

## **The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies: The Organizational Dimension**

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During the Soviet era, the area of foreign policy was largely monopolized by the Communist Party and the Academy of Sciences. In contemporary Russia, there has been a demonstrable crystallization of the process of using a complicated system of state-controlled and independent think tanks. In this regard, the Moscow-based Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS) has been transformed into a very powerful and well-organized community of experts in international affairs.

Think tank is a term which is traditionally used to define a research organization for the purpose of solving of problems, especially in the areas of technology, social or political strategy, armament or public policy. A think tank denotes people of creativity in their field who can produce new ideas on particular subjects. It reflects the profound desire of some people to influence public opinion and public policy. If there are numerous think tanks, then they are required to compete in their own marketplace and to sell their products. A think tank requires financing for the process of research, including the hiring of experts with experience in policy planning, research funding and the publication of policy proposals. The most important aspect of a think tank organizations is in the fact that they are able to exert serious influence on the policy-making process and on the decision-taking process in the country and even beyond. It is for this reason, international rela

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tions scholars follow with great interest the activities of various think tanks in the field of foreign policy making.

### **Think Tanks in the USSR/Russia: A Historical Sketch**

While exploring the creation and development of independent analytical institutions in contemporary Russia, it is essential to have a clear overview of the historical background that determines the specificity of experts required for governmental decision-making in the area of foreign policy.

Throughout the history of the Soviet Union, the existence a system of institutions known as the USSR Academy of Sciences (which conducts scientific research in versatile areas) was created. Here it is necessary to stress the high level of proficiency, expertise and efficiency of the scientific data and findings produced by these corollary institutions operating upon an advanced technological resource base and a highly educated and qualified staff. The Academy Institutes were an integral part of the USSR foreign policy-making system. Among the academic institutes which made direct influence on the elite mentality of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a result of their foreign policy contents were the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Institute of the USA and Canada, Institute of Oriental Studies, Institute of the Far East, *Miklukho-Maklay* Institute of Ethnography, Institute of State and Law, Institute of Europe, Institute of Scientific Information in the Field of Humanities, Institute of Social Sciences and the Institute of Slavic Studies and Balkan Studies amongst others.

However, scientific research in the USSR was monopolized completely by the state and the Communist Party (the very idea of an independent think tank in the Soviet Russia was an oxymoron) in isolation from the global scientific community. The Central Committee of the CPSU controlled the Scientific Department which was responsible for coordinating and directing all expertise in the interest of the ruling Soviet elite.

The Party-controlled institutions had to secure such ideas which today seem to be a relic of the past for some people and source of new international relations for the others. Among them is the idea of “proletarian internationalism”. It appealed to “working class” people around the world to unite in the fight against “world capital” and to build a society based on social equality and brotherhood. Another important foreign policy idea for the Soviet think tanks was the right to self-determination for all nations, including the separation and establishment nation states. The slogan was very attractive, had to exist beyond the borders of the USSR and endangered the territorial integrity and sovereignty many Western countries.

Undoubtedly, the collapse of the USSR has brought about a deterioration in the workability of a streamlined and effective system. During the 1990s the country was going through a rough patch: Russia as a fledgling democracy faced years

of political discontent and economic hardship. The government was preoccupied with state reorganization and the creation of new democratic institutions. Consequently, scientific development was a neglected area in the priorities of the government. The Russian Academy of Sciences, as a successor to the Soviet institution, went through severe degradation, caused predominantly by the lack of governmental financial support as well as a “brain-drain” of promising scientists.

In relation to the field of foreign relations and external policy, it is worth highlighting the fact that, on the one hand, foreign policy issues in general took a back seat on the agenda of the Russian government in the 1990s, and, as a result, there was almost no demand or interest from the state for analytical support in foreign policy decision-making process. On the other hand, political freedom and democratization gave a boost to the formation of numerous independent think tanks exploring political issues both in terms of foreign and domestic policy. Nevertheless, the majority of these newly established institutions and their research was subsidized by Western foundations. This has imposed a certain mark, and a limit on the quality of their work and made their impartiality quite questionable.

Additionally, there were institutions which wanted to be independent of the Russian government or Western funds. These could be found in the 1990s not only in Moscow and Saint Petersburg but also in Kazan, Nizhni Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, and Novosibirsk. Wherever there was a strong university tradition, Russian scientists created foundations, institutes, centers and other structures. Russian academics wanted to be recognized and benefit a new society in the midst of political uncertainty. That was an attempt to de-monopolize the very process of policy-formulation in the Russian Federation and to create an alternate community of institutes to the Moscow-based think tanks. The process of political regionalism in Russia under President Yeltsin supported this trend of de-monopolizing expertise. However, many of the new institutions with pretentious names were forgotten in the cruel market of economic reforms and analytical competition.

This sort of uncertainty continued till the 2000s, when the area of analytical work in the foreign policy field obtained a new breath of life. In an article dedicated to the activities of independent analytical centers by the Russian magazine ‘Kommersant Vlast’ it is stated that, “the interest in qualitative analytical support for the foreign policy decision-making re-emerged only in the 2000s, when the state had money and desire to pursue an active foreign policy.”<sup>1</sup> Even though the article assessed the current situation vis-à-vis the independent think-tanks in Russia as being ambivalent, the level of research in the foreign policy field leaves much to be desired in comparison with Soviet times. The period of Demetri Medvedev’s presidency is especially characterized by a soaring governmental interest in independent expertise in the field of foreign policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabuev Aleksandr, and Chernenko Elena, “Po stranam I stecheniyam obstayatel’stv/ Kommersant Vlast”, 01 Oct. 2012, last accessed on <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2025883>

The Russian governmental institutions admitted an insufficiency in analytical support, traditionally provided by the Russian Foreign Ministry as well as work in scientific research provided by MGIMO (Moscow Institute of International Relations) and the Diplomatic Academy, the two universities strongly correlated with it. Moreover, the Russian President stimulated cooperation between the governmental agencies and civil society.

Governmental interest in providing effective decision-making in foreign policy is growing rapidly and is proven by two general tendencies. Firstly, the number of government-subsidized tenders for research in this field has increased significantly<sup>2</sup> and this proves that at the top-level of the Russian government, a serious effort to create a competitive market in independent scientific research in order to serve foreign policy needs has been made. Secondly, the number of state orders sealed on a long-lasting basis reflects the growing demand and expanding financial influx into the area of foreign policy research.

### **RISS as a Think Tank of the Russian President**

The most striking example here is the Moscow-based Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) which has been included among the top-10 Russian think tanks'. This institute was initially created in 1992, however it was not until 2009 when it gained more prominence at the official level. The turning point in the history of the RISS was decree No. 478 issued by President Dmitry Medvedev on April, 29 2009. The RISS received the status of a Federal scientific institution financed through the state budget with the President of the Russian Federation becoming its founder.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the Director of the Institute was displaced by another Presidential decree, No. 479. As Leonid Reshetnikov, the current RISS director notes in one of his interviews,

“The new life of the institute started in April, 2009, when its Charter was changed. According to the Charter the founder of the Institute became the President of the Russian Federation. This fact has increased the volumes of our information, our research, our policy briefs consumed by the Presidential Administration and other state bodies. The structure of the Institute was also changed: now we have new departments, but the research fields in general remained the same”.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the Kremlin admitted a lack of alternative information and analytical production in the field of foreign and national security policy which was

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<sup>2</sup> Portal Zakupok, The official website where the government of the Russian Federation places the information about tenders subsidized by government, last accessed on <http://zakupki.gov.ru/epz/main/public/home.html>

<sup>3</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoy Federatsii 29 aprel'a 2009 g. № 478, 'Referent', the web-system of the legal documents of the Russian Federation, last accessed on <http://www.referent.ru/1/135207>

<sup>4</sup> Pyadisheva Evgenia, 20 let. Analiticheski tsentr, izdatel'ski dom I dazhe kinostudia/ RISI / IMA-Press, 26 March 2012, last accessed on [http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons\\_11137.html](http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons_11137.html)

at its disposal. The dramatic increase in information flows demanded a response from high quality expertise. Along with it, the information streams required not only an adequate response from specialists but also well-thought out policy initiatives. As a result, Russian policy in the field of international relations and security became active and offensive rather than reactive and ‘wait and see’.

Remarkably, though the new director of the RISS was appointed by D. Medvedev, he can be considered to be a pro-Putin candidate: Leonid Reshetnikov is a former General-Lieutenant of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and the head of its Information and Analytical Department. However, his prominence within the realm of the Russian scientific community seems to be indisputable. He has a Ph.D. in historical sciences; moreover, he is a member of the Scientific Council of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a member of the Scientific Council of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and the Public Council of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Mr. Reshetnikov has shown his sympathy for the White Army and the Russian emigration after the 1917 Revolution when he published his Russian-language book entitled “*Russian Lemnos: Historical Overview*” (2012). The director is also known for his support of the Russian Orthodox Church and of Russian spiritual values in the life of the country.

In general, the initial proclaimed tasks of the RISS have not changed noticeably despite the new status. They include;

- 1) dealing with the issues of national security, studying Russia’s relations with other countries;
- 2) analyzing and forecasting trends in political and socio-economic processes at the global and regional levels
- 3) exploring the possible ways of maintaining strategic stability in the new geopolitical conditions and evaluating factors of strategic risks;
- 4) Considering ways to resolve crisis situations threatening the global and regional stability as well as paying significant attention to the fight against terrorism.<sup>6</sup>

From the above-declared aims it becomes evident that the Institute was assigned with new tasks of a strategic nature. The RISS became a think tank of the Russian President and was responsible for coordinating strategic analysis and policy recommendations. It should be stressed that the fields of strategic research in RISS accruing from its new status varied from difficult socio-economic issues to extremely important counter-terrorism policy.

<sup>5</sup> Reshetnikov Leonid Petrovich, Direktor Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/index.php/jomsocial/profile/613-reshetnikov-leonid-petrovich>

<sup>6</sup> Ob institute, Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/about>

The ultimate goal of the institute activities is a sort of innovation as it completely corresponds to the new status in:

“Providing informational support for the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, the Federation Council and the State Duma, the Security Council, ministries and agencies. The RISS provides expert appraisals, recommendations, prepares analytical information for the structures enumerated above.”<sup>7</sup>

The wide range of scientific work is ensured by the structural subdivision of the RISS into the Research Center of CIS countries, Center for Asia and the Middle East Research, the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (‘geographical departments’), Center for Economic Research, Centre for Defense Studies as well as the Humanitarian Research Center (functional departments).<sup>8</sup> The latter represents a new department, introduced almost simultaneously with the Presidential Decree of 2009 and it is preoccupied with “the contentious issues of the foreign relations history and the role of the religious factor.”<sup>9</sup> Its introduction has added a new task of “counteracting the falsification of history in the post-Soviet space”<sup>10</sup> to RISS scientific activities which are determined by the need of the Russian government to provide strategic interests in the post-Soviet space. Here, there is a serious element of propaganda for Russian state interests. Upon the whole, we can conclude that the Presidential Decree of 2009 has turned the RISS into a useful tool providing abundant data and research for an appropriate “articulation of the strategic directions of the state policy in the sphere of national security.”<sup>11</sup>

### **RISS: A High Quality of Staff**

We have an opportunity to clarify the research priorities of the Institute if we look at the biographies and careers of the think tank Directors. Dr. Leonid Reshetnikov conducted research on the Soviet-Bulgarian relations and continues to pay attention to the Balkans, with the ability to speak Bulgarian, Serbian along with some knowledge of Greek. The First Deputy Director of the Institute Dr. of Sci. Konstantin Kokarev is a well-known specialist on China, its political processes and the politics of the South-East Asia. Deputy Director Tamara Guzenkova received her Dr. of Science. Degree from the Moscow State University for her dissertation about the Ukrainian Parliament (Rada). She concentrates on the politics of the European CIS countries, primarily of Ukraine, Byelorussia and Moldova. Deputy

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Pyadisheva Evgenia, 20 let. Analiticheski tsentr, *Izdatel'ski dom I dazhe kinostudia/ RISI/ IMA-Press*, 26 March 2012, last accessed on [http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons\\_11137.html](http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons_11137.html)

<sup>10</sup> Ob institute, Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/about>

<sup>11</sup> RISI - Ustav federalnogo gosudarstvennogo nauchnogo budzhetno gouchrezhdeniia, Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, last accessed on [http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav\\_docs/ustav.pdf](http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/ustav.pdf)

Director, Dr. Igor Prokofyev is in charge of energy research in the Institute. Dr. Michael Smolin who is another Deputy Director, chairs the Center for Humanitarian issues and provides research on State-Church relations and the Solidarity idea in contemporary Russia.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Azhdar Kurtov who is Editor-in-Chief of the Institute *Problems of National Strategy* journal deserves a special mention. Dr. Kurtov is the author of more 600 academic texts, articles and books. He is a specialist on the international relations of the CIS countries as well as on Iran, Turkey and Shanghai Cooperation Council. Dr. Kurtov writes on a regular basis for such journals as *Central Asia and Caucasus*, *New Eurasia: Russia and the Countries of Near Abroad*, *Russia and the Muslim World*, *Spirituality. Faith and Renaissance* and others.<sup>13</sup>

As this article is written for a Turkish journal, it is pertinent to mention a few words about the Institute Representative in Turkey. Professor, Dr. of Sci. (History) Alexander Kolesnikov serves as the Institute representative in Turkey. He is well-known by his research and more than 100 publications on the history, politics and economics of Turkey and the Central Asia countries. Prof. Kolesnikov speaks Turkish, English, French, Polish and Turkman. His Dr. of Sciences dissertation was devoted to the military scientists of the Russian Empire and their contribution to the study Central Asia. From 2010 Prof. Kolesnikov has served as representative of the “Parlamentskaya Gazeta” of the Russian Parliament in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup>

Returning to organizational structures, RISS has managed to maintain a high quality of research due to its system of representatives in foreign countries. Along with Turkey, RISS has its delegates in France, Poland, Serbia, and Finland. Additionally, RISS Director Reshetnikov invites a team of advisers to discuss tasks of the Institute. These advisers have a rich experience of service in the army, diplomacy, parliament, defense industries, media and other important branches of Russian society and state. Dr. Vladimir Kozin who has both military and diplomatic educational backgrounds is head of the advisers group.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when we read and analyze the bios of RISS leading experts, it is difficult to conclude that the Institute has particular priorities in the field of foreign policy expertise. Instead, it is arguable that they have a high quality of the experts which constitutes the Presidential think tank.

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<sup>12</sup> RISS - Rukovodstvo, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/about/managers>

<sup>13</sup> Kurtov Azhdar Ashirovich, “Problemy natsionalnoy strategii”, *Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy*, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/jomsocial/profile/600-kurtov-azhdar-ashirovich>

<sup>14</sup> Kolesnikov Aleksandr Antonovich, Predstavitel RISS za rubezhom, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/index.php/jomsocial/profile/639-kolesnikov-aleksandr-antonovich>. See also, Avtoreferat. Kolesnikov Aleksandr Antonovich, Gosudarstvennaya publichnaya istoricheskaya biblioteka Rossii, last accessed on <http://elcat.shpl.ru/index.php?url=/notices/index/IdNotice:60008/Source:default>

<sup>15</sup> RISS - Gruppa sovetnikov direktora, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/index.php/gruppy/view-group/39>

The RISS has advanced special programs and projects on soft power policy in order to guard the foreign policy interests of the Russian Federation. On the one hand, the Institute researchers contribute to the Russian newspapers and journals and have some positions in the informative space of the country. On the other hand, RISS has produced political films that have a clear propaganda message and theme. Among them are the *Servants of Death* (film about the Wahhabism ideology and practice which is considered to be extremist in Russia), *Iran: Life or Death* (about international pressure on Iran), *Crisis of the West: America Attacks Europe*, *Transnistria (Pridnestrovye) as a Western Outpost of Russia*, *Divided Serbia*, *How the West Destroyed the White Movement* and others.<sup>16</sup> A book Series, analytical reviews and the *Problems of National Strategy* journal of the institute constitute an additional source of the RISS influence as a conservative think-tank.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, some of the propaganda by RISS researchers has elicited open criticism from the social network of Russia, on subjects such as the Islamic *umma* of the country and the action of its agencies. Some web sites belonging to Islamic organizations not affiliated with the government-backed Internet-forums are outraged, reacting with anger towards the conclusions of the RISS experts which indicate an increasing rise in the number of the supporters of Wahhabism amongst the Russia' Moslems.

It is worth mentioning that the precedent of legally changing the think tank by official Presidential Decree is quite unique for Russia. Its new status was re-enforced by the new Charter in 2012<sup>18</sup>, which slightly differs from the previous one. In particular, the new Charter, as stated by the Presidential Decree No. 23 on January, 4 2012<sup>19</sup>, represents a well-thought out and structurally better organized document. Hierarchically arranged, the new section 'Structure' (dictating the organizational structure of the RISS) introduced the functions and obligations of the director in detail as well as the mechanism of the state orders.

### **Expertise of the Institute: Foreign Policy Implications**

The precedent of converting the RISS into the Federal scientific institution has two important implications. Firstly, in rhetorical terms, such a political move expands the significance of the RISS and endorses the quality and reliability of its scientific activities. In other words, the RISS is included in the range of permanent tools the Russian government has at its disposal for effective foreign policy

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<sup>16</sup> RISI-TV. Filmy RISI, last accessed on <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB69898C48E2B154F>

<sup>17</sup> Izdanya RISI, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/index.php/bookstore>

<sup>18</sup> Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoy Federatsii 4 janvaria 2012 g. № 23, *Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy*, last accessed on [http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav\\_docs/ukaz-2012.pdf](http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/ukaz-2012.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Ustav federalnogo gosudarstvennogo nauchnogo budzhetnogo uchrezhdeniia, *RISI*, last accessed on [http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav\\_docs/ustav.pdf](http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/ustav.pdf)



decision-making, alongside with the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its affiliated scientific research centers on the basis of MGIMO and Diplomatic Academy. It also should be noted that the Russian Parliament has made efforts to establish its own analytical centers and to obtain independent expertise over the last 10 years.

Secondly, in terms of *realpolitik*, the new status of the RISS means that its working procedures as well as the research areas are determined substantially by state demands which are officially formulated in the form of state orders with fixed deadlines and enumerated from the federal budget. As it was mentioned above, the new Charter states this mechanism more clearly. An emphasis is laid on the decisive role of the President's administration in determining the state ordered research and monitoring the flow and inner distribution of budgetary funds.<sup>20</sup> However, according to the Charter, the RISS retains an opportunity conduct private research for non-state clients, even though these activities are liable to the tough control of the Presidential administration, especially if the private orders fall under the category of a "big deal" and exceed certain financial barriers.<sup>21</sup> All in all, we would like to point out that the new status of the RISS proclaimed in the presidential decree of 2009 has transparently moved this center from the niche of independent think tanks to a sort of periphery somewhere in between the state analytical structures of the Foreign Affairs Ministry or completely state-financed Academy of Sciences and such independent analytical centers as the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies or the PIR-Center.

It is essential to stress here, that such a peripheral position leads to a controversial perception of RISS activities by Russian society and the scientific community. The financial and thematic dependence of the studies conducted by the RISS on the basis of state orders gives birth to sharp criticism. The RISS is accused of lacking impartiality, its research results are said to be distorted and adapted in accordance with governmental decisions and intentions and its staff is accused of being recruited on the basis of kinship and personal preferences rather than merit and professional qualification.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, we it is worth providing a sort of counter-evidence or justification in this article. First of all, it is vital to comprehend that such diversity and controversy of opinions is quite natural for the field of humanitarian studies, where unlike scientific data, it cannot be expressed in bare figures and where issues on the agenda are initially too acute and ambiguous as they touch upon religious

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<sup>20</sup> Ustav federalnogo gosudarstvennogo nauchnogo budzhetnogo uchrezhdeniia, RISS, last accessed on [http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav\\_docs/ustav.pdf](http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/ustav.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Gasanov Akper, "Pritcha o reputatsii: Chego dobiwaetsia Rossiiskiy Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy", *Inews.az. The Azerbaijanian news website*, 27 March 2012, last accessed on <http://www.1news.az/analytics/20120327045506904.html>.

matters, territorial borders and national interests. Secondly, the political realities of the Russian Federation are also to be taken into account. The combination of such factors as historical disturbances affecting science at the national level, the small number of analytical centers for foreign policy research, poor demand for this type of study from independent clients and, finally, a low level of competition as well as a shortage of the finance are realities which have predetermined a tough climate for the development of independent think tanks and therefore the urgent need for governmental interference in the area.

Thirdly, the RISS personnel, which total 180 employees, 13 Dr. of Sciences and more than 40 candidate,<sup>23</sup> along with its comprehensive structure, which unifies several regional affiliates, permanent representative departments as well as single representatives (including one in Turkey),<sup>24</sup> indicates strongly the efficiency and workability of the institute.

Fourthly, the idea of intentionally distorting the studies in order to suit the official governmental position contradicts common sense and discredits the government efforts and resources invested in acquiring a broad apparatus for rational decision-making in the external policy field. Of course, the RISS with its new status as a Federal scientific institution has to stick with an official governmental line in foreign policy. However, there is no need to confuse the means with the ends and loyalty with bias.

Fifthly, critics who suggest as an example of the U.S. think-tanks as a model of impartiality and effectiveness can be refuted on the basis of the strong lobby tradition in the USA which one way or another exerts influence on the scientific research and the experts.

In relation to concrete foreign policy implications, the vanguard role of the RISS should be highlighted. The impression remains that the institute brings policy ideas into scientific conferences as well as to the Russian and foreign mass media for discussion. Experts from the RISS endorse policy ideas which serve to promote Russian national interests in the field of foreign and security policy. That was the case with international sanctions and tension around the Iranian nuclear program whereby the RISS strived to prove the sovereign right of Iran to obtain an independent atomic industry, using a variety of means including special films about the “Western plans” against sovereign Iran. It was the case when RISS persuaded experts and politicians abroad that the Ukrainian Maidan was not pro-EU but contained a radical right, if not pro-Nazi forces in protest against President Yanukovich. It is not coincidental that in January 2014, the RISS “rolled out the ball” for the Transcarpathian region where the Rusyns (Carpatho-Russians) have

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<sup>23</sup> Pyadisheva Evgenia, RISS – 20 let. “Analiticheski tsentr, izdatelski dom i kinostudia”, IMA-Press, 26 March 2012, last accessed on [http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons\\_11137.html](http://imapress.spb.ru/society/anons_11137.html)

<sup>24</sup> RISS Obinstitutu. Structura, last accessed on <http://www.riss.ru/about/structure>

resided for centuries and saved its Orthodox faith and unique language. That the region had strong cultural and political sympathies with Russia was the message from the pro-Kremlin think tank to Kiev.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of analytically comparing the main research dimensions of the RISS and major provisions of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation<sup>25</sup> (published in 2009 and known as ‘twenty-twenty’). Taking into account the whole bulk of the presidential decrees (including the decree No. 304 issued on March 15, 2011 which “amends the list of organizations established under control of the President of the Russian Federation, the Government of the Russian Federation and the Russian Presidential Administration, as well as other organizations, which are provided with financial support for Office of the President”<sup>26</sup> and officially includes the RISS in this very list) we can conclude:

- 1) that the research carried out by the RISS experts covers the most important foreign policy issues on the Russian agenda;
- 2) that the research is carried out by highly qualified scientists within expansive and well thought-out structural framework;
- 3) that the impact of the RISS expertise on the process of decision-making in foreign policy which is carried out by the representatives of the executive branch of power in the Russian Federation is steadily increasing.

We should also recognize that the manner in which the institute can influence the decision-taking process in the Kremlin remains secretive. We have some problems when trying to measure the RISS influence in public policy-making process. Despite the fact that the Presidential Decree and Charter define the institute as the Federal Institution in order to provide important expertise on national security policy we have no clear picture of how it has a correcting impact on decision-makers. Independent foreign observers can only read the Web publications of the institute, some articles in Russian periodicals, compare ideas and foreign policy events and only then provide some thought as to the extent this think-tank has influenced national decision-makers in Moscow. This supports the argument for closer cooperation amongst the think tanks in different countries in the interests of providing a higher understanding of international relations in the globalized world.

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<sup>25</sup> Strategia Natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda, The Russian National Security Council official website, last accessed on <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

<sup>26</sup> RISI - Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoy Federatsii 15 marta 2011 goda № 304, last accessed on [http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav\\_docs/Ukaz\\_15\\_03\\_2011.pdf](http://www.riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/Ukaz_15_03_2011.pdf)

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