

## **Russian and American Students Discuss Biosecurity Issues**

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, The Graduate Initiative in Russian Studies (GIRS) organized a teleconference between students from MIIS and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO): “Ebola, Coronavirus... What’s Next? Biothreats and Biosecurity in the Modern World.” During the first part of the dialogue, participants discussed contemporary threats to biosecurity with an emphasis on the coronavirus outbreak. Young experts highlighted the need for international cooperation on containing biological threats within the WHO framework and the international scientific community. Participants also discussed raising awareness about biothreats and counter conspiracy theories emerging in the wake of similar outbreaks.

The second part of the dialogue focused on potential state and non-state level questions in biosecurity. The participants, more specifically, discussed US-sponsored biological laboratories across the post-Soviet space. From the Russian perspective, students noted apprehension that facilities could potentially be used to manufacture biological weapons. The US stance, however, maintains that they are aimed at reducing bioterrorism risks by collecting hazardous substances at a single secure facility. From this discussion, Russian and American students emphasized the need for greater transparency in US-Russian relations and the establishment of verification protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

The event continued the long-standing tradition of the MGIMO-MIIS dialogue series facilitated by GIRS. Such teleconferences are aimed at fostering mutual understanding among the younger generations of Russian and American experts.