

Chapter 11

Russian Influence Activities and Espionage in the Estonian Academic Environment: The Case of Viacheslav Morozov, a Russian GRU Spy at the University of Tartu¹

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Abstract: The current chapter is dedicated to the case of Viacheslav Morozov, a Russian GRU spy who worked at the University of Tartu for several years. This chapter provides an overview of Morozov's academic activity and how he disseminated Marxist ideas and pro-Kremlin narratives through scientific publications, lectures, conferences, and scientific-popular works.

Keywords: Russia, Viacheslav Morozov, University of Tartu, spy, GRU, academic espionage, information influence activity, pro-Kremlin narratives, Russophobia, Marxism

Introduction

Over the past two decades, we have seen an increase in Russian influence activities (among them disinformation campaigns, espionage) and other hybrid warfare activities around the world—especially since 2014, when Russia first attacked Ukraine² and which intensified after February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine.

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² See more: Vladimir Sazonov, Erkki Koort, Priit Heinsoo and Kadri Paas, *Introduction of Hybrid Threats of Internal Security* (Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, 2020); Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses* (Rand Corporation, 2017).

One of the tools of Russian hybrid warfare is espionage, which the Kremlin has actively used. There are many cases of Russian spies, agents of influence, and pro-Russian activists in the West across all spheres, such as economics, politics, security, the military, society, culture, as well as science and education.

The current overview chapter is dedicated to one recent case of Russian espionage in the Estonian academic environment—the case of Viacheslav Morozov. Morozov was Professor of International Political Theory at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies at the University of Tartu where he worked for thirteen years, and where, in addition to his academic work as a scientist and university lecturer, he was involved in espionage. In its 2023–2024 annual report, Estonia's Internal Security Agency (KAPO) noted Morozov's intelligence activities in Estonia:

*"In January 2024, KAPO apprehended Viacheslav Morozov, a professor at the University of Tartu, suspected of engaging in and supporting intelligence activities against Estonia. According to preliminary information, Morozov co-operated with Russian special services for years."*³

In June 2024, Harju County Court (Estonia) found Morozov guilty of activities against the Republic of Estonia and he was sentenced to six years and three months in prison.⁴ Chief State Prosecutor Taavi Pern said that the court's verdict confirmed that Morozov had cooperated with the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GRU) for a long time, stressing that Morozov was assigned by the Russian special services to collect information on Estonia's domestic, defense, and security policy, as well as its people and infrastructure.⁵

Taking all the above into consideration, I will qualitatively analyze some of Morozov's statements and ideas about Russia and its policies, etc.⁶ I will focus

³ See: *Estonian Internal Security Service Annual Review 2023–2024*, 20, accessed July 21, 2025, https://kapo.ee/sites/default/files/content_page_attachments/annual-review-2023-2024.pdf

⁴ "Venelaste jaoks luuranud Tartu ülikooli professor Vjatšeslav Morozov saadeti kuueks aastaks vangi," Reporter.ee, June 18, 2024, <https://reporter.kanal2.ee/8043436/venelaste-jaoks-luuranud-tartu-ulikooli-professor-vjateslav-morozov-saadeti-kuueks-aastaks-vangi>.

⁵ "Kohus mõistis Viatcheslav Morozov süüdi luuretegevuses," *Kaitsepolitseiamet*, June 18, 2024, <https://kapo.ee/et/content/kohus-moistis-viatcheslav-morozov-suudi-luuretegevuses/>.

⁶ Udo Kuckartz, *Qualitative Text Analysis: A Guide to Methods. Practice & Using Software* (Sage Publications 2014).

on some of Morozov's works published in academic and scientific-popular texts or presented at conferences and lectures. According to *Estonian Internal Security Service*, Morozov was working for the GRU⁷ and seems that he probably also completed other tasks, among them promoting (mostly hidden) pro-Kremlin narratives, e.g., narrative about Russophobia.⁸

Morozov as a GRU Spy and His Potential Tasks

Before proceeding to an analysis of Morozov's⁹ works and academic activity, a few key aspects must be explained.

Firstly, the kind of assignments Morozov could have received from the GRU and other Russian special intelligence services or at least define in general terms the scope of his espionage activities in Tartu.

Secondly, as I don't have access to Morozov's classified case files, we can only speculate on the kind of espionage he was engaged in. The scant data on this can be gleaned from statements by the prosecutor's office and KAPO, as well as from security experts who have analyzed this case. For example, Arnold Sinisalu, former director of KAPO, said in an interview on January 21, 2024, that Russian intelligence is interested in Estonia and that hundreds of people are engaged in intelligence activities against Estonia.¹⁰ From open sources we can find information about the potential tasks of Morozov.

⁷ Estonian Internal Security Service Annual Review 2023–2024, 20, accessed July 21, 2025, https://kapo.ee/sites/default/files/content_page_attachments/annual-review-2023-2024.pdf

⁸ Sanshiro Hosaka, "Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal," Vabariik, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>. See also the interview with Arnold Sinisalu, former Chief of the Estonian Internal Security Service, who highlighted: "...it cannot be ruled out that Morozov had specific tasks to develop Russian propaganda activities in the course of his research. After all, researchers are allowed more freedom; they can discuss both sides of an argument." Aaspõllu, Huko. "Sinisalu: Venemaal tegeleb Eesti-vastase luuretegevusega sadu inimesi." Err, January 21, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609227084/sinisalu-venemaal-tegeleb-eesti-vastase-luuretegevusega-sadu-inimesi>

⁹ For a better understanding of the GRU spy Viacheslav Morozov, who was active at the University of Tartu for almost fourteen years (2010—January 2024), and a brief overview about his life, education, and career, please see his academic CV on the "Estonian Research Information System," <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Persons/Display/0d15338c-29e1-4ac1-bd17-cde2f2d46466/eng>.

¹⁰ Huko Aaspõllu, "Sinisalu: Venemaal tegeleb Eesti-vastase luuretegevusega sadu inimesi," Err, January 21, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609227084/sinisalu-venemaal-tegeleb-eesti-vastase-luuretegevusega-sadu-inimesi>.

Although this information is very brief, we can assume that he was very active, especially if we look at his academic work and scientific activity in Estonia and around the Western world.

Estonian security expert Erkki Koort commented: *“Morozov’s case clearly shows that Russian military intelligence is not only interested in gathering military information. He was working with a university that does have contacts with military intelligence targets. The university carries out research commissioned by the state, which enables a spy to understand the interests of state institutions, and the presentation of the research to the leadership gives an idea of who holds what position in the ministry or what opinions different conclusions generate. Similarly, joining a spy group allows the spy to steer the group’s research or study in the desired direction, leaving out things they want to avoid.”*¹¹

We don’t know in detail what tasks Morozov was given by the GRU and how he collected and passed on data, but KAPO and the Estonian Prosecutor’s Office have given general information of what Morozov did while working at the University of Tartu. According to this information, Morozov was recruited by Russian intelligence in the early 1990s while he was studying at a university in Russia.¹²

The GRU instructed him to become more active when he moved to Estonia. Morozov probably provided the special services of Russia with information on the political situation and elections in Estonia, alliance relations, and social integration. This was information to which he had access, both because of his position as a researcher and because it was publicly available, which could be used by Russia to threaten Estonia.¹³

Koort supposed rightly that today’s students at university would be tomorrow’s decision-makers, and information about their connections and perso-

¹¹ Erkki Koort, “Venemaa sõjaväeluure spioon Tartus ja Eesti sihtmärgid Venemaal,” *Postimees*, June 21, 2024, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/8045133/erkki-koort-venemaa-sojavaeluure-spioon-tartus-ja-eesti-sihtmargid-venemaal>.

¹² Andres Einmann, “GRU värbas Eestis luuranud professori juba 1990. aastate alguses,” *Postimees*, June 19, 2024, <https://www.postimees.ee/8043515/gru-varbas-eestis-luuranud-professori-juba-1990-aastate-alguses>. See also *Estonian Internal Security Service Annual Review 2024–2025*, 30, accessed 29 December 2025, https://kapo.ee/sites/default/files/content_page_attachments/annual-review-2024-2025.pdf

¹³ “Kohus mõistis Viatcheslav Morozov süüdi luuretegevuses,” *Kaitsepolitseiamet*, June 18, 2024, <https://kapo.ee/et/content/kohus-moistis-viatcheslav-morozov-suudi-luuretegevuses/>.

nal characteristics could be the information needed in the future to decide who to recruit by the GRU, FSB, or other Russian intelligence services.¹⁴

Japanese political scientist Sanshiro Hosaka, who works and studies at the University of Tartu, also presented his suspicions about Morozov, whom Hosaka knew as a colleague: *“Morozov was convicted only for gathering, analyzing, and passing information to Russian intelligence. I presume Morozov denied any malicious intent in his activities related to academia.”*¹⁵ But Hosaka showed clearly how Morozov promoted pro-Russian ideas and narratives at the University of Tartu. Hosaka also emphasized that *“when Russian intelligence disseminated narratives on possible Russia-Europe cooperation in ecology and environment in 2021, coincidentally, he (Morozov) gave a series of lectures on Russian environmental policies.”*¹⁶

Morozov's Activities at the University of Tartu and in the Academic World

In the following chapter I will give a brief overview of some examples of Morozov's academic activities, from which it appears that Morozov's possible ambition was, under the guise of academic and teaching activities, to collect data about colleagues, to influence students and public opinion with his ideas, to infiltrate various scientific councils and networks, and to collect information on the political situation and important people in Estonian society, and so on.

I dare to suppose that former professor Viacheslav Morozov could have tried to recruit new agents for the GRU, both in in Estonia and abroad—or at least it should be not excluded.

Morozov's Activity in the Academic Environment of the University of Tartu

As a university teacher, Morozov has been very active and prolific in publishing scientific articles in prominent scientific journals such as *Internatio-*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sanshiro Hosaka, “Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal,” *Vabariik*, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

nal Theory, International Relations, Journal of International Relations and Development, etc., as well as popular science reviews, and he has often appeared in Estonian media both in Russian and Estonian.

He was also very active in the field of networking of scientists, and as a teacher he gave many lectures and seminars, supervised students' scientific works at all levels, from bachelor's to doctoral level, and was a member of various councils at the university.

Morozov activities in CEURUS

One important scientific center at the University of Tartu in which Morozov was actively involved is the Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies (CEURUS),¹⁷ where he was academic director from 2020 until January 2024.

In May 2013, Morozov published a comment in the newspaper of the University of Tartu, where he wrote: *"In March 2011, when the Centre for EU and Russian Studies Ceurus was one of the first to receive a grant of 1.6 millions euros from the newly established Development Fund of the University of Tartu. ... The rector emphasized the great potential of the Centre due to its geographical and historical position."*¹⁸

Other information about the activities of Viacheslav Morozov in CEURUS can be found by searching for his name on CEURUS' homepage.¹⁹

Pro-Russian Activities at Conferences and Seminars

Morozov actively participated in conferences in Tartu and across the world, and organized seminars and conferences at the University of Tartu himself.

For several years Morozov was a chairman of the program committee and main organizer of yearly Eastern European and Russian Studies conferences

¹⁷ The Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies is an interdisciplinary center for research and teaching at the University of Tartu. The idea of creating of CEURUS is establishing as a bridge for scholars, students and members of the public interested in the past, present and future of the Eurasian space, accessed November 2, 2024, <https://ceurus.ut.ee>.

¹⁸ Viacheslav Morozov, "Ceurus meelitat Tartusse tunnustatud teadlasiz," *Universtas Tartuens* 5, May 2013, <https://www.ajakiri.ut.ee/artikkel/947>.

¹⁹ "The Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies (CEURUS)," University of Tartu, accessed November 19, 2024, <https://ceurus.ut.ee/?s=Morozov&x=0&y=0>.

in Tartu.²⁰ These conferences organized by Morozov and other scholars were attended by, among others, very well-known scholars, among them historians, political scientists, sociologists, and others from Europe, Russia, the United States, and many other places, particularly Asia.

How Morozov used conferences and seminars as a platform remains to be seen. Here are a few examples. For example, Sanshiro Hosaka wrote in 2024 that Morozov “was invited to the Lennart Meri conference three years ago, along with other academics in the country, as part of efforts to bridge this practitioner-academic chasm,”²¹ although it is a matter for discussion how he could leverage this new platform for his intelligence activities.

Hosaka also highlighted that in June 2022 at the Eastern European and Russian Studies conference in Tartu, Morozov chaired a round table on “A Future of Russian Studies,” to which he invited his good friends and colleagues with neo-Marxist views and Morozov tried to show that the Western world is Rus-sophobic towards Russia and Morozov argued that academic interaction with Russian research institutions should continue. At which point Hosaka asked him: “*How can we talk about academic exchanges with Russian ‘educational’ institutions if many of them are housing FSB seconded officers?*” Morozov interrupted Hosaka’s question and didn’t answer. There are also other examples or cases where Morozov’s behavior at conferences seemed strange.²²

Morozov as Grant Holder

Viacheslav Morozov was also successful in writing and receiving grants in Estonia and abroad. I will present just a few examples here.

Morozov was holder of several scientific grants from Estonian and Eu-

²⁰ Fifth Annual Tartu Conference, “Post-Socialist (dis)Orders,” accessed November 15, 2024, <https://sisu.ut.ee/tartuconference/fifth-annual-tartu-conference-2021/>.

²¹ Sanshiro Hosaka, “Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal,” *Vabariik*, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>.

²² On May 31, 2021, I took part in a roundtable at the University of Tartu entitled: “The rise of populism and information warfare – the influence of Russian strategic narratives on the Global Knowledge Warfare,” at which Morozov was in the audience. Morozov commented with skepticism when the presenters criticized Russian aggressive imperialism. See “Roundtables mark the beginning of this year’s Tartu Conference on Russian and East European Studies,” University of Tartu, May 18, 2021, <https://skytte.ut.ee/en/content/roundtables-mark-beginning-years-tartu-conference-russian-and-east-european-studies>.

ropean foundations. The last scientific project of Morozov was entitled “National identity and Estonian-Russian relations: a longitudinal study of elite and mass discourses.” Morozov received this scientific project from the Estonian Research Council (with a considerable amount of financial sources €691,900 for three years 2021–2024).²³

Prior to that, Morozov was grant holder of other projects, for example: “When every act is war: Post-Crimea conflict dynamics and Russian foreign policy” (2020–2024) which he received from the Research Council of Norway,²⁴ and “Decision-making in domestic and foreign policy processes of the Russian Federation” (June 1, 2022, to May 31, 2023) which Morozov received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia²⁵ and several others.

Morozov’s Lectures at the University of Tartu and Opinions about His Teaching

There can be no doubt that, as university teacher, Morozov could influence many students who studied in Tartu from all over the world and probably tried to create a network for the GRU, and collect information which he gave to the GRU during his very frequent visits to Russia. Morozov also used often ultra-leftist and Marxist theories and promoted these views in his works, other texts, and lectures.²⁶

A student who attended Morozov’s lectures in 2022–2023 explained that Viacheslav Morozov emphasized the ills of Russia, and in this student’s opinion he analyzed Russia objectively, was able to explain to students how the Russian economy worked, and often spoke about the corruption

²³ See more about this grant at: <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/df35aa0f-1010-4884-b7aa-b423f8f09026>; see more about scientific biography of Morozov where all grants received from the Estonian Research Council or other European foundations are listed, accessed on November 17, 2024, <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/df35aa0f-1010-4884-b7aa-b423f8f09026>.

²⁴ “Estonian Research Information System,” accessed on November 21, 2024, <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/40a4b3e8-49fb-4b5f-80c0-ef9d58e48668>.

²⁵ “Estonian Research Information System,” accessed on November 1, 2024, <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Projects/Display/46389e4a-6e65-4a71-b2c0-2a4dc447a4e2>.

²⁶ Sanshiro Hosaka, “Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal,” *Vabariik*, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>.

thriving in Russia. However, according to several students, on the topic of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in 2022, one listener of his lectures recalled that no analysis on this topic was given at Morozov's lectures. According to other students, Morozov was not in a hurry to criticize and speak negatively about the actions of Putin's regime.²⁷ But there are also other students' opinion who highlight that Morozov was critical toward Russia and Putin's regime.²⁸

Morozov as an Opinion Leader and Author of Academic Works

In this last chapter I will present analysis of some of Morozov's academic and non-academic works as examples chosen to show what kind of ideas he presented and disseminated in the academic world in Estonia and as an analyst in reports whose target audience were politicians, decision-makers, and think-tank analysts, as well as more broadly in the West and as an opinion leader in Estonia who wrote for both an Estonian and Russian audience.²⁹

Let us take a closer look at what Morozov's views were as an author and opinion leader who published a lot in Estonian, English, and Russian, and even in the *Riigikogu Toimetised* ("The Proceedings of the Riigikogu" — the parliament of Estonia).³⁰

As Erkki Koort rightly said: *"In the Morozov case, what came out of the public debate was that he did not support Putin's direction at all and was talking a completely different story from the Kremlin regime. This is the only way to spy successfully, because if he had told the Kremlin's version, he would*

²⁷ Peeter Espak, "Venemeelne ja läänevastane marksist Vjatšeslav Morozov," *Err.*, January 20, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609228107/peeter-espak-venemeelne-ja-laanevastane-marksist-vjat-seslav-morozov>.

²⁸ Л.-Э. Ломп, "Студенты: задержанный по подозрению в шпионаже против Эстонии преподаватель относился к России скорее критически," *Rus.Postimees*, January 16, 2024, <https://rus.postimees.ee/7939521/studenty-zaderzhanny-po-podozreniyu-v-shpionazhe-protiv-estonii-prepodavatel-otnosilsya-k-rossii-skoree-kriticheski>.

²⁹ There were dozens of these broadcasts and listening to a few of them I couldn't yet draw any firm conclusions, but Morozov's idea was apparently to get a number of scientists from Russia, including his wife and colleague Elena Pavlova, on Russian-language radio. See more at the Centre for Eurasian and Russian Studies, University of Tartu, <https://ceurus.ut.ee/viacheslav-morozov-to-co-host-a-radio-show-on-estonian-public-broadcasting/>.

³⁰ Viacheslav Morozov et al. "Vene rehepapp, Kremli välispoliitika populaarsus ja de facto riigid," *Riigikogu Toimetised Riigikogu Toimetised* 40 (2019): 75–85.

not have had the opportunity to work for long and build trusting relationships.”³¹

It would be naive to think that a Russian spy would openly disseminate the Kremlin’s strategic narratives and propaganda messages, but I argue that we still can find some ideas in Morozov’s texts that directly or indirectly support a pro-Kremlin agenda and could be used to justify Russian imperialism and military aggression.

Viacheslav Morozov often published his articles and views in scientific-popular outlets and the most important Estonian newspapers in Estonian and Russian languages, and he also appeared on television and radio.³²

In 2009, one year prior to his position at the University of Tartu, Morozov published an article³³ in the Estonian magazine *Diplomaatia* entitled “Russia and the West: playing by the rules?” that deals with questions of politics and security, where he used a pro-Kremlin propaganda statement that Russia is not threat to the West: *“Russia does not pose the slightest radical threat to the established normative order of Western dominance. Far from being a revolutionary force, it is waging a positional war for the interpretation of norms and values, while holding them to be universally valid.”*³⁴ The idea that Russia is peaceful and does not pose a threat for its neighbors has been promoted by Putin’s regime in pro-Kremlin discourse for decades, and, for example, more recently by Dmitri Peskov, press secretary of the Russian dictator.³⁵

³¹ Erkki Koort, “Venemaa sõjaväeluure spioon Tartus ja Eesti sihtmärgid Venemaal,” Postimees, June 21, 2024, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/8045133/erkki-koort-venemaa-sojavaeluure-spiioon-tartus-ja-eesti-sihtmaegid-venemaal>.

³² See, for example, Radio 4, <https://r4.err.ee/1608595918/sosedi>, May 23, 2022. It is worth mentioning that in 2021–2022, Viacheslav Morozov co-hosted together several radio shows with Evgeniya Savina at the Estonian Public Broadcasting in a Russian-language radio Estonian Radio 4 program called “Соседи” (Neighbors). Twice a month, this program discussed various issues and developments in the post-Soviet space in popular science perspective with several invited guests.

³³ Viacheslav Morozov, “Russia and the West: playing by the rules? \ Venemaa ja Lääs: mäng reeglite järgi?” *Diplomaatia* 74/75, (November 2009), <https://diplomaatia.ee/venemaa-ja-laas-mang-reeglite-jargi/>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See: Ю.Катенова, “Песков: Россия не угрожает никому в Европе,” *Парламентская газета*, April 26, 2024, <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/peskov-rossiya-ne-predstavlyaet-ugrozy-ni-dlya-kogo-v-evrope.html>; “Россия не представляет угрозы для Запада”: SIPRI подсчитал военные расходы стран. *Военное обозрение*, June 1, 2024, <https://topwar.ru/243580-rossiya-ne-predstavlyaet-ugrozy-dlja-zapada-sipri-podschital-voennye-rashody-stran.html>.

As Peeter Espak showed in his analysis,³⁶ Morozov explains in his article published in 2009 in *Diplomaatia* that this Western-created world order is probably not the only option, and the world needs a “Pluriverse” instead of a “universe.” Morozov argues that Putin’s multipolar world might not be such a bad thing, and that the West should instead try to make friends with this image.³⁷

On March 29, 2021, in an interview in Estonian daily newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht*, Morozov also promoted ideas of the Russian political elite or Russian so-called regime opponents, who are against Putin but at same time often shows their sympathy to Russian imperialism and even Russia’s aggressive war in Ukraine.³⁸ Among others, Morozov declares: *“I don’t think Russia has any values that are very different from the West. It is perhaps a little more conservative, but you will also find it in Europe, including in this country, those who share its views on gay marriage or women’s rights, for example. He has a more traditional approach.”*³⁹

Here, Morozov again defends Russia, but does so not in a directly offensive way like the simplistic Russian propaganda channels, but in a more cunning way similar to many of the more subtle pro-Kremlin channels that disseminate Russian propaganda. In Morozov’s discussion with the journalist, we can read that Morozov’s idea is that Russia would get along well with the West if the West, including the US, would accept Russia (meaning accepting Russia’s imperialist goals and aggressive politics): *“Russia, however, clearly feels insecure and believes that the West is undermining its security by interfering in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.”* Morozov also brought up the idea, promoted by the Kremlin and Putin himself, that the West does not see Russia as an equal and therefore Russia is forced to take action. To the jo-

³⁶ Peeter Espak, “Venemeelne ja läänestane marksist Vjatšeslav Morozov,” *Err*, January 1, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609228107/peeter-espak-venemeelne-ja-laanevastane-marksist-vjatseslav-morozov>.

³⁷ Ibid. See about Putin’s multipolar ideas and Primakov’s doctrine. Also see Putin’s statement that the world has become multipolar: “Путин заявил о ставшем реальностью многополярном мире,” *РБК*, July 4, 2024, <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/66865a079a794793ab095cb3>.

³⁸ Krister Paris, “Vjatšeslav Morozov: ebakinda ja haavatavana tunneb end mitte niivõrd lääs kui hoopis Venemaa,” *Eesti Päevaleht*, March 29, 2021, <https://epl.delfi.ee/artikkel/92983781/intervjuu-vjatseslav-morozov-ebakinda-ja-haavatavana-tunneb-end-mitte-niivord-laas-kui-hoopis-venemaa>.

³⁹ Ibid.

urnalist's question: *"But if we now look at Russia in the Moscow-Washington-Beijing triangle, what role does it play there? Washington is verbally attacking both at the moment, but perhaps in the long term, Russia and the US can still put their backs together? Would Russia take up the offer?"* Morozov replied: *"It would be more likely to side with China in the current circumstances. True, if the West accepted him and treated him as an equal, the West would be the natural choice."*⁴⁰

On March 4, 2022, a week after Russian military aggression against Ukraine, Morozov's opinion was published in the Russian-language portal *Estonian Public Broadcasting* entitled "The war with Ukraine ended the history of post-Soviet Russia"⁴¹ where Morozov declared: *"These days, we are all facing many moral dilemmas and personal tragedies caused by war. Undoubtedly, the people of Ukraine, who have faced brutal military aggression, are the hardest hit. We have no idea yet of the full extent of the losses. It is clear, however, that the number of dead and wounded will continue to grow."* Although he mentioned Russian military aggression against Ukraine war and showed sympathy toward Ukraine and Ukrainian people, Morozov also showed deep concerns for Russians and Russia:

*"...Russians are also having a hard time. The economic devastation created by sanctions and military spending is already beginning to affect the lives of ordinary people. As families learn of the deaths of their sons, the scale of war losses will be realized."*⁴²

Two weeks later on March 18, 2022, Morozov answered journalist's questions in a regular program of the *Rus.Postimees* portal dedicated to the military situation in Ukraine and the international political situation. Morozov commented on the military situation and Russia's war in Ukraine, answered questions related to the high risk of a big war in Europe, and spoke about the

⁴⁰ Krister Paris, "Vjatšeslav Morozov: ebakinda ja haavatavana tunneb end mitte niivõrd lääs kui hoopis Venemaa," *Eesti Päevaleht*, March 29, 2021, <https://epl.delfi.ee/artikkel/92983781/intervjuu-vjateslav-morozov-ebakinda-ja-haavatavana-tunneb-end-mitte-niivord-laas-kui-hoopis-venemaa>.

⁴¹ В.Морозов, "Война с Украиной положила конец истории постсоветской России," *Rus. Err*, March 4, 2022, <https://rus.err.ee/1608520970/vjacheslav-morozov-vojna-s-ukrainoj-polozhila-konec-istorii-postsovetskoj-rossii>.

⁴² Ibid.

signals sent by US President Joe Biden to the Russian military leaders and Putin, etc.⁴³

According to Morozov: *“On the basis of intelligence data, as well as any objective data in general, no one can make an accurate conclusion about whether there will be a war and what its probability is. So, I assume that Emmanuel Macron was just analyzing the course of his conversations with Vladimir Putin, the course of his contacts with him, which have been quite intense throughout this crisis. Macron, I assume, has studied very well the signals that Putin is sending during these talks, and I think that’s what has been the decisive factor in Macron’s assessment, because he realizes that Vladimir Putin is ready to go quite far, ready to go for further escalation. That’s obvious. And it’s also evident from what’s happening in Ukraine, what’s happening in Russia, how the Russian elites are behaving. All this shows that the possibility of a big war exists and it is quite high.”*⁴⁴

We cannot see that Morozov promoted pro-Russian narratives here. However, in response to a journalist’s comment that, according to the Kremlin, one of Russia’s goals in launching a full-scale military attack on Ukraine is to “denazify” the country, Morozov said that Moscow’s main allies in Europe in recent years have been alt-right parties that have assiduously defended the Kremlin’s foreign policy.

Morozov answered in the following way: *“After a certain point—not even now, but about 2–3 years ago—there was a turning point where Putin stopped being interested in the West. That’s why he so blatantly misinformed his colleagues, that’s why he so blatantly lied even to Angela Merkel when she was Federal Chancellor and now lies to Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron. He was just lying to them on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine. He’s not really interested in Western public opinion now, and it’s clear that he’s not going to be able to use the friends he had there in the West anytime soon, because now there’s no one there on a platform of friendship with Putin’s Russia to get support any more.”*⁴⁵

⁴³ П. Соболев, “Путин хочет превратить Россию в самодостаточную осажденную крепость,” *Rus.Postimees*, March 18, 2022, <https://rus.postimees.ee/7479485/morozov-putin-hochet-prevratit-rossiyu-v-samodostatochnuyu-osazhdenную-krepost>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

I argue that sometimes Morozov spread other ideas and these ideas should be analyzed very carefully, while there are narratives and ideas that at least covertly justified Russian imperialism, but also Morozov also used some Marxist ideas and theories.

Therefore, we'll take the most important of Morozov's works, his only monograph in English, and look at some of the ideas he developed in it. Some scholars who analyzed this work accused Morozov of spreading several ultra-leftist views in his scientific works.⁴⁶

It was clearly shown by Estonian scholar Dr. Peeter Espak who analyzed some of Morozov's works and showed in his short analysis of Morozov's book *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (published in 2015) that this opus is full of radical left ideas and even some pseudo-theories, and an attempt to create a self-sufficient system or political economy of historical philosophy on the basis of all this, the discussion is in fact devoid of any rational systematicity.⁴⁷

Peeter Espak highlight the main arguments of Morozov “*essence of which only some of the reasoning and conclusions should have made the hairs on the head of any thinking person who is not a Russian imperialist and/or Trotskyist revolutionary stand up in anger and all the red fires light up wherever they are.*”⁴⁸ For example, Morozov argued: “*I would argue that twentieth-century Marxism and its intellectual heirs such as world-systems theory can provide us with additional conceptual tools, enriching our analysis. As I have repeatedly pointed out, especially in Chapter 2, I see a key strength of postcolonial theory as applied to Russia in its ability to integrate different levels of analysis, and in particular to see domestic developments as conditioned by such global phenomena as colonialism and Eurocentrism.*”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Sanshiro Hosaka, “Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal,” *Vabariik*, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>.

⁴⁷ Peeter Espak, “Venemeelne ja läänevastane marksist Vjatšeslav Morozov,” *Err*, January 20, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609228107/peeter-espak-venemeelne-ja-laanevastane-marksist-vjat-seslav-morozov>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Viacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 84.

Therefore, there is no doubt that Viacheslav Morozov in his book sympathizes with Marxism, among others highlighting, *“in a fascinating twist of conceptual history, the external dimension was brought up again in the debate between two Marxist thinkers—Mikhail Pokrovsky, a student of Kliuchevsky, and Leon Trotsky (see Etkind 2011: 86–87).”*⁵⁰

Sanshiro Hosaka who mentioned Morozov’s positive attitude to Marxism, highlighted that Morozov *“could work only for the handlers he respects and finds politically and intellectually stimulating. If someone imagines GRU handlers as Spetsnaz guys in military uniforms, they’ve seen too many B-movies. Intelligence theories say that handlers (agenturisty) have sophisticated civilian covers (scholars, journalists, etc.) and should treat Morozov as a soulmate, listening to him carefully, caring about what he is concerned about, and sometimes giving friendly advice. His unnamed handlers, as mentors, perhaps exercised greater ideological influence on Morozov than philosophers such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who Morozov often cites in his publications.”*⁵¹

Peeter Espak showed in his analysis that Morozov’s book presented fanatical ideas and pseudo-theories (old-school Marxism, Trotskyism, modern pseudo-scientific ideas). According to Espak, Morozov’s monograph *“is a presentation of emotions and wishful thinking, of personal convictions that are so ambiguous and even contradictory, and at times simply a presentation of utterly irrelevant.”*⁵²

As a scholar I agree with Hosaka’s and Espak’s assessments and arguments about Morozov work, and therefore, a deeper analysis of Morozov’s works would be useful and relevant to better understand how GRU agents operate in the scientific and academic environment and what messages and narratives they convey through their works and lectures. In Morozov’s book, the reader can not only find many leftist ideas, such

⁵⁰ Ibid, 33.

⁵¹ Sanshiro Hosaka, “Jaapani politoloog Sanshiro Hosaka: minu arvamus Morozovi kohtuotsuse taustal,” *Vabariik*, June 30, 2024, <https://vabariik.ee/kolumn/jaapani-politoloog-sanshiro-hosaka-minu-arvamus-morozovi-kohtuotsuse-taustal/>.

⁵² Peeter Espak, “Venemeelne ja läänevastane marksist Vjatšeslav Morozov,” *Err*, January 20, 2024, <https://www.err.ee/1609228107/peeter-espak-venemeelne-ja-laanevastane-marksist-vjat-seslav-morozov>.

as Trotsky's economic theories and other Marxist ideas, but even also narratives and ideas promoted by Putin's regime. Let us start with Morozov's main arguments that the Russian Federation must be viewed as a subaltern empire.⁵³

Morozov also promoted similar ideas in his lectures and popular-scientific texts. In one of these published in 2021, Morozov argues (basically using Russian propaganda narrative of Russophobia), that Russian *"elites consider themselves representatives of Europe in Russia, but at the same time they do not feel themselves full-fledged Europeans in Europe, because in Europe, Russia is still perceived as a peripheral, semi-barbaric state—the mythology with bears, balalaikas, and other things exists in various forms throughout practically the entire New Age."*⁵⁴

Morozov emphasized Russia's uniqueness: *"It is also important here that Russia lacks a language that would allow it to somehow describe its own uniqueness."*⁵⁵ He also highlighted the uniqueness of the USSR as an empire.⁵⁶ He also called modern Putinism a unique phenomenon: *"Putinism is based is probably unique, in structural terms it is a symptom of a much more enduring predicament that Russia has faced throughout its modern history."*⁵⁷

This idea about the "uniqueness" of Russia and the Russian soul, etc., is already a pro-Kremlin, pro-imperial narrative about Russia's special path⁵⁸ (*osobyi put'* in Russian) and uniqueness, for example, Putin called Russia

⁵³ Viacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

⁵⁴ Л. Гарипова, "Вячеслав Морозов. Россия/СССР – особая империя?" *Сигма*, March 14, 2021, <https://syg.ma/@leisan-garipova/viacheslav-morozov-rossiia-sliesh-sssr-osobaia-impieria>. See also: В Морозов, "Subaltern Studies. Лекция по курсу «(Пост)колониальные исследования» в рамках проекта «Ташкент-Тбилиси»" (2021).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Гарипова, 2021.

⁵⁷ Viacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 154.

⁵⁸ This term is often used in Russia with propagandistic purposes. В. Шевченко, "Особый путь развития России: миф или реальность?" *Проблемы цивилизационного развития* 2 (2022). See also: Igor Kopõtin and Vladimir Sazonov, "The Russian Military's Use of History to Create a Post-Soviet Identity: The Development of Conceptual Understandings from the 1990s to the Mid-2000s," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 36(4) (2023): 410–434.

a unique country.⁵⁹ However, it is quite old and has its roots in the 19th century. When Count Sergey Uvarov (1786–1855) lived and Slavophiles were active, the idea of Russia's uniqueness was taken up afterwards by Eurasianists such as Ivan Ilyin,⁶⁰ who lived in exile and other Russian philosophers who spoke about the "Russian idea."⁶¹ Morozov repeats these ideas and even develops them: *"In this sense, Russia is part of the pan-European space, but still a special part. It is connected with management practices, with economic structure, with resource dependence, with identity, with orientation and self-orientation, with the lack of full recognition as a European power. The element of subalternity is manifested on the one hand in identification with Europe, and on the other hand in a structurally conditioned sense of otherness and subordination, even, perhaps, inferiority."*⁶²

At the same time Morozov tries to distance himself, but still his arguments trace Russia's resentment towards Europe and oppression and discrimination against Russia, which fits perfectly into the Kremlin's propaganda narrative of Russophobia,⁶³ which goes back to the 19th century, to the era following the Crimean War (1853–1856). Morozov writes *"In this sense, Russia is part of the pan-European space, but still a special part. This is due to its governance practices, economic structure, resource dependence, identity, orientation and self-orientation, and lack of full recognition as a European power. The element of subalternity manifests itself, on the one hand, in identification with Europe and, on the other, in a structurally conditioned sense of otherness and subordination, perhaps even inferiority. It is sometimes exacerbated, sometimes attempted to be erased, but it is defined precisely by the fact that Russia feels itself to be part of Europe..."*⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "Путин назвал, в чем состоит уникальность России," ИА Красная Весна, November 25, 2024, <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/89263315https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/89263315>.

⁶⁰ Ivan Ilyin (1883–1954) was a Russian philosopher, fascist, and a White Guard emigre. Ilyin's ideas are said to have strongly influenced the worldview of Putin, who is very fond of reading Ilyin and has been called Putin's philosopher.

⁶¹ Н. Бердяев, *Русская идея. Основные проблемы русской мысли XIX века и начала XX века* (Париж 1946).

⁶² Л. Гарипова, "Вячеслав Морозов. Россия/СССР – особая империя?" *Сигма*, March 14, 2021, <https://syg.ma/@leisan-garipova/viacheslav-morozov-rossia-sliesh-sssr-osobaia-impieriia>.

⁶³ See about Russophobia in Morozov's book: Viacheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 115–120.

⁶⁴ Л. Гарипова, "Вячеслав Морозов. Россия/СССР – особая империя?" *Сигма*, March 14, 2021, <https://syg.ma/@leisan-garipova/viacheslav-morozov-rossia-sliesh-sssr-osobaia-impieriia>.

Concluding Notes

Analyzing Morozov's activities at the University of Tartu, including scholarly works and his texts as opinion leader, I can conclude the following:

First, one gets the impression that Morozov was not only engaged in information gathering, but also his academic activities were often related with pro-Kremlin discourse and supporting Russian imperialism.

Second, even if the GRU did not interfere in his academic activities (which I doubt), he was spreading extreme Marxist ideas in the academic environment, as Soviet intelligence and the so-called Cambridge five⁶⁵ in the 1930s and much later the USSR did during the Cold War, with the aim of reinforcing ideological frictions in the community in order to further polarize Western society.

Third, although Morozov sometimes criticized the Putin regime in his works, he did so with some restraint and almost always tried to defend Russian imperialism and Russia's aggressive foreign policy agenda, calling Russia a "subaltern empire" that has been outdone and spreading the idea that Russia is a unique country, including the Putin regime. Among other things, he raised the issue of Russophobia and other Russian propaganda narratives.

However, the question arises how such a person could have been working at the University of Tartu for almost fourteen years, given the fact that we were warned about Morozov's writings as early as in 2005 by Jeroen Bult⁶⁶ and that rumors had been circulating in Tartu for years that there was a professor of political science at the Skytte Institute of the University of Tartu who was a Russian spy.⁶⁷

Morozov's devastating activities are hard to estimate, he published a huge number of scientific articles in influential journals abroad and in Estonia,

⁶⁵ Richard Trahair, *Encyclopedia of Cold War Espionage, Spies, and Secret Operations* (Enigma Books, 2012), 489–652.

⁶⁶ Jeroen Bult, "Baltimaad – kas "uue" Euroopa esmaasukad?" *Diplomaatia* (October 2005), <https://diplomaatia.ee/baltimaad-kas-uue-euroopa-esmaasukad/>.

⁶⁷ Urmas Sutrop, "Spionaažis süüdistavat Morozovit jälgiti juba kümmekond aastatz," *Postimees*, January 22, 2024, <https://arvamus.postimees.ee/7943588/urmas-sutrop-spionaažis-suudistavat-morozovit-jalgiti-juba-kummekond-aastat>.

he published reports and analyses on Russian politics, he was an opinion leader and presented his vision in Estonian, Russian, and English, he was popular among students who studied in English at the University of Tartu, he supervised BA, MA, and PhD theses, organized major international conferences, and received awards and grants. In addition to all this, he was also secretly engaged in spying in Estonia for more than thirteen years, having been recruited by the GRU nearly thirty years ago. This is a good example of how academia can be used by the Russian special services to carry out their influence operations.

Policy Recommendations

While the espionage activities of Russian spy Morozov at the University of Tartu are acknowledged, the academic world needs to prepare for such threats and challenges in the future. The interest of Russian and Chinese intelligence services in Western scientists, their research, students, and universities is increasing.

The following steps and measures should be considered to prevent or minimize such threats:

Firstly, in the case of Morozov, there were a number of warning signs that Morozov might be linked to the Russian special services, as there were rumors in academic circles in Tartu for several years that a Russian professor working as a political scientist at the University of Tartu was a spy. These kind of signs should be taken seriously and not ignored by scientists and university management.

Secondly, an article published in Estonian think-tank's newspaper *Diplomaatia* in 2005 (five years before Morozov was hired at the University of Tartu) contained a thoughtful article on Morozov's pro-Russian views and the ideas he promoted in his works.

Thirdly, in several of his works and appearances, Morozov propagated extreme Marxist (e.g., Trotskyist) ideas and at same time defended Putin's Russian policy and promoted the idea of a multi-polar world, which is basically Primakov's doctrine main postulate. One gets the impression that his

colleagues did not read his works enough, or that the content of their research was not paid attention to and taken seriously by Morozov's pro-Kremlin activities, which were often hidden, but still identifiable.

On this basis, I would suggest that consideration be given to carrying out background checks on all non-Western academics, including what and where they have studied, worked, and what ideas they disseminate. This is a huge and complex but necessary task to protect the Western academic environment. The West's own scientists are also at risk, as they can be recruited, influenced, and blackmailed by the special services of Russia, China, and Iran, etc., so they too should be checked (at least randomly).

In addition, it is important to raise awareness among Western researchers, students, academic staff, and society in general about the security threats is crucial—especially threats posed by Russia and China, including, in particular, information about information influence activities (e.g., disinformation) and espionage. Increasing critical thinking of people in the Western academic environment should be a priority while they are teaching students, future decision-makers in politics, economics, culture, and society. Western researchers are creating new knowledge and know-how that should be protected from hostile countries and organizations, as well as from hostile impact and espionage.

Universities considering taking on academics (especially from outside NATO, the EU, and the wider world) need to be aware of the danger that a researcher or university lecturer from abroad could turn out to be a spy working for, say, the Chinese or Russian military intelligence. He or she could also potentially be a saboteur, a technology thief, or an agent of influence, for example, with the aim of creating a spy network or causing damage. In this respect, great caution should be exercised, potential researchers and academics who promote some extremist and imperialist ideas (e.g., pro-Kremlin views, etc.) should be very carefully screened and considered for employment. However, it should not be excluded that a seemingly ordinary, calm, and quite moderate-minded top scientist or university teacher may also turn out to be a spy. The challenges are therefore many, and it is difficult to solve them. At the same time, the academic world must remain free, sober-minded, and not indulge in witch-hunts, suspecting potentially everyone, which

will only create frustration, spread fear, and may stifle scientific discovery and progress in science.

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