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The responsibility to remain silent? On the politics of knowledge production, expertise and (self-)reflection in Russia's war against Ukraine

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We lived in a profusion of everything, objects, information, and ‘expert opinion’. No sooner had an event occurred than someone issued a reflection, whatever the subject...’ Annie Ernaux, *The Years*, 2018: 208

On February 24, 2022, Russia embarked on its full-scale aggression against Ukraine. By December 2023, when this Special Forum is published in full, the human toll will have reached over half a million people (Roth 2023). The unprovoked attack, sights of Russian missiles bombing Ukrainian cities, and massacres in Bucha and Izyum, among others, turned the attention of International Relations (IR) scholars, foreign policy experts, regional experts and pundits alike to what is happening in Ukraine. Less than one year into the war, we saw a proliferation of Ukraine-themed initiatives in academia, primarily in IR and its sub-disciplines: from book calls and journal special issues¹ to (academic) conferences, roundtables and webinars. Across the West,² university departments formerly called Russia Studies or Eastern European Studies that had historically studied

¹ In our own research, we have come across special issues or forums dedicated to Russia's war against Ukraine published in *International Affairs*, *Geopolitics*, *Contemporary Security Politics*, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, *Czech Journal of International Affairs* (forthcoming), *Journal of European Public Policy*, *European Societies*, *Gender Studies*, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, and *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* (forthcoming). There are surely more.

² By ‘west’ here we refer to the hemisphere of power where knowledge of IR has been traditionally foregrounded, produced and universalized (Grosfoguel 2013).

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Ukraine and the rest of the former Soviet space through a Russia-centred lens³ revamped themselves hastily into ‘Ukraine Platforms’, ‘Ukrainian Studies’ and the like (Ghent University 2023). Emergency scholarships for Ukrainian scholars were instituted – but as humanitarian aid rather than as an opportunity to remedy the inequality in the economy of knowledge production (Shynkarenko & Ruban 2023). IR scholars working on the former Soviet states, whether with prior expertise on Russia-Ukraine relations and Ukraine proper or without, found themselves in high demand as Ukraine came to populate the main spots at conferences and political debates. Scholarship that had grappled with Russia’s continued aggression against Ukraine as a colonial war (Boichak 2022), an imperial war (Mälksoo 2022), a war of coloniality (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021) and otherwise acknowledged Ukraine’s complex histories and identities (Musliu and Burlyuk 2019; Palko and Férez Gil 2023; Popova and Shevel 2023) (re)appeared in response to the newly formed interest.

Against the backdrop of the proliferation of all things Ukraine, we wanted to turn our attention to the politics of knowledge production about this war in IR and its subdisciplines. Despite the hegemony and the long-durée prestige of the notion of objectivity in social sciences (stemming from the projects of imperialism, colonialism and patriarchy), any and all knowledge is theoretically and methodologically conditioned, inherently embodied and subjective, as well as embedded in specific time, space and power structures (Mügge et al. 2018; Rutazibwa 2014; Grosfoguel 2013). Therefore, with this Forum we aim to, first, problematize who produces knowledge about the war in international, transnational and European political debates and how. Second, we ask who needs to hurry and speak loudly and who does or ought to remain silent. Third, we examine the institutional, individual and disciplinary stratifications and authority in debates of and about the war.

Grappling with questions of knowledge production, we as editors, as well as the contributors, contemplated questions of refusal and silence: to write or not to write amidst war. In highly turbulent times, IR scholars have called for ‘quiet as a research strategy’, despite institutional and other incentives to speak (Kimberly Hutchings in Band Lindegaard and Schouten 2016: 6), advocated for strategic silence towards the ‘malestream’ in feminist IR (Duriesmith 2020: 29) and imagined ‘International Relations as if people matter’ (Koomen 2021). Specifically in the context of Russia’s war against Ukraine, there have been pleas from IR scholars to colleagues without any insight on the subject to ‘Stop. Talking. About. Ukraine’ (Abrams 2023). Elsewhere, scholars of peace and security research have paired the need to disrupt exploitative conditions and practices of knowledge production with the politics of refusal as a ‘powerful form of complaint’ (Hagen et al. 2023: 2) – be that to the field,

³ In a study on the status of Slavic and East European studies in the USA post-WWII, Ornstein (1957: 380) concludes that the teaching of East European and Central Asian languages is ‘far outdistanced by Russian instruction’, just as the study of the region is effectively the study of ‘Russia, the Soviet orbit and peripheral areas’ (*ibid.*: 384). The review of area studies in the USA in the summer of 2023 revealed a similar situation (see Gorodnichenko, Sologoub & Deryugina, 2023). Kamusella (2023) argues that the single focus on Russia and Russian ‘engendered serious academic blindness’ in Soviet times, while in post-Soviet times it caused area studies scholars to ‘go native’ (that is, ‘go Russian’) and become professionally and emotionally dependent on Russia.



to the neoliberal university and its logic of trends, opportunities and colonial treatment of places as case studies or to the politics of knowledge production, knowledge cultivation and knowledge appropriation. In a discussion on ethnographic refusal, McGranahan argues that refusal is more than simply saying no: 'To refuse can be generative and strategic, a deliberate move toward one thing, belief, practice, or community and away from another' (2016: 319). For Zahara (2016), refusal can be 'an ethical intervention'. Refusal as research strategy/methodology has also been elaborated in contexts of settler-colonial research frames (Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Tuck 2009; Tuck and Yang 2014a, 2014b; Zavala 2013). Others have problematized refusal to confront racial hierarchies in knowledge production (Haastrup and Hagen 2021) and barriers to participation (D'Costa 2021). This Forum is a collective scientific exploration of the many theoretical, methodological, ethical, and emotional prerequisites and challenges for speaking, and the authors approach dilemmas of speaking or refusing to speak in their own ways.

In what follows, we elaborate on the focus and aims of this Forum and the different sets of questions its many contributions address with respect to knowledge, experts and expertise, subjects and subjectivities, and global schisms and dialogues in IR.

Of knowledge in IR

Although our Special Forum became interdisciplinary, we want to foreground the discussion about the politics of knowledge production on Russia's war against Ukraine in IR. IR has traditionally been most intimately linked with foreign policy and diplomacy. This close and oftentimes *closed* relationship between foreign policy practice and the academic discipline of IR is not without its (productive) tensions. In conversation with contributions to this Forum, we elaborate two interventions with regards to this relationship: one on the nature and the whereabouts of IR scholarship in (post)conflict studies, and the other on the traditional privileging of theory over empirics in IR (McIntosh 2015).

First, traditionally, IR and its subfields – peace and conflict studies, international interventions, and foreign policy – have been closely interlinked with warfare. They have actively shaped their disciplinary and theoretical contours through and via wars. As a discipline, IR was predominantly theorized in the Anglo-Saxon hemisphere (Grosfoguel 2013; Musliu and Mujika Chao 2024) and has used frameworks conceived in the west to capture realities elsewhere. In doing this, IR has routinely extracted the political realities of warfare from places far removed from the west and used them for abstract theorizing. Against this backdrop, very early on in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, several IR scholars called for a more responsible engagement of the IR community with the unfolding of the warfare (Mälksoo 2022: 11) and the necessity of talking about war not as a game for grabbing up territories but as a development which has repercussions that disrupt, change and take the lives of people and entire populations (Hozić and Restrepo Sanín: 2022). In problematizing knowledge production in Russia's war against Ukraine, this Forum seeks to reimagine the war as an *event* (Derrida 1983: 23) that is co-constitutive of IR.



The second argument has to do with IR's lacking knowledge of Russia, be that in overestimating its military and political capacities or in treating it as a black box, reminiscent of the Cold War period (Kallberg 2022; WPS LSE 2022). As testified in the contribution by Andrey Makarychev and Ryhor Nizhnikau, political science and IR are 'still struggling with the persistence of approaches grounded in the legacy of the fall of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and searching for new vocabularies and approaches that would better reflect today's realities'. Concretely, although the scale and brutality of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine were indeed shocking, neither the invasion nor the resistance it encountered should have been surprising. Prior to the full-scale invasion and despite 8 years of ongoing armed conflict, viewed through the Russian lenses, Ukraine had been misconstrued as weak and fragmented, Russia – as a modern power seeking to maintain its 'sphere of influence' through softer means and interference, and the relationship between the two – as 'brotherly' (see Oksamytna 2023). To this end, the unfolding of the war testified to how little this community knew about Russia and Ukraine in and of themselves. It is this same expert community that reacted in a shocked manner when witnessing that Ukrainian tractors were able to halt and counteract Russia's tanks; or the fact that Russia's supposed great military force and equipment were not as sophisticated. This, we argue, pertains to the Russia-centred epistemic frame that organises knowledge production about the whole region.

In their reading of why the academic community in the USA failed to provide clues about Russia's war against Ukraine, Gorodnichenko, Sologoub and Deryugina (2023) suggest that although such Russia-centrism in North America (and we argue in Europe, too) is largest in literary studies, it is also prominent in the study of history, politics and languages. In their contribution to this Forum, Makarychev and Nizhnikau argue that the discipline of IR has not simply gotten Russia all wrong: its various discourses have become complicit in normalizing and rationalizing Russia's conduct in Ukraine. In other words, the initial readings from the IR community exposed that, in the engrained discourse and practice of this discipline, Russia had been made and preserved into a black box filled with epistemic neglect and (mis)conceptions from the Cold War (for critique of these, see Driedger 2023; Driedger and Polianskii 2023; Kostelka 2022; Kukharskyy et al. 2022; Smoleński and Dutkiewicz 2022). Similarly, Andriy Tyushka in his contribution speaks of unintentional, intentional and collateral knowledge distortion on the subject of Russian belligerence in Ukraine. Accordingly, the hyperinflated use of the label 'Ukraine crisis' with regard to Russia's continued covert and overt aggression against Ukraine since the early 2010s served to belittle or even deny the said aggression despite factual evidence. So much so that the war, Tyushka argues, had 'not been widely called nor consensually recognized as such', distorting knowledge and perceptions on the situation.

The inability to generate a greater understanding of contemporary Russia owes much to privileging theory over empirics that has traditionally defined IR as a discipline and the structure of career rewards therein. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it became common again to see experts talk on the subject without necessarily having (empirical) knowledge on either country. In their contribution, Jan Dutkiewicz and Jan Smoleński expose 'IR theory without facts' and 'expertise without



a subject' and conceptualise it as epistemic superimposition – regarding Russia's war against Ukraine or any other. In a similar vein, in his discussion of knowledge distortion on the Russian war in/against/about Ukraine, Tyushka considers factors such as inertia, lazy or wishful thinking, and neglect and ignorance. Bohdana Kurylo in her contribution pushes this further to argue that '[f]ar from an innocent lack of knowledge, ignorance towards Russia's genocidal violence against Ukrainians is a deliberate, conscious decision, and its consequences must not be treated as apolitical'. In any case, had IR been more receptive and humbler to have listened to and (critically) engaged with feminist and critical knowledge coming from Central and Eastern Europe on Russian affairs and Russia's continuous policies towards its neighbours, the IR community would have appeared less shocked.

When it comes to IR's take on Eastern Europe (broadly defined), scholars have long identified patterns of epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007), the co-constitutive nature of coloniality and knowledge production (Tlostanova 2010, 2015), epistemic imperialism (Sonevytsky 2022), epistemic superiority (Stavrevska et al. 2023), inter-imperiality (Doyle 2020; Parvulescu and Boatcă 2020) and peripheralization (Kušić 2021). They have shown that the post-Soviet region and subject had been erased from social sciences and IR literature on the premise that the end of the Cold War rearranged the east/west geopolitical imaginaries into a global south/global north divide (Santoire 2023).⁴ In fact, even in the more 'critical' strands of IR, the omission of knowledge from the region – in general and specifically in the debates on Russia's war against Ukraine – has been prevalent (Hendl et al. 2023). In their contribution to this Forum, Míla O'Sullivan and Kateřina Krulišova expose the long-standing side-lining of Central and Eastern European (CEE) scholars in feminist security studies. The authors suggest that oftentimes knowledge production is not in conversation with the CEE subject when it comes to IR and its sub-disciplines; rather, they have been spoken over. Along similar lines, scholars have previously argued for the necessity to provincialize IR from Central and Eastern Europe (Alejandro 2021; Kušić 2021; Mälksoo 2021; Manolova et al. 2019; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012). The seemingly sudden discovery of Russia's colonial(like) and imperial(like) politics towards Ukraine and the rest of the former Soviet states in IR prompted what Mälksoo aptly pointed out to be the 'post-colonial moment' in Russia's war against Ukraine (2022).

It is precisely this seemingly sudden discovery of Ukraine – with its own agency and subjectivity – that became our main motivation for this Special Forum. In interrogating the politics of knowledge production in Russia's war against Ukraine, we are guided by the following set of questions: What does it take for knowledge to suddenly appear as if out of nowhere? Whose knowledge about Ukraine and about Russia was suddenly discovered? Knowledge production is fundamentally about the question of who gets to speak (who is invited, heard, taken seriously, published, read, cited) and who does not (is not invited, not heard, dismissed as biased or emotional, considered a supplier of empirical data and not a knowledge-producer, not

⁴ These discussions were to a large extent shaped and inspired by calls to decolonize IR (Acharya & Buzan, 2009, 2019; Buzan & Acharya, 2022; Rutazibwa & Shilliam, 2018; Rutazibwa, 2019, 2020) and provincialize IR (Vasilaki, 2012).



translated, not published, not read, not cited). While the space in this Editorial does not allow us a discussion on the difference between knowledge production, knowledge cultivation (see Rutazibwa and Shilliam 2018; Stavrevska et al. 2023) and knowledge extraction (see Bacevic 2023), we work with an understanding of knowledge production as the conglomerate of research, publication, citation, teaching, policy engagement, and public engagement (see also Freyberg-Innan et al. 2017). The contributions in our Forum further complicate the politics of knowledge production as they discuss knowledge diplomacy (Chaban and Headley), knowledge of suffering (Tsyymbalyuk), knowledge distortion (Tyushka), and meaning-making (Kurylo).

Of experts and expertise in IR

Further, and relatedly, questions that we problematize in the Forum are who an expert is and what expertise is, but also what the role of academics in the expert debate (through policy, media and teaching) is and to what extent these assumptions are shaken by the new (digital) media ecology. Scholars recognised as experts on a topic often share their analysis with the explicit intention of shaping policy or public discourse. Some ideas, however false, can have tremendous outreach within and beyond academia, as Dutkiewicz and Smoleński demonstrate regarding John Mearsheimer's public commentary in their contribution to this Forum.

While producing 'knowledge for war', scholars might face 'the normative security dilemma of writing security', explored in the context of the Norwegian debate on Russia's war against Ukraine in a contribution by Joakim Brattvoll. The author asks what the epistemic implications of fear and accusations are and whether scholars should do anything 'to avoid the danger of being termed treacherous' in a situation when those engaging in public debate 'become part of threat constructions they seek to tone down'. In turn, in his contribution on 'the limits of critique', Alexander Graef examines the limited ability of the Russian foreign policy expert community (academic and think-tank) to shape Russia's conduct of war and the moral choices they face in Russia. For Graef, the war against Ukraine represents a significant turning point in the evolution of Russia's foreign policy expert community: '[t]he emergence of a new 'regime of publicity' has severely limited the space for legitimate political discourse, as the state reasserts its monopoly on symbolic violence'.

In their contribution focusing on IR scholars in New Zealand, Natalia Chaban and James Headley remind us that, rather than fellow researchers, media or the general public, the primary audience of academics as knowledge-makers are students in social sciences, humanities and law: the ones likely to make future policies. The authors argue that the war 'has triggered a particular reflection on the self-attributed roles by international academics outside Ukraine as educators/researchers/innovators and as empowered-by-knowledge members of society with self-assigned responsibility to share this knowledge'.

Moving beyond the usual domains of academic debate and academics as knowledge actors, the contributions to this Forum by Tetyana Lokot and by Alina Penkala, Ilse Derluyn and Ine Lietaert turn to citizens as experts and social media as a platform for knowledge production in times of war. Lokot examines communicative



acts of Ukrainian social media users in the digital realm and situates their place, value and authority as knowledge actors in participatory warfare amidst the dominant high-level state war narratives and traditional expert commentary. She argues that ‘personalized expressions of affect and lived experience of war on social media can act as forms of resistance’, simultaneously ‘redefining the meaning of expertise in wartime and centering citizen voices in the hybrid media sphere’. Similarly, the contribution by Penkala, Derluyn and Lietaert examines narratives of self-understanding and self-determination that transpired from Twitter posts by Ukrainian academics, journalists, activists and regular citizens at the start of the full-out invasion. They find that, directed specifically at western audiences, these seemed ‘to act as a response to those who deny Ukraine the agency to define its own vision for its future’ and asserted Ukrainians as *the* experts on the subject. Such participatory warfare is, however, not without its dangers stemming, for example, from participatory warfare’s monologic of disengaging, dehumanizing and drowning the online opponent, its ‘domestication’ effect of bringing the war into safe home environments and everyday life or its continuation well after the physical war has ended (see Asmolov 2021; Chernobrov 2022; Boichak and Hoskins 2022).

Of subjects and subjectivities in IR

The third set of questions concerns subjects and subjectivities of knowledge production. We concretely ask: who talks and theorizes about the war as the war unfolds? Who is invited and foregrounded to talk about the war? In turn, who is silenced and side-lined? What kind of emotional, intellectual and physical labour is required to produce knowledge amid the war? What avenues and risks can (auto-)ethnography bring in this stalemate? In the words of Kurylo in this Forum: ‘What kind of knowledge is produced through limbless, raped or tortured bodies? Or through bodies decomposing under the rubble in battered Mariupol?’ Oftentimes, the stream of academic and policy commentary on Russia’s war against Ukraine was characterized by what Tlostanova argued earlier to be an ‘arrogant urge to take the vantage point of the observer and occupy a specific secure place exempt from reality’ (2015: 40). In weaving together theory, methods, ethics, gender, national identity, place and epistemic violence, the many reflexive contributions in this Forum show the embodiment of war and the disruptions it has brought for Ukrainian scholars (abroad) and the wider academic community.

The autoethnographic narrative by Bohdana Kurylo identifies the epistemological, ontological and methodological hierarchies in knowledge production by IR scholars that together result in effacing Ukrainian voices (and marginalizing knowledges of Europe’s East more generally). It is, above all, an ‘act of resistance’ for the author through which she seeks to reclaim her voice. Kurylo argues that a more encompassing understanding of the war stumbles on three hierarchies that led to systematic devaluation and dismissal of the voices of Ukrainians in *mainstream* and *critical* IR scholarship alike, namely: hierarchy between Europe’s west and east,



between elite and everyday actors, spaces and practices and between the objective and the subjective.

In her reflection, Darya Tsymbalyuk walks the reader through her body being tokenised for its Ukrainian-ness and acting as an indirect legitimisation of the sudden shift of Russia-focused academic institutions to Ukraine. '[T]he knowledge I share is often seen as coming less from my scholarly labour and more from a place of personal experience' – the false distinction and hierarchy serving to diminish her contribution. In a call to re-centre knowledge that comes from suffering, Tsymbalyuk argues that her body 'often knew things before [she] could process them through reasoning', and it has since taught her disengagement as a practice of decolonial resistance and a response to Russian colonialism.

In turn, Kseniya Oksamytna observes the conundrums of many Ukrainian scholars (abroad) who find themselves navigating 'the war-life balance' while simultaneously being 'disappointed about not producing more academic 'outputs' or guilty about not doing more for the Ukrainian cause'. She discusses three specific challenges faced by Ukrainian researchers when producing knowledge on the Russian invasion of Ukraine: the burden of care and service work, tone (self)policing, and variable levels of sympathy and solidarity from colleagues in the core west and the global south.

Looking in from the outside, in their contribution to this Forum, Vera Axyonova and Katsiaryna Lozka reflect on the need to (re)negotiate researchers' social identities as knowledge producers (in this instance, including their countries of origin and very names), as well as power relations vis-à-vis research participants and emotions in the research process, which 'brought the war closer to our homes – not physically but psychologically'. The authors plea that, however exciting and novel one's research might be, knowledge producers need to weigh expected scientific gains against potential harm and exercise the responsibility to remain silent when necessary. In a similar vein, Marnie Howlett and Valeria Lazarenko argue that because doing research is a privilege, not a right, researchers ought to weigh the sense of urgency in conceptualising the events and the appeal of studying a war in 'real time' against the need for sensitivity, transparency and rigour in one's research, and prioritize the latter.

Of global schism and dialogue

Finally, Russia's war against Ukraine as well as the academic and political reactions to it seem to have brought forward a schism in the global intellectual and IR community. The schism might have been there prior to the war but it was accentuated and articulated more prominently following Russia's full-scale invasion. The aggression against Ukraine was met with declaratory and material support across the European Union and the west more broadly. The unprecedented welcome of Ukrainian refugees in many EU countries – which have been anything but welcoming to other refugees and migrants fleeing turmoil, genocide and system failure in the Middle East and North Africa – did not go unnoticed. Prominent European media reported



sympathetically about Ukrainian refugees while resorting to orientalism and racism about their (conditional) whiteness in portraying them as ‘relatively civilized, relatively European’ as opposed to Afghans, Iraqis or Syrians.⁵

The privileging of suffering, we argue, has created new schisms between many countries in the global south and Ukraine. Grovogui (2023) argues that in its fight against Russia, Ukraine is in fact racializing itself as white and thus no longer at the edge of modernity so that it can become part of the western European club. Yet, it is this very club which has enabled Russia’s long-standing colonial approach towards Ukraine and the rest of the former Soviet states in the first place. Bhambra (2023) poignantly observes that the framing of support for Ukraine was often mobilized around ‘European values’. Because the latter reveal the histories of colonialism and imperialism that have made the ‘world order’ today, many countries in the global south found it difficult to be solidary with Ukraine.

Many (CEE and Central Asian) scholars have been perplexed by the lack of solidarity from more critical and decolonial voices coming from the global south (Hendl 2022; Kassymbekova 2022; Kassymbekova and Marat 2022; Kassymbekova and Chokobaeva 2023; Khromeychuk 2022; Oksamytna in this Forum; Sonevytsky 2022; Tsymbalyuk et al. 2022). Several of them interrogate the blind spots of both feminist IR scholars as well as decolonial scholars who embarked on reading Russia’s war against Ukraine through the tropes of ‘NATO expansionism’ and/or ‘NATO revival’, without properly interrogating and/or understanding the colonial and imperial layers of the invasion and at the same time painting Russia as cornered to defend itself in a world dominated by western imperialism (for critique, see Durdiyeva 2023; Hendl 2022; Hendl et al. 2023; Tripathi 2022). Kurylo in this Forum notes that critical IR scholarship is ‘yet to put itself through the same degree of critical scrutiny as it exercises towards its subjects’ and fails to understand ‘agency that does not fit into the fixed conceptions of ‘acceptable’ agency in Critical IR’. In turn, Oksamytna in her contribution discusses the lack of a common vocabulary and variable levels of sympathy and solidarity from colleagues in the core west and the global south (given their different historical legacies, as well as experience with liberalism, capitalism and nationalism) as one of the main challenges to engagement for Ukrainian scholars and proposes ways of strengthening dialogue between different research communities.

Conclusion

This Special Forum is a product of intense intellectual and emotional labour of all involved, in keeping with the ethics of care and the spirit of solidarity and responsibility. The writing, the editing and the reviewing of contributions to this Forum often awoke pain in authors, editors and reviewers. On the one hand, throughout the process, we were normatively guided by a willingness to contribute to discussions of epistemic justice, as we grappled with questions who the subjects and subjectivities of knowledge production in Russia’s war against Ukraine are; and where the

⁵ See for more a reflection by Bayoumi (2022).



whereabouts (spatial and conceptual) of that knowledge are. On the other hand, we are also cognizant that this Forum omits many voices. Several authors who have initially committed to contribute to this Forum eventually did not submit their contributions for a wide range of reasons including emotional burden, incapacity to think and/or write at this point in time, epistemological and existential doubts on ‘taking the space’, among others. These dynamics point us to important discussions on who are the subjects and subjectivities of knowledge production, especially in times of war.

We hope this Forum will serve as an intervention, an opening for the many urgent theoretical, methodological and ethical conversations that are habitually avoided and evaded for being uncomfortable, unpleasant or untimely – or dismissed as a ‘luxury’ few can afford when in the academic running wheel. Rather than prescribing the answers, our aim was to continue the discussion on knowledge production in IR against the backdrop of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in order to (re)articulate structural problems in (the way we do) IR and to pave the way forward. It is an intervention for more relevant IR (Smith 2009), in hope for more sound, ethical and responsible knowledge production, and in aspiration of a more inclusive academia. The status quo is harmful and intellectually unsustainable.

Rather than hurry to react, with this Forum, we wanted to take the time needed to reflect. We now invite you to reflect with us.

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