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Constructivism in the Studies of EU-Russian Relations: English-Language Publications

Western academic circles actively use constructivism to analyse foreign and domestic policies of both the European Union and the Russian Federation. This approach in relation to the European Union is conditioned by the idea of the normative nature of the EU that is dominant in Western academic discourse. That, in turn, leads to the need to use this paradigm in the study of the interaction between the Russian Federation and the European Union. Moreover, the use of constructivism in the analysis of the relations between the Russian Federation and the EU has itself become one of the themes presented in Western scientific debate. The key point of departure is the well-known work of Iver Neumann "The Use of the Other: the East in the Formation of European Identity." Despite the fact that, strictly speaking, this work does not focus on the Russian Federation and the European Union as actors of international relations, references to this study have become almost an obligatory part of the constructivist analysis of the EU and Russia.

First of all, these are publications looking at the relations between Russia and the EU through the prism of the formation of identity discourses and through the normative interaction that accompanies this process. There is a whole line of academic publications exploring the notion of "Europeanness" in Russian political discourse. For example, Sergei Prozorov describes Russia as a subject simultaneously belonging and excluded from Europe, while Bahar

Rumelili and Vyacheslav Morozov concentrate on the dialogic nature of the interaction of identity discourses. The position of Russia as "the other" - "oppressed" is considered in later works of Morozov. The study of these discourses is impossible without resorting to the normative component of modern politics, which has also become the subject of analysis in a number of works.

Theoretical studies here successfully co-exist with more applied ones. Joan DeBardeleben points out a number of possibilities for using constructivism. First of all, this study of how Russia and the EU design their foreign policy identities, which allows explaining respective positions on conflicts in the surrounding territories. Secondly, constructivism can assist in updating discursive and institutional ways of interaction. Indeed, analysing existing publications, we can identify a number of similar studies. Constructivism is the main theoretical framework in the study of the development and revision of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union; the European Neighbourhood Policy; Northern Dimension; Partnership for Modernization. In all cases, researchers paid special attention to the normative component in the policy of both the European Union and the Russian Federation. Moreover, on the one hand, one of the key points, especially after the EU enlargement, was the need to analyze the capabilities of these programs both from the perspective of the formation of new geographical spaces and new narratives. On the other hand, there was a need to choose an appropriate analysis scheme, where the EU's normative line, presented as a priority in relation to economic cooperation could be compared with Russian normative statements about the priority of the economic over the political one, which predetermined the appeal to constructivism. Moscow's uneven assessment of EU initiatives (i.e. Northern Dimension vs. the ENP) became yet another important point, which drew the attention of researchers.

The study of the Energy Dialogue became another interesting field for the application of the constructivist approach. Moscow's desire to use energy as a foreign policy resource in parallel with the securitization of energy resources, articulated by Brussels, forced many energy specialists to turn to constructivist categories. At the same time, for constructivists studying the relations between Russia and the European Union, the Dialogue as a program has become a new object to study discourses.

In sum, it is obvious that the uneven use of this paradigm by Western and Russian researchers in the analysis of relations between the Russian Federation and the EU increases the number of gaps in the general scientific discourse that leads to less and less mutual understanding

between the academic elites of Russia and the European Union. But it is constructivism, as DeBardeleben points out, that is able to direct academic, and then official discourse into a more positive direction.