Introduction

Russian studies on the Middle East are addressed at international institutions, states, and non-state actors. Along with that, Russian researchers concentrate their focus on different fields of the region’s development. Here, we can see and read in-depth research on economic, political, and military trends as well as the soft power models working in the area. Doing that, Russian academia and experts wish to identify the country’s place in the area.

The Middle East in Russian science and expertise can also be seen with an institutional dimension. The institutional dimension of Middle East studies shows the scholarly discourse of a variety of institutions that develop highly competent research on the area. These institutes are affiliated with the Russian Academy of Sciences, university departments, research centers, and think tanks working for the Russian Middle Eastern policy-formulation process. Diversity is also manifested in mutual interaction of all three types of research groups so that, say, researchers from MGIMO University are able to analyze processes in the area within quite another academic or university structure based in Moscow. It is like a system of “connected vessels.” It can be represented by a variety of institutions. The community consists of traditional academic institutions affiliated with the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) and university departments and centers. There are dozens of qualified scientists who spent many research years in the area and use knowledge of Middle Eastern languages and specifics of countries and regional dynamics.

However, there also exist a few institutes that have to do with foreign and national security analysis and policy-planning process. The latter have an impact on Russian policy decisions in relation to the Middle East. It is also necessary to imagine what Russian researchers understand by the Middle East. Russian political lexicon knows the terms Near and Middle East. By the first term (Near East), they mean Arab countries (including Egypt but not the other Arab states of Northern Africa), Israel, Turkey, and Iran. The notion of the Middle East also includes Pakistan and Afghanistan. Reviewing Middle Eastern studies in Russia in this book, we understand that we are talking about Near Eastern countries.
Studies on the Middle East in the Research Institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences

The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences is one of the leading research centers in Russia. Scientists and experts at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences make a great contribution to the research on the Middle East, both at a theoretical dimension and in the field of applied studies. The institute has a number of departments that are responsible for a variety of Oriental studies vectors. The director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences is Alikber Alikberov, a well-known orientalist and specialist in the field of Islamic studies.

It is worth mentioning the scientific director of the institute – Professor Vitaly Naumkin, an outstanding scientist and expert in Oriental and Islamic studies, a specialist in the study of the multifaceted issues of international relations and politics in the countries of the Middle East. His numerous works in different languages have been published in well-known publications in Russia and across the world. Being an expert in Middle Eastern studies, Professor Naumkin is a member of the Scientific Councils of Foreign Ministry and the Security Council of the Russian Federation, two influential departments having considerable impact on the Russian foreign and security policy-making process. His expertise is widely used by the authorities of the Russian Federation.

One of the main structural divisions is the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies (CAIS). The research topics of the center are focused on a number of areas, including religion and society in the modern Middle East, trends in the socio-economic development of the countries of the Middle East, and the political systems and institutions of the Arab countries, as well as international relations in the Middle East and cooperation with the Russian Federation. Among the staff members of the Center for Arab and Islamic Studies are scientists and experts, members of the Valdai International Discussion Club, the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group, and Russian International Council (RIAC) experts. The head of the center is Dr. Vasily Kuznetsov, well known in Russia and in the ME universities as a researcher of political processes in the Arab countries and a member of a number of international working groups on international relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

One of the features of the center’s work is the emphasis on the development of transformational complex interdisciplinary research that combines the fundamental nature of goal setting with practical results. The formats of the work of the department’s employees are quite diverse: conducting field research; teaching activities in the country’s leading universities; publishing activity; and holding scientific and practical events of various scales, including the annual conference of Arabists titled Readings of I. M. Smilyanskaya, in which representatives of 20 countries take part. As a result of this conference, a collective monograph is being published. At the same time, the center has maintained cooperation with Russian state structures, among them the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Foreign Ministry, and the Security Council; that is, it has been an active part of the policy-making process. At the same time, CAIS employees are active in the field of “second track diplomacy.” Among their accomplishments are the organization of three rounds of Inter-Palestinian consultations in 2011, 2016, and 2019; two rounds of Inter-Syrian consultations (2015); and holding the Dartmouth Conference. CAIS and the Valdai International Discussion Club are partners in organizing the annual Middle East Dialogue; in addition, the center is a co-organizer of the international forum Islam in a Multicultural World and other major scientific events dedicated to Oriental studies.
The Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) is actively operating at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Its research topics, in contrast to CAIS, focus on regional analysis. Thus, research work is being carried out to analyze the current political, economic, and cultural situation in specific states of the Near and Middle East. With regard to the Middle Eastern states, three sectors operate on the basis of the center: the Iranian sector, the Turkish sector, and the sector of Kurdish studies and regional problems. The center is headed by Professor Vyacheslav Belokrenitsky, who studies politics and international relations in the Middle East.

Employees of the CMES carry out fundamental and applied research within the framework of the designated topics and are also involved in the preparation of information and analytical materials. In particular, in 2018, the center implemented a program to study Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, study the military potential of Iran, identify the features of Russian-Turkish relations at the present time, etc. As a result of the study, the All-Russian Inter-Institutional Scientific Conference Nations and Nationalism in the Muslim World was held. The conference focused on the analysis of the situation in the region and the influence of Islam on it.

An important place in the structure of the Institute of Oriental Studies is occupied by the Center for Study of Common Problems of Contemporary East (CSCPCE). The research topics are based on three areas: the relationship between Russia and the countries of the East, the influence of religion on political and social processes in the countries of the East, and regional security and international relations in the East (in particular, the problem of the Syrian crisis), as well as the migration direction that appeared in 2014 due to changes in the structure of international migration processes. The head of the center is Dr. Sergey Panarin, who is known for his research in the fields of migration and security. It should be noted that, in the direction of security and migration, active project work was carried out with the participation of leading domestic scientists and foreign experts from such countries as Italy, Iran, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The main specifics of the project work were to use an integrated approach to the analysis of the problem (inclusion in the study of the etymology of concepts and historical and cultural context) and interdisciplinarity of research (representatives of various professions worked on each project), as well as the development of a clear concept for each of the projects.

The Department of Israel and the Jewish Communities is active at the institute. The subject of its research is connected with comprehensive study of various spheres of the life of the Jewish society and the processes of modern Israel. The head of the department is Dr. Tatyana Karasova, who served as a diplomat and spent a few years at the Russian Embassy in Israel. In her studies, Dr. Karasova has discussed topics related to the Israeli political system, features of Israeli-American relations, and regional politics. The researchers of the department work in close cooperation with the Israeli Embassy in Moscow; Russian State Humanitarian University; ISAA Moscow State University named after M. V. Lomonosov; Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO (U), affiliated with the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Jewish Museum and the Center for Tolerance, the Institute for National Security Studies (Tel Aviv), and others. They actively participate in conferences of various scales, roundtables, and meetings with experts.

Separately, it is worth mentioning the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, distinctive features of which include civilizational research (studies of inter-civilizational relations in the context of both large socio-cultural spaces and individual social groups) and the use of a comparative historical approach in the analysis of Eastern cultures. The emphasis of research is on the “borderline” inter-civilizational states associated with the integration of migrants. The Department of Economic Research also has its own specifics, carrying out comprehensive
forecasting studies on the economic and demographic situation in the countries of the East, as well as individual forecasting scenarios for the Middle Eastern states until 2050. Scientists from other research organizations also took part in the process of regional studies. The results of the work of the staff of the department are regularly published in a special series of yearbooks of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, *Eastern Analytics*. In 2017, the department published the monograph *Countries of the East by 2050: Population, Energy, Food, Investment Climate*. The book presents a holistic study of the development of the countries of the East until 2050; the most probable scenarios are considered.

On the basis of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, there are high-ranking scientific publications devoted to the study of the countries of the Middle East: *Oriens* (editor in chief V. V. Naumkin), which is part of the Scopus database; *Eastern Analytics* (editor in chief V. V. Naumkin); *Oriental Studies: History and Methodology* (editor in chief M. A. Pakhomova); *Asia and Africa Today* (editor in chief is Director of the Institute for African Studies of the RAS, Corresponding Member of the RAS, and Special Representative of Russian President for Relations with African Leaders A.M. Vasiliev); and other scientific journals, yearbooks, and bulletins.

Middle Eastern studies are also widely represented at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO RAS), on the basis of which the Center for Middle Eastern Studies laboratory operates. The head of the center is Professor Irina Zvyagelskaya, whose scientific interests are related to security issues in the Middle East. Professor Zvyagelskaya is a member of the Executive Office International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), working directly for the president and an expert for the Parliamentary Committee on International Affairs, the Committee for CIS Affairs, and Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots.

A group for the study of the general problems of the region and a group for the study of regional relations, which include specialists from various research institutes, including the Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS, operate in the institute. Research topics range from analyzing the relationship between global and regional trends to studying the interests and capabilities of individual states in the Middle East. These groups work in several areas: publication activity, research activities, and holding scientific and practical seminars and events, as well as participation in grant competitions.

### Studies on the Middle East at Research Universities and Institutes of Higher Education

The Institute of Asian and African Countries (IAAC) and Moscow State University (named after M. V. Lomonosov) remain among the leading Russian universities teaching and training Orientalists and Africanists, specialists on the countries and regions of Asia and Africa. Languages of the Middle Eastern area are well known to faculty of the IAAC, so Arabic, Turkish, modern Hebrew, and Persian have been taught at the institute since the Soviet period. Many bright diplomats and researchers of the USSR and Russia graduated from the institute. The graduates can be found in the Russian president’s Executive Office (press secretary Dmitry Peskov), the Foreign Ministry (Ambassador Ilya Morgunov), the Russian Council of Federation (chairman of the foreign relations committee Grigory Karasin), the Russian State Duma (deputy and leader of Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovsky), and many other distinguished members of Russian political, security, and business establishments.

The main research directions include political processes, problems, and their settlements in contemporary states of Asia and Africa; the history and culture of Oriental countries; the
countries of Asia and Africa in the world economy and international economic relations; religious systems of Orient: tradition and modernity; and the countries of Asia and Africa: global and regional dimensions. It should be stressed that the Orient in the history and culture of Russian research direction is developed under the supervision of world-known Turkish studies Professor Mikhail Meyer. Professor Meyer has been head of the Chair of the Countries of the Near and Middle East since 1994 and president of IAAC since 2013. He served as director of IAAC from 1994 through 2013.

Another department of IAAC related to Middle Eastern studies is the Chair of Political Science of the Orient. The chair, established under a different title in the USSR, was long led by Professor, Deputy Foreign Minister, and Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies (in the Soviet period) Mikhail Kapitza. Professor and Arabist Maria Vidyasova has been head of the chair that does research on international relations, political systems, and ethnic and religious issues of contemporary countries of the Orient, including the countries of the Middle East. One of the topical peculiarities of the chair is studying political Islam and contemporary terrorism. The tradition of profound scientific activities at IAAC has been sound, and professors reflect their research in the *Moscow University Bulletin, Series 13: Oriental Studies*. The journal has chapters on history, literature studies, economics, publications, and other topics. It publishes research texts not just on the area of the Middle East. Among the Middle Eastern topics studied in the *University Bulletin*, we can name the dynamics of political processes in Qatar, the army and military elites of Turkey, the most important directions of economic developments of the Arab countries from the 1980s to the 2020s, the evolution of the Turkey’s warfare against international terrorism, the exploitation of the Muslim religion by ideologists of the so-called Islamic State, Arab countries in world trends of atomic industries, and others.

Tight connection with university teaching processes and with classic fields of knowledge like history, linguistics, and economics constitute distinctive features of Middle Eastern studies at IAAC. Along with that, the institute’s researchers regularly address themes that usually relate to the activities of think tanks. Unlike the RAS Institute of Oriental Studies and affiliated with the Russian Foreign Ministry (MGIMO), the Institute of Asian and African Countries does not have a specialized research center on the Middle East. However, the institute has several chairs connected with doing research on the region. They are the Chair of Arabic Philology, the Chair of Iranian Philology, and the Chair of Turkish Philology. The Chair of Judaic Studies should also be mentioned here. This department is responsible for studying the history of the Jews, Hebrew and Hebrew literature, and the politics and economics of the state of Israel. The chair is probably one of the most oriented at practical work in the Middle East departments. It trains future diplomats and all those who are going to work in the state of Israel, the institutions of the Jewish community in Russia, the media, and business. Graduates of this chair must know Hebrew and Jewish culture. Affiliated with Russian Foreign Ministry (MGIMO), Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) is responsible for teaching talented young people who are going to become diplomats, international economists, journalists, and military serving Russian security interests abroad. It means that while analyzing activities of any MGIMO research departments, we should remember the practical and applied importance of the studies developed at the university.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies was founded in 2004 and has embraced researchers of MGIMO, Russian Academy of Sciences institutions, and Russian think tanks. The MGIMO Oriental School of Studies has roots in famous Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages of the Russian Empire. Lazarev trained Russian diplomats and interpreters of high quality for service in Oriental countries like Persia, the Ottoman Empire, China, and Japan. The director of the
center is Professor Andrei Fedorchenko, a well-known and recognized specialist on Israeli and Middle Eastern economic processes.

The center does research on the following:

- Political and economic systems of the countries of the Middle East
- Regional conflicts and ways to resolve them
- Russia’s relations with the countries of the Middle East
- US and EU policies in the Middle East
- Religious factors in the internal and foreign policy of Middle Eastern countries
- Regional economic integration in the Middle East
- The Iranian nuclear program and non-proliferation issues of nuclear weapons in the Middle East

Research products are articles and monographs as well as analytical materials for the Russian Foreign Ministry and other departments responsible for the Russian foreign policy formulation process. To elaborate research and work out in-depth applied analytics, staff members of the center take part in international conferences with their foreign colleagues, also concentrating on Middle Eastern studies. One of the perspective events is the World Congress of Middle Eastern Studies in Tunisia; the MGIMO center is very active in preparing this intellectual gathering. In its turn, all that essentially helps the researchers prepare updated special courses on different issues of domestic and foreign policies, economy in the countries of the area, and contemporary Arabic that don’t stand at one place but quickly develop.

Some outstanding books were published by the MGIMO center, and all of them had direct relation to practical analysis of Middle Eastern realities.

The center’s State of Palestine: Right for Future is about the history, economics, and politics of Palestine. It reflects the hopes of Russian diplomats for a viable Palestinian state, and it was translated from Russian to English and Arabic in cooperation with MGIMO and Palestinian Embassy in Moscow. The Middle East in the Focus of Political Analytics, a collection of articles, pays special attention to role of Islam in the area and to the complexity of the Middle Eastern settlement. Social and economic problems of the region, the political situations in certain countries, and the vectors of Russian policy towards the Middle East are considered in the volume. The researchers don’t go away from applied research and have prepared a mid-term prognosis of the developments that can happen in the Middle East.

Together with Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, the center published State of Israel: 70 Years Long Path. In the book, written by leading Russian experts on Israel such as Andrei Fedorchenko, Tatyana Karasova, Vladimir Morozov, and others, current problems in the history, policies, and economies of this country are considered; the main results of Israeli society and state development are identified, and the possible prospects for Israel’s future are issued. Considerable attention is paid to key issues that impede the Middle Eastern settlement. The authors also discuss the progressive development of Russian-Israeli relations under Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Putin.

Extremely important and equally practical was a plan proposed in 2020 by Professor Alexander Krylov, the center’s researcher, to restore Syria after many years of devastating civil war. Post-hostility restoration of the country was considered by Krylov as a national project of Syria, cooperating with China, Russia, Iran, and Brazil.

Although MGIMO traditionally has to do with diplomatic-political issues, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies has not refused to take on military topics. An article by MGIMO
Alexandra Ashmarina and Alexander Kornilov

researchers Alexander Krylov and Natan Shuminov devoted to the marine strategy of Russia in the area deserves to be mentioned. Published in 2021, the article argues that the Russian Navy successfully overcame the systemic crisis and took up positions corresponding to the status of a great power. Relating to Iran and its nuclear program, the center has advanced continued debates and produced scenarios about how the situation around Iran could develop. MGIMO researchers have also contributed to a multi-optional prognosis of the situation in the areas of the Middle East and North Africa.

The MGIMO center, like think tanks recommending policy, participated in the process of normalization of Russian-Saudi relations. Here, we should name a serious study by Professor Fedorchenko on ways of advancing a partnership between Russia and Saudi Arabia (Fedorchenko 2019). The director of the center proposed that Moscow and Al Riyadh concentrate on jointly fighting terrorism, conflict resolution, forming a collective system of security in the Persian Gulf, coordinated action in the energy markets, and increased humanitarian contacts. Many of these and other studies are done by MGIMO in cooperation with scientific and educational institutions of the Arab East, Iran, Israel, Turkey, the US, Germany, Japan, and the post-Soviet states. It is difficult to see any theoretical studies in the center for Middle Eastern activities. Rather, staff members do theoretical studies in other formats, like the MGIMO journals Polis. Political Studies, Comparative Politics, International Trends, and others.

The Higher School of Economics (HSE University) is one of the centers for active study of the Middle East processes. As a research structure, as well as a major institution of higher education, the Higher School of Economics combines research activities with the education of a younger generation of specialists in the Middle East. Thus, on the basis of the university, the School of Oriental Studies is being implemented – one of the leading Russian centers for the study of the countries of the Middle East, popular among applicants. The school uses an integrated approach to the study of Oriental studies, including:

- Fundamental research with academic work and practical skills
- In-depth study of Oriental languages
- The study of the socio-economic and political characteristics of the countries of the East
- The study of applied aspects of interaction with the region (including the behavior of political and business elites, business, entrepreneurship, and business communication)

The school implements undergraduate and graduate programs, actively works with school-children, and also cooperates with research centers and programs at leading universities abroad. The School of Oriental Studies classes are taught by such leading Russian Orientalists as Professor A. N. Karneev, Professor E. S. Steiner, Professor A. A. Dolin, Professor A. A. Maslov, Dr. M. V. Karpov, and Dr. A. V. Ants. The HSE University also operates the Middle East Club, an open multi-level student organization that brings together interested students and young researchers in the field of Oriental studies. Scientific seminars and conferences on the Middle East are regularly held.

Founded in the Soviet Union, the (People’s Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) educated hundreds of students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America for a long time. It served as an institution of the “Soviet soft power.” Based in Moscow, today, it is one of the most respected Russian universities widely open to foreign students. Every year, dozens of students from the Middle Eastern states enter the RUDN, and their teachers continue to update knowledge about the modern history, culture, religions, politics, and foreign relations of countries and international organizations in the region.
Studies on the Middle East in Russia

Although the university has no special department on Middle Eastern studies, it has a Department of Theory and History of International Relations, which is responsible for preparing bachelor’s and master’s degree students in the fields of international relations and foreign regional studies (profiles of China and the Middle East, Eurasian studies). Led by Professor Denis Degterev, the department is a widely known scientific and educational center in Russia on the history of international relations, applied quantitative analysis, international assistance, and the foreign policy of the CIS countries, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The department publishes the peer-reviewed Vestnik RUDN: International Relations journal. In recent years, the editorial board has issued the journal in the form of a thematic dossier. Researchers in the department and RUDN partner institutions of higher education do research on the geopolitical dimension of Middle Eastern affairs, complex phenomena, and international terrorism.

One of the 2018 thematic dossiers was devoted to the Syrian crisis, coalition wars, and strategies to find ways out of the crisis (Vol 18 2018). In particular, the authors of the issue analyzed how the Syrian factor influenced Russian-US relations (2011–18), role of the “Syrian Issue” in Turkish-US relations, different aspects of Iran’s anti-terrorism approach in “hard” and “soft” dimensions, and the dilemmas of Syrian reconstruction between Russia and the Western countries.

The Islamic factor in world politics became the topic of a special issue in 2019. The RUDN and invited authors discussed extremely important themes, among which we should name the Saudi Model of Development for the Islamic World: Peculiarities and Limits; the Gulf States’ Assistance to Egypt after the 2011 Revolution: Logic, Dynamics, Systemic Impact; Al-Azhar University in the Events of the Arab Spring (Case of Egypt); and the Kurdish Issue in Turkish-Syrian Relations in the Context of the Syrian Crisis. In 2021, number 4 of the journal was entitled The Greater Mediterranean: Still Constructing the Macro-region, so many articles were connected with topics of the area. The authors did research on such issues as Russian policy in the Mediterranean, the Islamist challenge in the Greater Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean in UAE foreign policy, Islamist terrorism in the context of contemporary hybrid wars, and China’s relations with the Mediterranean states. The department of comparative political science, which is also a part of RUDN, does not set the task of in-depth Middle Eastern studies despite the fact that one of professor of the department is a well-known specialist on the Arab Orient: Yuri Pochta, who is also editor in chief of the Vestnik RUDN: Political Science journal. This journal does not address Middle Eastern affairs on a regular basis.

St. Petersburg State University has the famous Faculty of Asian and African Studies (FAAS). This faculty was established as Lazarev’s Institute of Oriental Languages in the Russian Empire. The FAAS is one of the world’s major centers for the study and teaching of languages, literatures, cultures, international relations, economics, religions, and history of the Asian and African countries. The region of the Middle East, among other areas, is studied at the faculty. Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, and other Middle Eastern languages are taught here. The dean of the FAAS is a world-known expert on the history of Islam and Middle East, Director of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg Mikhail Piotrovsky. The Department of Turkic Philology at FAAS has held The Kononov Readings annual conference. Dedicated to an outstanding Russian Turkologist, academician Andrei Kononov, the readings gather research reports that cover different issues of the formation and development of the languages, linguistic structure, history, culture, ethnography, and literature of Turkic peoples in the past and at present. The research of the FAAS scientists is published in the Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University Asian and African Studies. Being a peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary journal, the Vestnik is committed to fostering original and professional research in Asian and African studies. The authors of the Vestnik devote their articles to the issues of practices of speech expression in Arab diplomatic communication,
the partnership and common interests of Russia and Saudi Arabia, problems in the study of the Houthi Movement, the role of bureaucratic politics in Egypt’s Africa policies under President Mubarak, prospects for the development of Arabic and Islamic studies in the digital age, the Berber question, the self-identity problem of the North African indigenous population in the context of contemporary Algerian society and others. Academic staff is mainly concentrated in the FAAS Department of History of Middle Eastern Countries led by Professor Nikolay Diahkov, who is a famous specialist on the culture and religion of the area.

Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (UNN) represents an example of Middle Eastern studies developed outside Moscow. In-depth research of the area started in the 1980s and 1990s when Doctor of Science and PhD dissertations were defended at Moscow and St. Petersburg Universities. Over the last ten years, UNN has emerged as one of the remarkable research centers where Israeli foreign policies studies are especially made. The UNN Institute of International Relations and World History has departments in which MES remain to occupy a very important place. UNN researchers have paid special attention to such issues as Turkey’s foreign policy formulation process, British Parliament and its role in the Middle Eastern policy of the UK, the role of the army in the political processes of modern Egypt, Russian policy in the region, and others. The State of Israel’s foreign policy and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affairs are studied in different monographs and articles of UNN researchers.

It should also be noted that UNN scientists are often invited to do research and participate in joint research projects, conferences, and publications with the RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, MFA MGIMO, RUDN, and MFA Diplomatic Academy. This trend reflects the general vector of integration made by Moscow academics for the advancement of fundamental and applied research in the Middle Eastern area.

Studies on the Middle East at Non-governmental Institutions

The Institute of the Middle East (IME) is a non-state independent research center with Russian funding, engaged in a comprehensive study of the countries of the Near and Middle East. Well-known Orientalist and economist Yevgeniy Satanovsky is president of the institute and its founder. The work of the IME is depoliticized and deideologized; it includes cooperation with experts in the field of the study of the Near and Middle East and further publication of the works of Oriental scholars in paid and free publications. At the moment, about seven hundred researchers have published in the publications of the Institute of the Middle East, of which about a hundred are from the countries of the Near and Middle East. The works are mainly devoted to the analysis of situations in these countries and the forecast of the consequences of current events in the region. At the same time, special emphasis is placed on the study of Russia’s interests in the region. The main activity of IME is publishing. This includes the publication of articles in domestic and foreign high-ranking publications, the compilation of monographs, regional reference publications, situational reviews on the military-political situation of individual countries, and the publication of the series of works “The Middle East and Modernity” and “Arab Countries.” Along with that, the institute also organizes roundtables and conferences with the participation of Oriental experts on topical issues affecting all spheres of life in the Middle East region. In addition, employees regularly prepare information and analytical materials on the Middle East and actively interact with Russian departments in the Middle East, Russian representative offices in the region, and major international research centers. Doing that, the institute invites competent military, economists, and diplomats to the process of writing and publishing articles on the burning issues of the area. Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, and other non-state actors are under the constant attention of these experts. During
Studies on the Middle East in Russia

the hottest months of the Syrian civil conflict, the IME published quite specific analyses about the military dimension of the conflict. In particular, the authors of the analyses considered the phenomenon of drones, aviation use in urban areas, and counterterrorist operations in Syrian towns and desert.

Conclusion

Middle Eastern studies in Russia demonstrate diversity in institutions and topics of research. Institutional dimension shows three types of institutions that develop serious, in-depth, and highly competent research on the area. They are institutes affiliated with the Russian Academy of Sciences, university departments, and specialized centers and think tanks working for the Russian Middle Eastern policy-formulation process. Diversity is also manifested in the mutual interaction of all three types of research groups so that, say, researchers at MGIMO University are able to analyze processes in the area within quite another academic or university structure based in Moscow. It is like a system of “connected vessels.”

The second feature of MES in the Russian Federation can be found in the contents of the research. On the one hand, Russian scientists keep the old tradition of fundamental science, which stimulates advanced studies in Oriental (Middle Eastern) languages, the history of countries, economics, religious systems, and culture to apply civilizational approach. Fundamental science is not about responding to what happened a few hours or days ago. It is rather about those often-hidden strata that have a long-term impact on the consciousness and behavior of the people residing and acting in the region. Fundamental science that is taken care of in academic institutions and universities helps think tanks and policy experts look at the events in the area through different lenses.

On the other hand, applied research on the Middle East in Russia is oriented at constant monitoring of the most important trends in politics, economics, foreign policy, ethnic conflicts, interreligious dialogue, and contradictions. The dynamics of the Middle East itself form the contents of the applied research. However, applied research is not only reactive but also active. That is why Russian think tanks and experts aim to develop different formats of joint projects with their counterparts in the area.

Notes


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