Dunyasha can get acquainted with people, recognize them and have a friendly chat on a variety of topics, being quite spontaneous. Everything seems to be fine, but at some point the cashier offers: “Now choose entertainment, please!” and a prudish forum participant involuntarily wants to shrink and look back thievishly. These “entertainments” (whatever they are) are labeled as “edutainment interactive options” on the menu.  
But Dunyasha’s main asset is her skin, or rather the artificial cover that imitates the skin. It looks quite natural. Dunyasha can wink, move her eyebrows and lips, thus showing different emotions. According to the robot’s designers, Dunyasha’s prototype is “Mrs. Perm” and the wife of a businessman from Perm who is the founder of Cyber café network.

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Meanwhile, Rector of MGIMO had his own busy program at the Forum. He took part in a number of interesting sessions, and the first one was Internationalization of Russian Higher Education under Modern Conditions. The discussion was focused on the issues of cooperation with foreign partners and entering new international educational markets with a view to present-day developments. Anatoly Torkunov opened the discussion, offering his comments on the current situation and the prospects of international cooperation in the field of education. “‘Internationality’ of any university is a world standard. It doesn’t depend on geopolitical conditions and twists of the international situation. Our goal today is to search for new partners and to find new ways of communication with our colleagues abroad. Personally, I wouldn’t dramatize the situation around our international cooperation. In my opinion, it’s important not to sink to the depths of despair thinking that all our traditional partners have turned their backs on us. That’s simply not true! MGIMO has more than one hundred European partners out of which only four have rejected cooperation. The rest have informed us that they are ready to admit our students on a case-by-case basis. They do not sever the ties that have been established over decades.”  
Touching upon the heated discussion around the Bologna Process, Anatoly Torkunov stated, “Indeed, I must say that the Bologna Process had absolutely no effect on our curricula and courses, we defined them ourselves. There is a certain

misunderstanding concerning the essence of the Bologna System, which is more of a figurative term, as we don’t fit into this system in many respects. And speaking about cooperation on dual degrees, there has always been huge work done to coordinate the courses delivered both to Russian and foreign students. We gave everything we wanted to give to our foreign students, and nobody imposed on us their views on the academic content of our courses.... By the way, our foreign students didn’t want to leave; an Italian student cried at my office saying that they were forced to leave. And many of them disobeyed: 60 per cent of students that were pressed to leave opted to stay, and are currently

**Anatoly Torkunov:**  
“The Bologna System is more of a figurative term, and we don’t fit into this system in many respects. It had no effect on our curricula and courses, we defined them ourselves.”

waiting to get their diplomas.”  
MGIMO’s Rector emphasized that the issue of promoting international cooperation and looking for new partners is much more important than the discussion on the Bologna System itself. “MGIMO is going to continue its dual degree programs which are realized together with the Chinese and the South Korean Universities. We are also looking in the direction of the Persian Gulf countries, Latin America, ASEAN states, and place a premium on cooperation with the Indonesians and the Malaysians. We have just signed an agreement with a Mexican university... We are going to maximize the use of new Internet formats so as not to hamper the development of international links due to logistical problems.”  
The session titled Diplomacy of All Tracks: the Role of Traditional and New Instruments of Diplomacy in Promoting







National Interests of Russia might have been rightfully dubbed a MGIMO session as its participants were professors and alumni of the University: Dmitry Stolkov, 3rd class Active State Councillor of the Russian Federation; Konstantin Kolpakov, Chairman of the Council of Young Diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia; and Alexander Bobrov, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Diplomacy, MGIMO. The session was moderated by Prof. Olga Lebedeva, the Department of Diplomacy.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov was expected to come, but he must have been with the President, so Deputy Minister Alexander Pankin represented him. Anatoly Torkunov was the keynote speaker of the panel

discussion. Having read Sergey Lavrov's address, Mr. Pankin immediately got a question from the audience on the role of diplomacy under sanctions. His response set a positive tone for the whole session. He replied, "I graduated from MGIMO in 1985 having defended a thesis on the topic – attention, please! – The Policy of Sanctions and Discrimination on the Part of Western States. That's why nothing since the beginning of the Special Military Operation and nothing since 2014 as well as the situation well ahead of those events surprised me. I do not remember any periods when sanctions were lifted, in fact. Nowadays, many are trying to wipe out the role of diplomacy – by sending out diplomats, closing diplomatic missions, 'draining the blood' out of our embassies –



**A**natoly Torkunov: "We see the growing role of non-conventional diplomacy tools, for example, antivirus diplomacy. Some time ago, a group of athletes graduated from MGIMO having completed a course on sports diplomacy."

but despite all this, diplomats are actively helping our government to find solutions to numerous problems, including those with logistics and transportation.

Today we are turning to those partners who have traditionally been loyal or neutral to us. These partners are currently under incredible pressure on the part of our enemies that are taking unfriendly steps towards Russia. Diplomacy is also in high demand in those areas where we might not have paid due attention to certain partners who had expected this attention – we followed familiar, well-trodden paths. And these days we have to reorient, as we've been given the task not only to ensure survival in a self-sufficient, closed system but also to reestablish cooperation on a wide variety of issues



with more than a hundred states. So we do have something to busy ourselves with.” Speaking about the tools of modern diplomacy, Anatoly Torkunov suggested looking at them from a broader perspective and focusing on the multifaceted activity of the state and society in the international arena. He explained how he sees the relation between classical diplomacy and people’s diplomacy. “Classical diplomacy is of utmost importance. Our diplomacy these days has the traits of Russian classical diplomacy, such as creativity, innovation and strategic empathy. At the same time, we see the growing role of non-conventional diplomacy tools; for example, antivirus diplomacy, which is aimed at putting an end to this disaster and finding allies, as pandemics can be coped with only through joint effort... Some time ago, another group of athletes graduated from our university having completed a course on sports diplomacy. Members of sports federations are now facing hard times, they are defending their rights in the legal field, and they must be prepared to do it professionally and with dignity.”

**Oleg Kuvshinnikov: “We need different foreign languages, and English is no longer the only one; we cooperate with China, with India. Who else but MGIMO can help us? And we’ll supply you with our world-famous butter – in birch bark barrels!”**

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A number of agreements with educational and social institutions were signed on the sidelines of SPIEF. The MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov signed an agreement on cooperation

and coordination with the Russia – Land of Opportunity autonomous non-profit organization. The agreement is meant to support projects and initiatives that create opportunities for personal and professional fulfillment of students as well as to create new and develop existing mechanisms of finding talents in various fields. Over the four years that the Russia – Land of Opportunity platform has operated, MGIMO students have been actively taking part and achieving good results in such competitions as “It’s Your Turn”, “I Am a Professional”, and “Leaders of Russia. Students.” Mr. Torkunov emphasized, “We are actively discussing the prospects of creating an expertise center of administrative competence on the basis of our university for those specializing in international relations.” “Nowadays, youth policy is implemented by different actors, such as the state, the university, the mass media and opinion leaders. However, institutions of higher learning play a leading role in shaping the personality and career preferences of the young. Not a single organization or platform has such close contact, such

The MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and the Governor of Vologda region Oleg Kuvshinnikov signed an agreement on comprehensive cooperation between the University and the government of the region. Namely, there is a plan to organize an employer-sponsored training at



MGIMO University, as well as a set of educational, training and career guidance programs for secondary school students from the region. The parties expressed their interest in the exchange of information, holding events, cooperation in youth employment, organizing retreat events.





access to young people as universities and colleges. This agreement with MGIMO – the oldest university in the country specializing in training professionals in international relations – will let us form through our projects a candidate pool for the country from smart, gifted, and ambitious young people,” noted Alexey Komissarov, the Executive Director of the autonomous non-profit organization.

The MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and Andrey Nikitin, the Governor of Novgorod Oblast, signed an agreement on cooperation in the academic sphere which provides for implementation of a joint academic program whose graduates will get two diplomas – one from Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University and another one from MGIMO, degree program Cultural Identity. The parties also agreed to cooperate in training specialists in the field of tourism as part of the realization of a strategic MGIMO project within the framework of the Priority 2030 program.

To mark the occasion, Mr. Torkunov said, “A new master’s program is underway; the program oriented both towards Russian and foreign students, and this program is intimately related to Russian civilization, the specifics of Russia’s development. Where else but in Veliky Novgorod should it be implemented?”

MGIMO and HSE University signed two agreements on the sidelines of the Forum – on creating a consortium to realize a scientific project “Political Atlas of the Modern World 2.0” as part of “Priority 2030”, the program to support Russian universities, and another one on cooperation in the field of promoting socially important youth initiatives. The agreements were signed by university rectors – Anatoly Torkunov and Nikita Anisimov.

The work within the above-mentioned consortium, whose creation was initiated by MGIMO, will let the two universities unite their academic potential to

**Unrestrained dollar issue, economically unjustified “green transition”, the pandemic and unprecedented chaotic anti-Russian sanctions are leading the world to a power catastrophe.**



implement the academic project “Political Atlas of the Modern World 2.0”. Researchers will focus on analysis and description of physcogeographical parameters and financial and economic indicators of states, their involvement in the international banking and financial system; they will also study certain aspects of global financial system, transport, trade and power industry. Besides, the specialists involved in the project will prepare forecasts concerning the possible scenarios of global political development.

The agreement on comprehensive cooperation between MGIMO and the government of Vologda Oblast was signed by the MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and the governor of Vologda Oblast Oleg Kuvshinnikov. In particular, the parties are going to implement a program on employer-sponsored university education as well as a number of educational and professionally-oriented programs for school students of the region.

“We need different foreign languages,

**These days, the world is competing neither for cheap labor nor for raw material resources. It is competing for the quality of state governance.**

and English is no longer the only one; we cooperate with China, with India. Who else but MGIMO can help us? And we’ll supply you with our world-famous butter – in birch bark barrels!” promised Mr. Kuvshinnikov. “You’ve kept the secret, haven’t you?” jokingly asked Mr. Torkunov. “Sure. This is the only brand we’ve retained. And not a drop of raw products from other regions is used. There is Vologda lace as well, though... In fact, we supply Vologda products to 29 near-abroad and far abroad countries.”

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Hardly anyone expected Igor Sechin, the head of Rosneft – the largest oil company in the world – to make the Biblical Noah’s Ark the principal image of his report. As a rule, his annual speeches at the SPIEF Energy panel are totally practically-oriented, well-founded and intentionally lacking in vivid imagery. But the situation has dramatically changed. Unrestrained dollar issue, economically unjustified “green transition”, the pandemic and unprecedented chaotic anti-Russian sanctions leading to a power catastrophe have become the ninth wave that has overwhelmed humanity. According to Mr. Sechin, salvation might be found in Russia’s power potential, which is capable of meeting the long-term global needs for affordable energy. One of the top projects that can meet these energy requirements is “Vostok Oil” – the largest project of its kind in the world, developed by Rosneft. “We are absolutely convinced that all the objectives will be achieved. And it has to be done before ‘the Great Flood’,” concluded the head of Rosneft. ☐



MGIMO-ODINTSOVO



Photos by: Igor Drobyshev, Igor Lileev

# GORCHAKOV TRACK

On 1 September, the new academic year began at MGIMO-Odintsovo for students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, college, and Gorchakov Lyceum programs.

MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov congratulated the students on the occasion and wished them success, emphasizing the importance of obtaining a high-quality education provided by MGIMO, "At MGIMO-Odintsovo, we have a professional team of professors and teachers. The Odintsovo branch has become a platform for experimentation for us."



The Rector congratulated the students on their successful admission to the college and the Gorchakov Lyceum. The college enjoys great popularity among applicants, with an exceptionally high level of competition. The Gorchakov Lyceum is the best Russian school for social sciences and humanities.

Lyceum Principal Ilya Demakov first spoke with senior students, the class of 2023. They discussed the educational process, university prep curriculum options, specialized exams, trainings, subject tests that the students are already familiar with, finals, and university admissions.

Today, 95 percent of Lyceum graduates fulfill their academic and personal potential at MGIMO – their first choice

Today, 95 percent of Lyceum graduates fulfil their academic and personal potential at MGIMO – their first choice of university.

of university. The variety of Schools and programs allows each Lyceum student to find their niche, perfectly suited to their talents, interests, and ambitions. MGIMO Vice-Rector Roman Kotov welcomed the newcomers.

This part of the event featured a presentation of the key components of the Lyceum’s academic environment and the education guidance model based on tutoring and mentorship,



as well as the active involvement of educational program heads. New students familiarized themselves with the learning process through an interactive presentation of subject departments: foreign languages, humanities, social sciences, natural and exact sciences.

The day concluded with a concert at the sports and wellness center for both Lyceum and MGIMO students.

that Europe is closing its doors to us for an indefinite period, while the East and the Middle East are becoming more promising, and they communicate this perspective to their children. Among other news, we are launching medical classes to prepare children for potential admission to MGIMO Med, MGIMO’s new higher education projects, a school which will train doctors with knowledge of foreign languages. We are constantly looking for interesting teachers who share our system of values.

Our competition reflects the high level of interest from parents, which surpasses our infrastructure capabilities.

**MJ: What values are these?**  
First and foremost, it’s a human-centric approach to education, in which the child is at the center of the educational process. This concept emphasizes a humanistic aspect, recognizing each student as a unique individual with their own strengths, weaknesses, developmental nuances, and family background.

**MJ: Can a teacher really not share these simple and understandable values?**  
Unfortunately, this does happen. The thing is that the human-centric approach requires more concentration and individualization of the process from teachers. One teacher puts in the effort to work with each child, while another prefers to simply enter the classroom and present the material, without considering the unique learning styles and needs of the students.

**MJ: How effective has the “tutor-teacher” system proven to be?**  
It seems to me that it works wonderfully, as it is part of the concept of human-centric, personalized education. For us, the subject teacher focuses on teaching their subject, while the tutor addresses the child’s individual problems and concerns. By the way, this is very MGIMO-like: since time immemorial, MGIMO has had a system of course supervisors – very serious about their job, but caring and attentive to the needs of students. So, we



**ROMAN KOTOV**  
Vice-Rector for Pedagogical Programs, General and Secondary Professional Education

“In recent years, the Gorchakov Lyceum has seen a remarkable and positive trend: increased competition for tenth-grade admission and a growing number of students interested in enrolling,” says Roman Kotov.

**MJ: And this is even with the Lyceum charging full tuition fees?**  
Yes, in this sense, we consider ourselves similar to private schools. The only difference is that there are few private schools that actually have a competition for admission. Our competition reflects the high level of interest from parents, which surpasses our infrastructure capabilities. This allows us to select the most motivated applicants, who are most interested in getting into MGIMO.

**MJ: Are you continuing to search for new teaching formats?**  
Of course. Last year, we had a pilot

bilingual instruction project, and this year it’s being introduced as a regular format.

**MJ: Can you tell us more?**  
In the 1970s–1980s, in the Soviet Union, some schools taught certain subjects in foreign languages. Our Lyceum introduces a similar initiative. At the same time, we offer new foreign languages: in addition to English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese, we now also offer Arabic. I believe there aren’t many schools in Russia that teach such a wide variety of languages as both first and second foreign languages while maintaining a high level of quality. For example, last year, one of our graduates scored a perfect 100 on the Chinese language state exam, which is undoubtedly one of our achievements.

**MJ: The interest in Chinese is understandable, but what about Arabic?**  
I think it’s due to the growing interest in exploring beyond Europe, so to speak. Apparently, it comes from within the family, as parents begin to understand



are not doing anything radically new here; we are just using old experience at a new stage of development of our pedagogical practice, responding to the challenges of the time and the demands of parents. It's great that we're not reinventing the wheel or introducing something foreign to us; instead, we have the opportunity to refine the practices of MGIMO, our alma mater.

**MJ: And the practices of the Gorchakov Lyceum? Starting this year, you began scaling them up as part of the Russian International School project, didn't you?** We started doing this a little earlier, and this was the basis for our application for the Priority 2030 program. Our preliminary work was recognized as successful and approved, and now, thanks to the Priority 2030 and the financial opportunities that have been made available to us, we have moved further: as part of the Russian International School project, we open examination centers abroad. It is now possible to administer state final exams and issue Russian certificates outside the territory of the Russian embassy. This is our unique achievement.

In this work, we are building on a project we successfully launched. I'm referring to Tashkent, where we initially had lyceum classes. Having received a Russian license last year, we opened admissions this year and inaugurated a full-fledged lyceum in September, along with our first examination center for the state final examination of secondary education. A unique aspect of our program in Tashkent is that we obtained both an Uzbek license and a Russian license abroad simultaneously, which also grants us the right to issue two certificates within a single educational program. The two-certificate program is not new for MGIMO; we have many double master's degree programs, but for secondary education, this is a kind of know-how.


**MJ: In Kyrgyzstan, you also opened lyceum classes. Is it the same model? How special is this project?** It seems to me that it will be even easier there because it is a bilingual country, and the Russian language is widely spoken. We started working with 10th and 11th grades at this school and want to implement a full-fledged school project in the future; we are currently in negotiations about this. I don't foresee any significant challenges in Kyrgyzstan. In Turkey or Dubai – yes,



**T**here aren't many schools in Russia that teach such a wide variety of languages as both first and second foreign languages while maintaining a high level of quality.

there are fundamental differences. Active negotiations are underway with Turkey, and I think we will open the Unified State Exam centers there in 2024. However, due to systemic differences, we will have to solve certain issues, particularly when it comes to harmonizing the curriculum. It will be extremely difficult to create a double-certificate program. Turkish schoolchildren will master the same Russian program and take the same state final exams, the Basic State Exam or the Unified State Exam. The situation will be

different in Turkey. The main difference is that while in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan the curricula are very similar to the Russian one (roughly speaking, we all still use the same textbooks as we did in the Soviet Union, and the difference there is not fundamental), in Turkey, for the program to be compatible, methodologists and teachers must diligently analyze educational materials, Turkish and Russian curricula, and education systems to identify areas of alignment.

**MJ: How would you describe the mission of the Russian International School project in a nutshell?** I believe the goal is to promote exceptional Russian education abroad, highlighting its strengths like mathematics and literature—not by requiring knowledge of every work by Russian authors, but by fostering critical and reflective thinking in children. Every parent wants their child to receive an education that will give them a successful start in life. Our aim, in collaboration with our teachers, is to prepare our educational programs to compete in the highly competitive international market. 





# FIFTEEN YEARS OF THE MGIMO ENDOWMENT

Photo by: Igor Lileev, MGIMO Development Fund

Today, MGIMO is a leader in the Russian higher education market and one of the most prominent university brands in the country. It boasts a high Unified State Exam average (96 points for state-funded places), joint educational programs with the business community, scientific achievements of the faculty, students’ accomplishments, and a well-developed alumni network worldwide.

Among MGIMO’s impressive achievements in recent years is the MGIMO Endowment, one of the largest endowments in Russia, standing at 1.8 billion rubles in 2022.

In 2022, the MGIMO Endowment celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Marina Petrova has been at the helm of the Endowment since 2014.

**MJ: The Endowment is now an essential part of MGIMO’s structure. How did it all start?**

On March 28, 2007, the Foreign Ministry’s Reception House on Spiridonovka Street hosted the founding meeting of the MGIMO Development Fund. The fund was established in accordance with the Federal Law “On the Procedure for the Formation and Use of the Endowment of a Non-profit Organization,” adopted

Yes, some even struggled to grasp the principle that underpinned the idea: there is no direct spending from the endowment made up of alumni’ investments; only the interest obtained from the allocation and management of funds can be paid out. The Endowment invests in the stock market, constantly adding value. It is with the investment income that MGIMO programs are financed, while the initial capital remains intact.



in December 2006, and became the first structure of its kind in Russia. Rector Anatoly Torkunov was elected Chairman of the Fund’s Board of Trustees, which included prominent entrepreneurs and philanthropists, MGIMO alumni Vladimir Potanin, Alisher Usmanov, and Patokh Chodiev, who laid the financial foundation of the Endowment.

**MJ: The Endowment was a true breakthrough for its time.**

**The Endowment is a tool that shapes the tradition of living not only for today but also for planning beyond the short-term horizon.**

And today, when explaining the mechanism of the Endowment, we refer not only to the experience of foreign endowments and the common phenomenon of perpetual deposits in pre-revolution Russia but also to the well-established experience of MGIMO.

The Endowment is now a recognizable brand for most companies and graduates, as well as for grant recipients. It is a tool that shapes the tradition of living not only for today but also for planning beyond the short-term horizon. The underlying model allows focusing on long-term prospects, rather than thinking only about immediate benefits and short-term projects.

**MJ: Endowments have developed in leaps and bounds. Remember, back in 2011, endowments were allowed to accept not only cash donations but also securities, assets, and real estate?**

Yes, the endowment law responds to market conditions and the expectations of the professional community. Later, other financial opportunities were added (shares of exchange-traded funds, derivatives). In addition, tax incentives were granted for individuals for philanthropic giving. Various support measures for endowments are being developed today as well. This year, the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Mishustin, has given the necessary instructions, primarily due to fluctuations in the stock market. For several months now, we, together with our counterparts from other university endowments and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia, have been working on a long-term endowment development strategy, specific proposals for improving legislation, and benefits for corporate donors. In the existing framework, endowments don’t have

enough leeway anymore. For example, the accumulated pool of business partners and numerous students’ business initiatives suggest we should consider investing in startups. We are currently discussing this with the MGIMO Ventures accelerator.

**MJ: What is the overall investment strategy of endowments?**

The Endowment is committed to a moderately conservative investment strategy. This means a heavy allocation to corporate, federal, and sub-federal bonds. These instruments enable value addition while outpacing inflation (with an average annual growth of 10 percent). Bonds of Russian companies in yuan are becoming increasingly popular.

**MJ: What projects were funded with investment income in recent years?**

We have struck a balance between expanding long-term programs and building a financial buffer for current projects. First of all, I would like to mention long-term programs. One could say that this is also an investment strategy of the Endowment, not just spending, but developing and supporting major areas of MGIMO’s work. These include research, publishing, research conferences and seminars, developing the potential of students and applicants, grants for students and the faculty, international programs and internships, events for MGIMO graduates and partners, supporting honorary professors of MGIMO, infrastructure development, and IT. Starting last year, MGIMO’s strategic projects have been funded through the Priority 2030 program, but the Endowment serves as a co-financing mechanism that also attracts business partners. Among large-scale projects, I would mention corporate departments at MGIMO, some of which are funded by the Endowment. In recent years, we have been offering many corporate scholarships for students – some monthly, providing additional support, and others fully covering master’s program tuition fees. We plan to expand this initiative to give talented students more opportunities. The Endowment is indispensable when new projects are launched and corresponding expenses arise. We are always flexible and find ways to support them. Accumulated investment income allows us to think ambitiously; we are not dependent on income stemming from a single donation.

**MJ: In addition to investment income, the Endowment grows through new donations. How difficult is it to attract new potential donors?**

Fundraising is an essential part of the Endowment’s operations. We put a lot of work into donation agreements, offering well-developed projects and describing benefits for companies. The Endowment has become a structure that articulates MGIMO’s financial interests for potential partners and sponsors, while clearly understanding the University’s strategic tasks.

forums and demo days, the MGIMO Rector’s Golf Cup, MGIMO Day, and the RISA Convention. For companies, the closest form of partnership is opening a corporate department at MGIMO. Currently, there are about 20 of them at the University. The philosophy of the Endowment is to create a socially responsible charity system, where money will work for the benefit of future generations, for centuries. The Endowment is about sustainability, stability, responsibility, and commitment.



**As the endowment grows, so do the University’s goals. Our motto is “The MGIMO Endowment: Future Starts Today!” Every new idea aimed at developing MGIMO will be implemented**

The Endowment is happy to fund and participate in organizing business events together with the Alumni Association. For example, international MGIMO alumni forums (held in Baku, Moscow, Yerevan, Astana, Tashkent), startup

**MJ: How did the Endowment perform in 2022?**

Today, the Endowment totals 1.8 billion rubles. The total value of donations to MGIMO amounts to 1.5 billion rubles.

**MJ: How do you see the MGIMO Development Fund in the near future?**

We are guided by our motto, “the MGIMO Endowment: Future Starts Today!” In the long term, we would like to reach a level of investment income that would free us from having to look for funding for a particular project. Looking at the bigger picture, in terms of the country’s economy, university endowments, particularly ours, contribute to the training of qualified staff for various industries, to scientific and technological breakthroughs, and serve as major investors. This is a clear and transparent mechanism that will grow and develop with the participation of corporate partners and alumni. 





# SAYING GOODBYE TO SUMMER IN NAKHABINO

Moscow Country Club in Nakhabino hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> MGIMO Rector's Golf Cup

Photos by: Igor Lileev, Yevgeny Filippov



It has become a good tradition for MGIMO alumni and partners, government officials and businesspeople, heads of foreign diplomatic missions to take part in the tournament.

This time the program of the event included a golf tournament, a putt competition, a lesson of golf for beginners and the Discussion Lounge on training in tourism and sustainable development.

The team competition was won by “Nakhabino”, with “State Duma”, a team of MPs, taking second place and “Alumni Club” coming third.

Special prizes were given to players who distinguished themselves in the nominations “The longest stroke” and “The most precise stroke”. The prizes were given to the players by Anatoly Torkunov, MGIMO rector, Maria Bazhenova, Moscow Country Club Golf Director, and Oxana Tubman, Director of Sponsorship and Corporate Social Responsibility at S8 Capital.

The Discussion Lounge focused on two issues: “Economics of Impression” and “ESG approach to training modern managers”

The Discussion Lounge focused on tourism and ESG issues. At the session “Economics of Impression” the list of the speakers included Konstantin Markov, Executive Director, Head of the Sber Industry Expertise Centre for Tourism, Armine Sarkisyan, Head of GetExperience.com travel marketplace B2B sales department, and Vazgen Avetisyan, General Director, Managing Partner of the Center for Regional Tourism Development. The session was moderated by Elena Kozlovskaya, Director of MGIMO Odintsovo. The participants discussed new organizational models and professional development of personnel amid growing competition for customers’ emotions.

The session “ESG approach to training modern managers” addressed the issue of combining approaches in different industries to personnel training and



the image of a modern manager amid the increasing role of eco-friendly and sustainable social development. Igor Yurgens, a leading researcher at the MGIMO Center for Sustainable Development, Alla Kiseleva, Head of the SFU Center for Sustainable Development, Oxana Tubman, Director of Sponsorship and Corporate Social Responsibility at S8 Capital Holding, and Alexey Borisov, Vice President of the World Federation of UN Associations took part in the



discussion. The session was moderated by Vladimir Salamatov, Director of the Institute of International Trade and Sustainable Development at MGIMO. At the farewell party Anatoly Torkunov said: “For our University such friendly gatherings are of particular importance. As I see it, there is lack of friendly communication today, and we must by all means make up for this lack. The situation today is difficult, tense. I think human communication, warmth, cordiality, even if you just pat someone on the shoulder, hug, look into each other’s eyes, is truly a gift of fate and you should use it. Even more so is here in the country, when nature is already beginning to lose its colors, but has not lost them yet, when fall has not yet gained the upper hand over summer and its remnants are still to be seen. I would like to keep warm







summer in our hearts as long as possible, because it will soon be snowing, and it will be cold.”

The Rector also shared MGIMO’s achievements and further plans to develop the University: “We set ourselves many goals and achieve a lot. Our University, despite any difficulties, is rapidly moving forward. We are launching new majors, implementing the state program of support for Russian universities Priority 2030 in five strategic areas, creating world-class laboratories. This year we have opened a lyceum in Tashkent and lyceum classes

in Kyrgyzstan, we have launched cooperation with our Turkish friends, and we continue to develop our branch in Tashkent. Having chosen the path of networking, we are implementing programs on tourism, world agricultural markets and artificial intelligence, we have opened MGIMO-MED, which we co-founded with Mother and Child company.

“We are working hard to keep our positions of a leading university in Russia and abroad as we are the only university with a Guinness record number of foreign languages taught.



By the way, we have taken a decision to resume teaching two languages abandoned in the 1990s – Burmese and Khmer, as there is an interest in them in terms of cooperation with these countries.

“We used to cooperate extensively with foreign universities, used to have joint master programs... However, today this cooperation has been suspended. “Nonetheless, we continue to send exchange students abroad. This year we have admitted over 300 students from abroad, including European countries and the USA. We are committed to enhance our efforts in the Asian-Pacific direction. Everything we have lost will be compensated for.”

In response to the joke that “his 30-year-long rectorship turned him





Anatoly Torkunov: “We set ourselves many goals and achieve a lot. Our University, despite any difficulties, is rapidly moving forward. We are launching new majors, implementing the state program of support for Russian universities Priority 2030 in strategic areas, such as: tourism, world agricultural markets, AI etc.

into a brand”, Anatoly Vasilievich smiled: “I don’t know if it’s good or bad to be a brand or a symbol. Perhaps, it is enjoyable. But I am not a symbol of myself, I represent our University instead. It’s a great honor to work at MGIMO, but the most important thing is having our excellent teachers, our team, very creative, always coming up with new ideas, many of which are being successfully implemented!”





# The MGIMO Trip To Africa



**The delegation from MGIMO University led by the Vice-Rector for Students’ Development and International Affairs Stanislav Surovtsev continued its tour of Africa, arriving for talks in Tanzania.** The delegation was received by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United Republic of Tanzania Andrei Avetisyan, who expressed his readiness to provide full support for the proposed initiatives and MGIMO educational products. The visit included a series of events at the Russian House in Tanzania. MGIMO delegation met with the team of the Russian Center for Science

and Culture in Dar es Salaam, headed by Maria Pateeva to discuss plans to expand MGIMO University’s presence in the Republic. Later, a meeting with interested Tanzanian youth was organized, which was attended by the students from the Center for Foreign Relations, Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology and the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy. At the event, Stanislav Surovtsev, the Deputy Vice-Rector and Advisor at the Rector’s Office Ekaterina Shuvalova, and the Executive Secretary of the “Russia – Africa: What’s Next?” Forum’s Program Committee

Igor Tkachenko told those present about the University and its programs available to foreign students, as well as shared information about youth cooperation between Russia and Africa. Their statements were followed by a major Q&A session. As a result of the meeting, about 15 Tanzanians

international relations. At the meeting, Stanislav Surovtsev discussed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations and invited the Professor to visit MGIMO University. The trip of our University’s delegation to Africa was the first in many years, prompting a



have already joined the team of the “Russia – Africa: What’s Next?” Forum. Talks were held at the University of Dar es Salaam with its head Professor William-Andey Anangisye and the team responsible for the university’s

new stage in the development of academic and youth cooperation between the University and representatives of the continent, including in the context of preparation for the upcoming Russia – Africa Summit.

**MGIMO delegation paid a landmark visit to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Headed by Stanislav Surovtsev, the delegation held several major meetings, signed an agreement with the leading university of Ethiopia, and cemented agreements on cooperation with the African Union.** The delegation was received by the President of Addis Ababa University, Professor



Tassew Woldehana. The parties discussed important aspects of interaction between the two universities, as well as plans for the future. The meeting resulted in the Memorandum of Cooperation between the institutions, providing for

the possibility of launching academic exchanges in the near future. The Russian Embassy in Ethiopia hosted a meeting with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Federal Democratic Republic

of Ethiopia, Yevgeny Terekhin. The Ambassador expressed full support for MGIMO initiatives and put forward his proposals for the program to expand the University’s presence on the continent. As part of the visit, talks were held with the Ethiopian Minister of State for Education Samuel Kifle. The meeting was devoted to promising projects for MGIMO’s entry into the African continent, as well as educational products that have been developed for Ethiopian citizens. Stanislav Surovtsev confirmed MGIMO University’s readiness for more active cooperation and coordination with local authorities in launching an international school Olympiad in the Republic. Meetings were also held at the Institute of Foreign Affairs

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, where the delegation was received by the Executive Director of the Institute Desalegn Ambaw and at the African Leadership Excellence Academy which was presented by its head Mehret Debebe. The talks concerned the signing of memorandums of cooperation, joint professional development programs for Ethiopian civil servants, as well as the involvement of experts from the Ethiopian Institute of Foreign Affairs in the research carried out at

MGIMO University. In addition, the parties expressed interest in holding online lectures by the University’s professors. The issues of youth cooperation with Ethiopia were also raised during the trip. Ekaterina Shuvalova spoke at the meeting of youth leaders of Russia and Ethiopia, telling those present about MGIMO University, new projects on the African track and the activities of student organizations in this area. The audience was also addressed by Igor Tkachenko,

Executive Secretary of the MGIMO-based “Russia – Africa: What’s Next?” Forum’s Program Committee. He noted the importance of developing relations between Russia and Ethiopia, putting forward an initiative to create an expert African youth council under the Forum’s Program Committee. MGIMO delegates Ekaterina Shuvalova and Valery Zhuchkov also had a meeting at the African Union Headquarters with the leadership of the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate. Particular attention

was paid to the plans to organize the first Model of the African Union in Russia at MGIMO University and the youth participation in the Russia–Africa Summit, which will be held this July in St. Petersburg. The representatives of the African Union supported the University’s proposals and offered to deepen and expand the areas of cooperation. In addition, it was agreed that the African Union Directorate will co-organize the upcoming Model at MGIMO University.

# China Week

**MGIMO University hosted the China Week, a project organized by the Chinese Club of the Scientific Student Society that won the Student Grant Competition of the MGIMO Endowment.** Among the honored guests of the opening ceremony were the Director of the China Cultural Center in Moscow Ms. Gong Jiajia, the Director of the First Asian Department of the Russian MFA Georgiy Zinoviev, the Director of the RAS Institute of China and Modern Asia Kirill Babayev, and the Vice-Rector Andrey Baykov. A lecture was given by the First Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly,

Ambassador of the Russia to the PRC (2013 – 2022) Andrey Denisov. Mr. Denisov devoted his lecture to the stages of the development of China, focusing on the events that took place after 1949. In his speech, he noted key trends and parallels in the Chinese history, identifying major milestones in the establishment of modern China. The lecture was followed by the Youth Scientific and Practical Conference “China in Multipolar World: Challenges and Prospects”, uniting over 40 speakers from all over Russia. The event included three panels: Internal processes, Foreign policy of China and economic processes, Innovation in China. The Day of Language and



Culture saw a lecture by the Associate Professor of the Department of Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and Lao Languages Elena Khamaeva on Chinese names; a workshop by the Research Fellow of the Center of Chinese Culture Studies of the RAS Institute of China and Modern Asia Anna Donchenko devoted to the ink washing painting; a lecture by a tea master Daria Biryukova and

a historian Ivan Sokolov about the tea ceremony. The program of the closing gala concert included opera, dancing and singing performances by MGIMO students and graduates, as well as the ceremony of awarding the certificates of appreciation to the volunteers. A photo exhibition “Exploring China” and a book fair were also held within the framework of the event.

**The new Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to Russia H.E. Pengiran Husaini Alauddin paid a visit to the ASEAN Centre. The Director of the ASEAN Centre Dr. Ekaterina Koldunova welcomed the guest.** During the meeting Dr. Ekaterina Koldunova told about the background of the ASEAN Centre, its mission and highlighted the key areas of its activities. One of the most successful recent joint projects undertaken by the Centre and

the Brunei Darussalam Embassy was the “Brunei Day” at MGIMO University dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Russia-Brunei diplomatic relations. The recent ASEAN Centre’s publications

were presented to Brunei diplomats as well as the working plans for 2023. The Ambassador highly appreciated the ASEAN Centre’s work and expressed his hope to continue cooperation. At the end of the meeting the Ambassador passed to the ASEAN Centre’s library an album “ASEAN Diversity” that was specially prepared on the occasion of Brunei’s chairmanship in ASEAN in 2021.





# Foreign ambassadors in MGIMO

The MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov welcomed the Director of Research Center for International Policy (CIPi) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba José Ramón Cabañas. During the meeting, the Rector spoke about the key areas of research and educational activities of the University, outlining areas for further cooperation between MGIMO University and the Center.

In turn, José Ramón Cabañas noted that people in Cuba, in



particular, and South America, in general, attach great importance to Russian research. He pointed out the region's growing interest in the issues of the post-Soviet space and at the same time the lack of expert support on this topic. The guests from Cuba believe that all this makes the cooperation between Russian institutions specializing in international relations, namely MGIMO University, and Latin American partner organizations extremely relevant.

MGIMO University welcomed Ambassador of the United Mexican States to Moscow Eduardo Villegas Megías. The guests were received by the MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov, the Vice-Rectors

Stanislav Surovtsev, Andrey Baykov, the Dean of the School of International Business and Business Administration Vladimir Shapovalov, and the Head of the Department of the Spanish Language Valery Iovenko.



The parties considered a set of issues regarding the cooperation between MGIMO and Mexican universities in

academic mobility, research and cultural ties, in particular, the preparation of a cooperation agreement with La Salle University. They also discussed academic contacts of the Embassy with the Department of the Spanish Language to make both the Spanish language and Ibero-American culture more popular at the University. The Mexican side invited our students who take Spanish classes to participate in updating the Russian version of the Wikipedia page on Mexico through a hackathon.

The Ambassador of Somalia to Russia Hassan Abdi Daud visited MGIMO University. The Ambassador was received by the MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and the Vice-Rector Stanislav Surovtsev.

Addressing the honored

guests, Anatoly Torkunov spoke about the University, its cooperation with African universities, African languages taught at MGIMO University, various events held to promote African studies among Russian students, help comprehensively

explore the region as well as strengthen relations between Russia and African countries in general.

During the visit, the parties discussed the prospects for cooperation between MGIMO University and Somali

universities. Those present agreed to maintain cultural and academic interaction, in particular, through the participation in the RISA Convention and the 2nd Forum 'Russia – Africa: What's Next?' to be held in October at MGIMO University.



MGIMO University welcomed the Ambassador of Iran to the Russian Federation Kazem Jalali. The Ambassador met the University's Rector Anatoly Torkunov as well as the Director of the International Institute of Energy Policy and Diplomacy (MIEP) Valery Salygin.



Mr. Torkunov told the guests about the most relevant focus areas and objectives of MGIMO University. He also noted the importance of further broadening of Iranian-Russian

cooperation and prospects for encouraging cooperation, with the support of the Iranian Embassy, between MGIMO University and MIEP, and the most prestigious Iranian universities and companies to launch relevant for our countries joint educational BA, MA and MBA programs, train researchers, organize student exchanges and internships, carry out joint analytical projects, hold conferences and roundtables devoted to the promising areas of cooperation between Russia and Iran.



During the meeting, the parties addressed possible cooperation between MGIMO University and MIEP with the leading Iranian universities and companies with the support of the largest Russian companies that are strategic partners of the University. The possibility of establishing a Russian-Iranian International Research Center and a Russian-Iranian Institute of Energy Cooperation is of interest. The talks covered world economy and energy development trends, promising



areas of international cooperation, challenges related to the development of an innovative economy, digitalization, and other topics. Kazem Jalali also held a meeting with BA and MA students devoted to further development of cooperation between Iran and Russia. The students took a keen interest in discussing the prospects for such cooperation, in particular, in energy sector, asking numerous questions and showing deep knowledge and immaculate basic training.



The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates hosted a meeting between the MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov and the UAE Ambassador to Russia Mohammed Ahmed Sultan Essa Al Jaber. The parties discussed cooperation in a number of educational and research areas. His Excellency described the potential of a university cluster

to be launched in the UAE and invited MGIMO University to join. Anatoly Torkunov reassured the Ambassador that the University is ready to be part of the project and told him about the plans to develop secondary education in the UAE, do joint research as well as organize research and practical events and workshops with experts from the University.

MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov met with the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Russian Federation Nazih Elnaggari. The parties discussed a broad range of issues related to academic cooperation, the development of joint educational and research programs, the peculiarities of teaching the Arabic and organizing events devoted to the Arab culture. The meeting gathered the Deputy Head of the Mission Marois Lasheen, the Counsellor Mohamed Elhady, the First Secretary Mohamed Fuda and the Vice-Rector – Chief of the Rector's Office Artem Malgin.





# Events at MGIMO’s ASEAN Centre

The 20th Meeting of the Executive Board was held at the ASEAN Centre. Among the participants of the meeting were H.E. Jose Antonio Morato Tavares, Ambassador of Indonesia to Russia Co-Chair of the Board, H.E. Pg.Husaini Alauddin, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam to Russia, H.E. Igor Bailen, Ambassador of Philippines to Russia, along with a number of diplomats from other ASEAN embassies.

The Russian part of the Executive Board was represented by MGIMO Vice-Rector Dr. Andrey Baykov, Co-Chair of the Board, Mr. Andrey Lyamin, Deputy Director of Asian and Pacific Cooperation Department, Appointed Ambassador of Russia to ASEAN Mr. Evgeniy Zagainov, as well as MGIMO professor Dr. Nikolai Maletin, and the ASEAN Centre’s staff.

Dr. Andrey Baykov welcomed the members of the ASEAN Centre’s Executive Board. In his opening remarks, he noted that over the past three-year



reporting period, the Centre continued to fulfill its mission despite international political and economic turbulence and the post-pandemic recovery. The Centre organized numerous academic, social and cultural events in order to expand



the knowledge of Russia and ASEAN citizens about each other. He announced a brand new MGIMO Master’s degree program "Political Economy of ASEAN-Russia Strategic Partnership", designed specifically for ASEAN and

Russian citizens willing to develop ASEAN-Russia relations further. The meeting’s agenda covered the three-year reporting period of the ASEAN Centre’s activities, including such documents as the report on the activities of the ASEAN Center for period 2020-2022, Centre’s financial report for 2020-2022 and Centre’s

matrix of implementation of its work program for 2022. During the discussions, the ASEAN partners complemented the Centre on its three-year term activities and made some recommendations and proposals for its future work.

**MGIMO welcomed a Malaysian business and academic community delegation.** Malaysian colleagues took part in the conference dedicated to the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Russia and Malaysia and participated in several business meetings. The delegation included Mr. Khalek Awang, CEO, Khalek Awang and Associates,



President, Alumnae Foundation, International Islamic University of Malaysia, H.E. Teoh Seng Lee, Honorary Consul of Russia in Penang State, Mr. Muamar bin Mohd Mokhtar, Executive Director at 3F Resources Sdn Bhd, Mr. Mohd Khair bin Ngadiron, Director of Permanent Secretariat of National Book Council of Malaysia Ministry of Education, Ms. Adibah binti Omar, Chief Executive Officer of Book City Corporation and Mr. Rahul Mishra, Director of the Centre for ASEAN Regionalism of the University of Malaya. The delegation met with MGIMO Vice-Rector Dr. Andrey Baykov and the ASEAN Centre’s staff, where the parties discussed educational, research and cultural cooperation in various promising areas. The Malaysian side learned about a unique MA

program in ASEAN and Southeast Asian Studies developed by the ASEAN Centre in MGIMO. The delegation expressed interest in promoting this MA program in Malaysia and noted its high prospects for the development of Russian-Malaysian relations. The meeting program included a visit to the MGIMO History Museum and the MGIMO Rare Book Museum, where the Malaysian colleagues got acquainted with the history of the MGIMO formation as a leading center for preparing diplomatic personnel, including those for the countries of the Global South. The Malaysian colleagues toured the MGIMO campus and the territory of the university. They highly appreciated student lifestyle, the level of business culture and overall educational level of MGIMO students.



**MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov met with a group of MA students of the ASEAN countries.** Welcoming the students Prof. Anatoly Torkunov noted that MGIMO has been always developing and maintaining strong relations with the universities and think tanks from ASEAN countries. Rector emphasized that at the moment the University has official agreements with partners from Brunei, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and the Philippines, and also seeks to establish broader contacts with other ASEAN countries. He also especially noted that among the graduates of MGIMO from

the ASEAN countries there are many well-known diplomats and politicians. The Rector also informed the students that since 2010, MGIMO has been the home of the ASEAN Centre, an analytical and educational think tank established by Russia and ASEAN, which has been consistently popularizing and promoting the ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership through joint research, cultural activities and public diplomacy for many years. The Rector also announced a brand-new Master’s Program “Political Economy of ASEAN-Russia Strategic Partnership”,



which was developed specifically for the joint study of Russian-ASEAN interaction by students from both sides. The guests of the meeting, in turn, shared with the Rector

their impressions of their current study-programs and expressed a number of considerations for further improving the educational process for AEAN students.

**MGIMO Rector Anatoly Torkunov welcomed at the University the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Chang Ho Jin.** The meeting was also attended by the Vice-Rector Andrey Baykov, the Associate Professor at the Department of Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Mongolian Languages Valery Sukhinin and the Associate Professor at the Department of Oriental Studies Ilya Dyachkov.

The MGIMO Rector told the guest about MGIMO University, its ties with South



Korean think tanks, and a long tradition of student exchanges. Those present discussed



academic cooperation, current and future research projects, in particular, the

presentation of the book entitled “Russian–Korean relations.

**MGIMO University hosted the presentation of the book titled “Russian–Korean relations. Parallel History”. The event was held in a hybrid format: the Russian authors and honored guests in Moscow were communicating via video conferencing with their Korean colleagues who were participating in the parallel presentation of the Korean version of the book.** The Russian-South Korean project to write a collective monograph on the history of Russian-Korean relations from late 19th century till today was launched in 2019. The research was done in the format of a parallel history, meaning that the teams



of leading Russian and South Korean experts independently expressed their opinion on each of the ten specified periods. The final version of the book

was published in Russian and Korean, and in the future it might be translated into English. The book was published in Russian with the support of

the MGIMO Endowment. The presentation was inaugurated by the speeches of the project’s leaders: the MGIMO Rector, the President of the Russian-Korean Society Anatoly Torkunov, and the Professor Emeritus at Dongguk University Kim Hak-chun. Those present were also addressed by the President of the Korea Foundation Kim Gheewhan, the Director of the First Department of Asia of the Russian MFA Georgiy Zinoviev, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Russia Chang Ho Jin and the Ambassador of Russia to the Republic of Korea Andrey Kulik, followed by the representatives of the research teams of both countries.



**MGIMO University and Shenzhen MSU-BIT, a Chinese-Russian university, signed an Agreement on cooperation in science and education.** On MGIMO University's side, the document was signed by the Rector Anatoly Torkunov, while MSU-BIT was represented by the Rector Li Hezhang. The heads of the universities are confident that the cooperation will promote professional growth and development of students, making them more interested in research. The Agreement aims at enhancing research, educational and cultural ties between the two universities. The students and faculty will work on joint research projects in economy, law, international relations



and political science, hold joint conferences as well as research and practical workshops. By using their experience and best practices, the universities will enrich and improve their educational and research practices as well as identify additional landmarks for further development. "The cooperation with Shenzhen MSU-BIT will allow us to substantially increase the variety of professional training and adopt new creative and innovative practices. I am convinced that our universities will find ways for effective and fruitful cooperation. We intend to primarily focus on establishing joint MA programs," noted Anatoly Torkunov.

## Vietnam Day

**MGIMO hosted a traditional, large-scale celebration of the Vietnamese culture – the 8th Vietnam Day, which was jointly organized by ASEAN Centre in MGIMO and the Vietnamese Students' community.** The 8th Vietnam Day in MGIMO was attended by more than 500 people, which is unprecedented and speaks about the growing popularity of this annual celebration among the students and the general public. This year, among the guests were representatives of state institutions, diplomatic missions and business of Russia and Vietnam, as well as famous Vietnamese studies experts,

lecturers and students from the leading Russian universities. The event was broadly covered by Russian and Vietnamese media. Dr. Andrey Baykov, MGIMO Vice-Rector delivered

his welcoming remarks at the opening ceremony of the conference. He noted that Vietnam Day has already become a traditional event of the University and one of the

world turbulence circumstances: politics, economy and society", which consisted of four sessions: "Dynamically developing Vietnam: results, challenges and prospects", "Vietnam in international organizations: history of interaction and current state", "Foreign Policy of Vietnam: Partners and Areas of Cooperation", as well as "Socio-Economic Processes in Vietnam before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic". For the first time the Vietnam Day's conference included a joint session of the ASEAN Centre and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Following the conference, the students specializing in the Vietnamese Language from MGIMO, Institute of Asian and African Countries (Moscow State University), National Research University Higher School of Economics and Moscow State Linguistic University, took part in the Quiz on Vietnamese culture, language and contemporary society development. The Vietnam Day culminated in a large-scale cultural evening held in the MGIMO conference hall.



most important annual events in its academic and cultural life. It is not only evidence of the long-term friendship between Russia and Vietnam, but also an indicator of the growing interest of the public in the culture of Vietnam and the ASEAN countries. A series of the 8th Vietnam Day events started with the academic conference "Vietnam in the

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