

Spring 2018 ISKRAN Student Visit to the University of Maryland and CISSM

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) hosted a group of seven students and researchers from the School of World Politics and International Security at the Institute for the U.S. and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISKRAN). This was ISKRAN's fifteenth annual visit to CISSM as a part of the joint Collaborative Education and Security Project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The program develops and fosters the next generation of Russian and U.S. leaders in international affairs.

The annual visits provide ISKRAN students the opportunity to meet with experts in the field of international relations and security both at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy (SPP) and CISSM as well as at think tanks, foundations and media outlets in the Washington, D.C., area. Additionally, the ISKRAN students collaborate with their MSPP student counterparts on a joint policy exercise that results in a presentation highlighting areas of potential cooperation between the U.S. and Russian governments.

This year's ISKRAN cohort arrived at the University of Maryland (UMD) interested in better understanding American perspectives on the current state of U.S.-Russian relations. A common question posed to several experts by the students throughout their visit was "Do you think the U.S. and Russia are in a new Cold War?" The strained relationship between the U.S. and Russian governments was a major concern for the Russian students who focused their discussions with Americans on hearing different perspectives on prospects for improving relations. To the surprise of several of the students, their American counterparts were willing to talk candidly with them. One ISKRAN student reflected on this by saying, "I was most surprised by their openness. They were willing to discuss many issues of U.S. domestic politics with foreigners."

Joint Policy Exercise

This year, ISKRAN and SPP students divided into two groups with one focused on U.S.-Russian cooperation on the North Korea nuclear issue (North Korea group) and the other looking at prospects for U.S.-Russian cooperation on strengthening the nonproliferation regime and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT group). The students began the exercise by exchanging "food for thought" memos outlining areas for potential cooperation prior to the Russians arrival. They then met over a two-day period and presented their recommendations to a CISSM panel made up of CISSM leadership and other faculty at the school.

On Tuesday, April 10th, the ISKRAN students attended a session of Professor Nancy Gallagher's course on International Security Policy for their first in-person



NPT group presents meets after class for the joint policy exercise

interactions with their UMD SPP student counterparts in the joint policy exercise. To get acquainted, the students attended a working lunch prior to class. Professor Gallagher then began class by welcoming the ISKRAN students to the School of Public Policy and offering remarks on the program and the current state of U.S.- Russian relations. Professor Gallagher then asked each member of the class to introduce them self and explain how they first became interested in the field of international security. The question prompted a varied set of personal stories about the experiences and motivations that led each student to a common interest in security policy and international relations. After introductions, Gallagher asked the Russian students how they felt about the Trump administration. Gallagher then focused the remainder of the class on questions pertinent to U.S.-Russian relations and to better understanding Russian and American perspectives on the current state of affairs and how to bring about change.

In the last hour of class, the joint policy exercise groups met to begin their deliberations on areas of cooperation to highlight during their Thursday presentations. Each group used the “food for thought” memos as a baseline for discussions on areas of cooperation.

In their presentation, the North Korea group advocated for a three-step approach that would benefit both the United States and Russian interests: 1) a new round of six party talks, 2) a double freeze (no nuclear or ballistic missile tests by North Korea in exchange for no large-scale military exercises by the U.S.), and 3) biennial meetings to discuss progress. The group argued that the six-party talks should prioritize multilateral security guarantees to build trust, and a non-aggression pledge by all states. Finally, the group asserted that the talks should bring about formal diplomatic relations between North Korea and the United



North Korea group presents their recommendations to the panel

States, South Korea, and Japan. To achieve these gains, the North Korea group argued that negotiations must be equitable, and the parties should focus on incremental progress to avoid a stalemate in negotiations, with the issue of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula seen as a long-term objective. Finally, the group agreed that economic and military provocations should not be used as bargaining chips.

The NPT group saw the greatest promise for U.S.-Russian cooperation on the issues of nuclear fissile material, disarmament, and North Korea and Iran. In their presentation to the CISSM panel, the NPT group argued for limiting the quantity of fissile material in global circulation by promoting the use of fuel banks to provide the necessary amount of low-enriched uranium for nuclear energy use. On disarmament, the NPT group proposed working toward a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East agreement by finally convening an international conference on the topic. Both the United States and Russia would act as facilitators for the conference, which would involve all interested countries, including Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the NPT group highlighted the need for a New START follow-on conference that would include all P-5 countries. The conference would focus on setting targets for continued progress on strategic nuclear weapons reductions ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Another recommendation was to strengthen the IAEA's capacity to fight terrorism by controlling fissile material and facilitating information sharing between the United States and Russia. The CISSM panel urged students to think about how to prioritize these recommendations to maximize progress. After completing their presentations, Nancy Gallagher exchanged gifts with the ISKRAN students, thanking them for their participation in this year's program.



NPT group presents their recommendations to the panel

After the exercise, SPP students reflected on their experience working with the Russian students. Many found the Russians to be far more conciliatory than expected. One student said, 'It was striking to me how much the students talked about the importance of dialogue and common ground and how self-aware they are.' Another SPP student expressed surprise at the group's ability to come to agreement by stating, 'I wasn't open to finding common ground with Moscow, or optimistic any plausible solution could be formulated. I expected this to be more blatantly apparent in our interactions with the Russians but was instead pleasantly surprised at the common ground we were able to find.' That same student concluded, 'I now view Russia as a more useful partner in working towards a peaceful resolution to North Korea's increasing hostility towards the United States and its allies.'



ISKRAN students exchange gifts with CISSM Director, Nancy Gallagher, after the joint policy exercise

Washington, D.C., Meetings

On Wednesday, April 11th, the ISKRAN students went downtown to meet with several experts focused on U.S.- Russian relations to discuss the current state of affairs and the prospects for improved relations. Daniel Russell, President and CEO of the U.S. Russia Business Council (USRBC) hosted the students at the council's downtown offices. Russell began by acknowledging the importance of these educational exchanges for keeping dialogue going during difficult times. In his remarks, Russell emphasized the need for the U.S. and Russia to increase predictability and stability, but acknowledged the difficulty of accomplishing this without willing participants in government. He argues that the two countries need a crisis like the situations in North Korea and Syria to spur cooperation. Russell still believes that Syria offers an opportunity for engagement with both countries heavily invested in the outcome. Finally, Russell asserted that commercial engagement is needed to open channels of communication between the two countries that aren't dominated by political elites.



ISKRAN students meet with Daniel Russell, President of the U.S. Russia Business Council

Later that morning, the ISKRAN students met with former U.S. Ambassador to Russia and current Director of the U.S. Russia Foundation, John Beyrle. Beyrle outlined the activities of the U.S. Russia Foundation and lamented its current relationship with the Russian government after being deemed an undesirable entity by Russian authorities. He spent much of the meeting arguing for the importance of sustained dialogue and the need to develop unofficial channels to accomplish this goal. Beyrle believes that military to military dialogue is essential to avoiding conflict escalation, particularly since conflicts are more militarized nowadays. He instructed the students to converse with Americans their own age and develop relationships.



ISKRAN students meet with former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, John Beyrle, at the U.S. Russia Foundation

After a quick lunch, the ISKRAN students went to the office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) for a meeting with arms control expert, James Acton. Acton explained the mandate of CEIP and gave an overview of his current research on the vulnerability of command and control systems to non-nuclear weapons. He then argued that the Iran nuclear deal will likely fall apart because of dissatisfaction on both sides of the agreement. Acton also discussed his skepticism over the prospects of a

successful summit meeting between the U.S. and North Korea. He believes the summit is a high risk/ high reward endeavor and that the best-case scenario would yield a general statement of principles.

After finishing the meeting with Dr. Acton, the ISKRAN students made their way to Georgetown University to meet with Dr. Andrew Kuchins. Kuchins discussed American perspectives on Russia and U.S. and Russian positions in the current global order. He told the students that there are fundamental differences between the Cold War and the current tensions between the two countries but that he worries the “enemy image” of Russia by Americans could be at its worst point in history. Kuchins believes it will be very difficult to get past the current political impasse but that a resolution to the Ukrainian conflict could help to ease tensions.



ISKRAN students discuss arms control with Dr. James Acton of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The ISKRAN students ended their day at The Tombs restaurant on the Georgetown campus for a meeting with Dr. Andrew Karber of the Potomac Foundation. Karber argued that we are in a period of tripolarity and that tripolar systems are historically unstable. He lamented the demonization that is occurring in today’s politics and the excessive level of intensity in the political rhetoric from government officials. One of the students asked Karber about the potential summit with North Korea, which Karber quickly dismissed as “silly.” He believes that the United States and South Korea have very little leverage over the North Koreans.

On Friday, April 13th, the Russian students began their day with a meeting at the *Washington Post* to discuss U.S.-Russian relations with contributing editor, David Hoffman. Hoffman spent most of the meeting fielding questions from students about the current state of political affairs and the role of civil society. Hoffman discussed the media landscape in Russia and how it has changed since Putin came to power. Hoffman argued that civil society comprises the connections between the rulers and the ruled and that countries with robust civil society are better able to self-correct. He believes that democracy, markets, and the rule of law are the fundamental elements for civil society to thrive. When asked about Russian meddling in the U.S. election, Hoffman claimed that the Kremlin miscalculated and engaged in a counterproductive exercise.



Meeting with Washington Post editor, David Hoffman

The Russian students next met with Center for Strategic and International Studies President John Hamre at the center's D.C. offices. Hamre began the discussion with an assessment of American political leaders' views on Russia. He claimed that the anti-Russian fervor is strong in both political parties. Despite the animus, Hamre argued that there are still areas ripe for cooperation, namely, maritime, space, and arctic security. Hamre asserted that those interested in improving relations between the two countries should focus on opening up scientific pathways, recommitting to arms control, and cooperating on space security. He also argued that Russia needs to spur intellectual and entrepreneurial activity in its country to broaden its economic foundations.



Meeting with president of the Center for International and Security Studies (CSIS), Dr. John Hamre

After the meeting at CSIS, the Russian students met with Dr. Richard Weitz and several of his colleagues at the Hudson Institute. The meeting started with introductions followed by a question and answer session with Weitz. He argued that the U.S. relationship with Russia was ruined by his generation and hoped the next generation would work to reduce tensions. Additionally, Weitz identified curbing horizontal nuclear proliferation as one of the most important issues requiring U.S. and Russia cooperation. The students finished the meeting with a picture outside of the Hudson Institute offices directly across from the new Trump Hotel.



ISKRAN students with Dr. Richard Weitz of the Hudson Institute across from the Trump Hotel

The Russian students ended the day at the Russian Embassy for a meeting with the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov. The Embassy staff served traditional Russian tea and cookies to the students as they awaited the Ambassador's arrival. During the meeting, Antonov discussed the NPT, the Syrian conflict, and the future of arms control with the students. Afterward, the students enjoyed an official tour of the Russian Embassy with its beautiful Russian furniture and décor.

Seminars with SPP Faculty and CISSM Fellows

On Tuesday, April 10th, the ISKRAN students met with UMD SPP Professor Alec Worsnop to discuss Worsnop's research on the determinants of effective insurgencies in conflict. Worsnop argued that

effective training that is routinized, realistic, and fosters capable small-unit leaders is as if not more important than the traditional focus on resource flows and social cohesion.

After their discussion with Worsnop, the Russian students sat down with SPP Dean Robert Orr. Orr dissected U.S.-Russian relations through the lens of the United Nations where he served as special advisor to the Secretary General for many years prior to becoming dean. Orr argued that Russia will need to build out a modern infrastructure to keep pace with the rest of the world. He told the students that he has worked very little with Russian counterparts on combatting climate change because Russia lack interlocuters that aren't connected to the Kremlin. Orr rejected the notion that we are in a new Cold War but said that there needs to be a greater focus developing unofficial channels for sustained dialogue to help ease tensions.



ISKRAN students meet with MSPP Dean, Robert Orr

On Thursday, April 12th, the Russian students started their day meeting with CISSM Graduate Fellow, Naoko Aoki to discuss security issues on the Korean peninsula. Aoki gave an overview of past attempts at diplomatic engagement with North Korea and the factors impeding a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. Fielding questions about the prospects for a diplomatic summit with North Korea, Aoki expressed a general belief that dialogue is positive. However, she is skeptical that the summit will lead to a positive outcome. She explained that U.S. and North Korean officials define denuclearization differently, which could pose problems during negotiations.

Following their meeting with Aoki, the students met with SPP Professor, I.M. (Mac) Destler to discuss the Trump administration's foreign and trade policy. Destler argued that Trump's actions on trade policy toward China have been questionably executed but may still yield some positive results if there is a change in China's behavior on the issue of stealing intellectual property from foreign firms operating in their country. Destler also addressed the ongoing special counsel investigation into the Trump administration arguing that Robert Mueller's findings will likely be damaging to the president.



ISKRAN students meet with MSPP Professor, I.M (Mac) Destler

Extracurricular Activities

The Russian students participated in an array of extracurricular activities during their visit, including a tour of the UMD campus. A favorite for Russian students each year is the tea hour that Professor Zhanna Vernola from the UMD School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures hosts for the ISKRAN students. The tea hour offers the ISKRAN students the opportunity to chat and joke with Russian speaking UMD students and gives them a well-deserved break from speaking English.



Russian student spending time with UMD Russian language students at the Language House

The Russian students also joined their fellow SPP students for ice cream at the Maryland Creamery after completing their joint policy exercise presentations. This was one of the highlights for many of the Russian students, as it gave them a chance to get to know their American counterparts outside the class setting.

As is tradition, on April 11th, the group attended a pizza and movie night featuring “A Walk in the Woods,” a televised play based on private discussions between U.S. negotiator Paul Nitze and Soviet Delegate Yuli Kvitsinsky during 1982 arms control talks in Geneva.

Finally, this year, the Russian students attended the CISSM 30th Anniversary event, celebrating CISSM’s accomplishments and commemorating past CISSM directors Catherine Kelleher, Mac Destler, and the late John Steinbruner. The students enjoyed talking with one another and guests at the event about their experience on the trip. Following the celebration, the International Security and Economic Policy (ISEP) Council held a happy hour for the Russian students at The Commons restaurant just off campus.



ISKRAN and SPP students at the Jim Henson statue outside of Stamp Student Union



ISKRAN students enjoying the CISSM 30th