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Institutionalism in the foreign publications devoted to EU-Russian relations

Institutionalism is widely used by the scholars studying relations between the EU and Russia. Let's try to examine the reasons that determined popularity of institutionalism among non-Russian researchers, and the way how it is usually used to study of EU-Russian relationship. This popularity could be explained by different reasons. First of all, one should mention obvious analytical advantages of this theoretical approach in explaining international cooperation in general and its particular cases (studying the role of institutions in international relations, institutional features, decision-making procedures, the actions of state actors to protect national interests and their negotiations with other actors, mutual influence of actors on each other and their transformation as a result of participation in common institutions, etc.). In addition, institutionalism and neoinstitutional approaches (historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism) are effectively used to analyze the European integration process, the institutional framework of the EU and various activities of the European Union, including the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and the EU relations with the third countries. It is also important to mention the active use of institutionalism in historical studies of European integration. Eventually historical studies led to the formation of historical institutionalism with its emphasis on a specific event and its consequences as a definite development route. Finally, the diversity of theoretical and methodological tools used by institutionalists in their attempt to determine role of institutions in international relations makes this approach extremely useful for researchers of Russia-EU interaction. Today international studies tend to combine elements of different theories, therefore even those scholars who use other approaches as a basic theory can also apply elements of institutionalism.

This review is based on publications in foreign academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *International Organization*, *European Security*, *Cooperation and Conflict*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *The International Spectator*), publications of research centers and institutions, including the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the Finnish Institute of International Relations (FIIA)), books and reports from academic conferences. Taking into account results of different researches published abroad, it is possible to identify the way how non-Russian scholars use institutionalism in the study of relations between Russia and the European Union.

First, institutionalism is used in those researches, which are devoted to political integration in Europe and the implementation of the CFSP. In such cases, relations with Russia are used as an illustration of the EU external activity and implementation of the CFSP decision-making procedures. It should be noted that institutionalism (taking into account its constructivist version - sociological institutionalism) is the dominant theory explaining CFSP and the EU's role in the world. Many scholars pay particular attention to the influence of member states in the EU foreign policy decision-making process and national influence on the policies towards third countries. Of course, particular events might have a serious impact on the research agenda, the problems studied and the use of theoretical approaches. So the crisis in Ukraine sometimes is perceived as a test for the EU institutional system and the procedures developed for the CFSP. The EU failures on the international arena are interpreted as an institutional failure and a reason for institutional reforms in order to ensure efficient external activities. Concerns about non-efficient institutions were raised as a result of crisis in Yugoslavia. Today the Ukrainian crisis raised new concerns about capabilities of the EU institutions.

Secondly, the institutional approach is often used as a basis for historical analysis of the EU-Russia relations. In these studies, institutions are interpreted either as a framework facilitating cooperation between the Russian Federation and the European Union, or as an indicator of the nature of the EU-Russia relationship. Researchers emphasize the key principles on which relations between Russia and the European Union are based, and examine major challenges to development of the EU-Russia relationship.

Finally, some scholars examine the institutional aspects of the interaction between Russia and the European Union with an emphasis on decision-making procedures within the Russian institutions. They explain rationality of the Russian decision-makers. They study various factors that influence Russia's policy towards the EU, including historical background, geopolitical situation, influence of external actors, interaction with different states and international organizations. Some representatives of this group often combine an institutional approach with other approaches, including geopolitics and neo-realism.

Therefore, institutionalism and neoinstitutionalism appear to be highly relevant to examine relations between the EU and Russia. It could be used to describe both efficient cooperation and serious contradictions. It might be used as an analytical framework to examine general tendencies of relations between the EU and Russia, and individual cases.