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Institutional issues in the relations between Russia and the European Union in studies abroad

In modern political science and international relations it is crucial to distinguish three major institutional levels of cooperation: the level of heads of state and government, sectoral ministers and foreign ministers, the level of "transgovernment" ties based on a system of permanent inter-institutional contacts at the level of senior officials and below. And, finally, a "transnational" level, which includes a constantly active business level, academic ties and "invisible" level of international cooperation. During the period of relations between the European Union and the USSR, it was reasonable to operate only with the first level of dialogue between institutions. The disintegration of the USSR and, more importantly, the collapse of the traditional system of relations, led to the emergence of a significant number of participants who were in need of international contacts on the one hand and involving states in facilitating these contacts on the other.

At the same time, the institutional vertical of the first two levels was built by the European Union and the Russian Federation on the basis of practical steps: the 1989 Agreement, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the Russian Federation and the European Union of 1994, the EU Common Strategy for Russia, the systemic the "Wider Europe-Neighborhood" initiative, the Strategic Partnership within the framework of "four spaces" and on the basis of regional interaction of European regional structures with Russian regions, of Russian North-West including within the Northern Dimension. The third level was mostly represented by business interactions between Russian and European companies. In the political space, it resulted in a significant mutual interest of researchers: the lobbying level and the systemic participation of business in decision-making.

In a broad value sense, the study of institutions was carried out quite intensively, however, mainly from a critical point of view, "baskets of institutional values" were criticized rather than compared to European standards. At the same time, a significant number of researchers agreed that unique features of relations with Russia for the European Union were exaggerated. That is why, from the point of view of foreign authors, especially until 2010, the EU's interaction with Russia was perceived in institutional terms. Researchers preferred to study not the actual Russian-European relations and their features, but assess the effectiveness of improving Russian institutions on the way to rapprochement with European standards. Similar criticism can also be found in the authors' articles, where institutions are perceived in a broad sense.

The regional stages of institutional cooperation are mostly linked to the Northern Dimension project, "launched" by Finland in 1997. Institutional component in this case was taken by regional organizations (the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the

Council of States of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, the Arctic Council), the International Energy Agency. The wide representation provoked a wide academic interest: many authors were involved in a discussion about the problems and prospects for the expansion and further institutionalization of relations within the Northern Dimension, among them we note the researchers P.Jonniemi, C.Frank, S.Gebhard, A.Haglung-Morrissey, L.Khaininen, N.Hizer and others.

However, Russia's rejection of the expected reforms in the early to mid-2000s. became the cause of gradual cooling in the institutional component of relations. Despite the initiatives of the "four spaces", their substantive component was rather modest, which served as the basis for "overflowing" institutional activity from the general political format to the ad hoc format, in our case, rather a sectoral one. The most popular direction was linked to the Energy Charter and the Energy Charter Treaty of 1994. (ECT): energy cooperation, trade, investment and transit issues.

Nowadays one of the new directions in the study of the relations between Russia and the European Union is the evolution of the role of the Eurasian integration experiment. In this regard, some articles prepared by foreign researchers demonstrate moderate interest, since in terms of institutional approach this issue deals with not only relations between Russia and the EU, but also suggests accepting this dialogue in terms of aggregated and institutionalized interests of the EAEC.

Summarizing the review of foreign studies affecting institutional logic, we have to note that the interest towards institutional agenda is pretty low. Initial assumptions, embedded in the logic of interaction through interstate institutions, were hardly understood by key players. Relations between Russia and the European Union for last few years were narrowed to sectoral, the revival takes place only at the level of business interaction and then, with a certain attention to the mutual sanctions policy. Participation of Russian business structures in European lobbying associations and vice versa does not exist: even in some episodes can be found they should remain isolated and excessively politicized.