

How will termination of research partnerships with Russia affect global scientific research?

March 8 2022, by Jodi Heckel



Some research institutions are quickly ending scientific collaborations with Russia since its invasion of Ukraine. University Library professor Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe said the actions are a significant shift in policy from a long tradition of scientific diplomacy. Credit: Cindy Brya

Financial, political, commercial and cultural entities quickly cut ties with Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. Some universities also are ending research projects and scientific cooperation with institutions in Russia. Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, the coordinator for information literacy services and instruction and a professor in the University Library at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, co-wrote an essay on scientific "decoupling" that was published on the Society for Scholarly Publishing's blog, The Scholarly Kitchen. She talked with News Bureau arts and humanities editor Jodi Heckel.

Historically, universities in the U.S. and Europe have followed a policy of openness regarding research and [scientific collaboration](#) with other nations, even during times of conflict. How have scientific partnerships and shared projects been used for diplomacy?

Scientific collaborations between and among countries facilitate deepening ties. In times of tension, partnerships serve as a locus of shared interest and common ground that can help counter the tensions and bring things back to a more felicitous state. In times of conflict, continuing collaborations serve as a basis for facilitating the reestablishment of relationships post-conflict.

Examples of scientific diplomacy are numerous, including Cold War-era relationships with the USSR, more recent investments in scientific and educational exchanges with China, and some nascent nongovernmental organization work happening with North Korea. The everyday exchanges that are very common here at Illinois also are part of this fabric of diplomacy, as are headline-making efforts such as the International Space Station and the ITER energy project.

Are you surprised to see the quick move to sever research ties with Russia by some institutions?

There are real concerns about sharing information with adversaries. But the sudden and swift pivot away from scientific diplomacy was definitely notable. We started drafting the Scholarly Kitchen piece as cutting ties was being proposed; over three intense days of researching and writing, we had to update repeatedly from observing something being discussed to it being implemented. By the next day, the piece was somewhat out-of-date as more actions were taken.

So, not only is this a significant shift in policy, but it is happening very quickly. Given that some of these collaborations were years or even decades in the making, the rapidity signals the urgency of the moment. At the same time, one hopes this isn't hasty action with unintended long-term consequences.

Also worth noting is the simultaneous pivot toward supporting and strengthening research ties with Ukraine. There are significant efforts to support immigration of scholars and students through pathways that will enable them to continue their academic work. Granting agencies are exploring "hop on" grant programs for Ukrainian researchers to join existing projects. And publishers have opened their materials to people in Ukraine. We also see mass media dropping paywalls on their coverage of the Russian invasion and global response.

How will this impact ongoing research projects? What about the long-term effect on future collaborations?

Some governments say that although they are ceasing formal relations with Russian institutions and organizations, they are encouraging scientists to continue individual engagement. It is unclear what that really can mean, though. Continuing to work together when the projects are themselves suddenly unfunded seems rather difficult to sustain.

At the same time, some are arguing that severing ties would do more harm than good. The considerations are very complex. Looking ahead to the end of this conflict, we can expect that some projects will never resume. Others may recover, but slowly, even if only because of the logistics and paperwork involved. And even if ties are not cut, there will be the challenge of reestablishing trust.

There are also potential second-order effects on the trust that undergirds other scientific collaborations. Partners in other nations may be less confident of mutual commitment in light of the rapid decoupling from Russia. It is worth noting as well that China is not breaking its formal ties with Russia. As a result, many analysts also are thinking ahead to scenarios of what a tighter China-Russia coupling could mean.

Is this also affecting scientific publishing?

Publishers are already having to align their business practices with various sanctions that have been put in place. They are also under pressure from a variety of sources to cut ties with Russia. One journal editor has said that manuscripts from authors at Russian institutions will be rejected, and others are said to be considering such a policy.

Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science has called for Clarivate and Elsevier to stop indexing journals published by Russian institutions in Web of Science and Scopus, respectively. Researchers also may see a shift in sentiment about scientific openness and questions about dissemination of information on sensitive and dual-use topics.

More information: Decoupling from Russia:
[scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/20... oupling-from-russia/](https://www.scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2022/05/12/decoupling-from-russia/)

Provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Citation: How will termination of research partnerships with Russia affect global scientific research? (2022, March 8) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-03-termination-partnerships-russia-affect-global.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.