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Methods of Studying EU-Russian Relations: Overview

About 60 books on the relations between Russia and the EU were published in Russia between 1992 and 2017; outside of Russia about 50 books realised in major international publishing houses are noteworthy. Numerous articles were also published in specialized journals in Russia and also outside it (but their share on average does not exceed 5% of all publications on the EU's external policy or Russian foreign policy). Hence, Russia-EU relations have not become a central story, despite the geographical proximity of partners, the mutual importance of relations, especially in the economy.

On both sides, the study of the relations between Russia and the EU is influenced by the traditions of studying social and economic processes. In Russia it is, first of all, a historical approach, a systematic approach. An important element of the Russian tradition of studying relations between Russia and the EU was the emphasis on empiricism, which led to descriptiveness, and also often a rejection of theory and often an arrogant presentation of the lack of a theoretical framework for research as a virtue. Finally, vulgar realism has become a specific feature of Russian research, with a rejection of many other paradigms (in particular liberalism, neoliberalism and constructivism).

Non-Russian studies of Russia-EU relations are much more theory-oriented. Two traditions can be singled out in them: one is based on the realities of Russian foreign and domestic policy, the other considers Russia as an example of general trends in the EU's external activities. At the same time, the contradiction between the tradition of studying the processes within the EU, combining the theory of international relations and political science, moving to the latter, and the

study of external relations of the EU, where the theory of international relations are still dominant, is curious. However, there have also been studies of Russia-EU relations using such approaches specific to European integration as Europeanization or normative power. Finally, there is a rich tradition of constructivist studies in non-Russian literature, which only make their way to Russian-language research.

Another feature, which characterises the study of EU-Russian relations since 2014, is the increasing support of official positions of Russia or the EU. Often, unfortunately, this supersedes the tradition of impartial academic analysis, while also strengthening the paradigmatic gap in the research of relations between Russia and the EU in both Russia and abroad. Finally, on both sides, one can diagnose a fair amount of self-censorship at the stages of both writing articles and, in particular, submitting it to a journal.

Let us now briefly consider six basic theoretical approaches to the study of relations between Russia and the EU.

The first - realism - is present on both sides. It became dominant as a result of the events of 2014 in Ukraine and the subsequent tightening of mutual rhetoric of partners. The difference consists, first of all, in a greater emphasis on empiricism in Russian studies and on theory – in non-Russian works. It is also interesting that Russian researchers emphasise the system and its factors, i.e. neo-realistic perspective, whereas Western researchers, rather, proceed from the realities of Russia's domestic policy, that is, apply neoclassical realism. In both cases, however, an asymmetric dependence is diagnosed (instead of interdependence) and the ways of its reduction are sought. Especially often this logic is used in the study of issues of tough security, energy and neighborhood.

The second approach, which deserves attention in studies of Russia-EU relations, is liberalism and associated (neo)institutionalism and legal research. This approach is the most popular outside of Russia. First, the differences between a realistic-minded Russia and a liberal European Union are emphasized. At the same time, the liberal-institutional logic of the EU outside Russia is not always seen as a drawback, many works emphasize the comparative advantages of the EU's approach in the long term, the importance of further strengthening institutions. The neoinstitutionalism of rational choice and historical neo-institutionalism dominate. In Russia, the liberal-institutional approach is often viewed as outdated and idealistic. At the same time, legal studies of Russia-EU relations, focusing primarily on classical institutionalism, demonstrate this approach in domestic science. At the same time, there are interesting differences that are being made by Russian political scientists and lawyers between those theories and methods that can be

used to study the internal processes in the EU, on the one hand, and its interactions with the outside world, including with Russia, on the other.

The third theoretical framework - constructivism - is much more popular in non-Russian studies, although recently this gap is partially closed. If we talk about the subject of research, then constructivism in Russia is applied much more often to the EU or its interaction with Russia than to some other actor. It is also interesting that Russian authors often involuntarily and unconsciously resort to constructivism (including discussing such issues as identity, perception, "europeanism"). Insufficient attention to constructivist problems, however, makes a number of Russian studies superficial. In Western studies, in general, two trends can be identified: the first one is the study of Russia as a meaningful other for the EU and Europe, the second one is the study of the EU's foreign policy identity and its impact on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the Northern Dimension, the European Neighborhood Policy and other forms of interaction.

The fourth approach, which is important to pay attention, is economic theory. Russian researchers have traditionally quite actively studied the relations of Russia and the EU in this context, however, they were mostly focused on empirical data, on the dynamics and indicators of trade flows and capital investments. Some recent studies also focus on how EU experience can be used in Eurasian integration, which can contribute to the growth of more fundamental economic studies. Western researchers, mainly, use political-economic approaches. At the same time, qualitative changes are being studied, including the ratio of private and public sectors, the impact of WTO and Eurasian integration on Russia-EU relations, the dynamics and nature of energy ties.

The fifth approach, worthy of attention, from our point of view, is the concept of the normative force of Europe. It appeared in Western studies and is obviously connected to the specifics of the European Union as an international actor and to constructivism. Russia at the same time is used by Western actors as an example of the EU's implementation of the concept of normative power, and it is by no means always successful. In Russia, however, the concept of normative power came with some delay. For a long time it was used to describe the EU, but not Russia-EU relations (with lengthy explanations why it can not be used for Russia and why the perception of the EU as a normative power is impaired). It is also interesting that the concept of normative power was often combined with the realistic tradition in Russia. There have also been attempts to theoretically classify Russian claims against the normative power of the European Union, to refute it, to prove its inapplicability to the dialogue between Moscow and Brussels. Finally, in recent years, the relationship between normative power and soft power has been explored in

detail, as well as between the normative power and the EU's resilience. Discussions about the normative power of Europe in the study of Russia's relations with the EU both in Russia and in the West were connected with the question of the correlation of norms/ values and interests.

Finally, europeanisation has often been applied to the study of relations between Russia and the EU. At the same time in Russia, special emphasis was placed on the differences between europeanisation as an important historical process and today's EU-ization. The study of changes in Russian law, education, and economics made it possible to distinguish between normative and instrumental europeanisation. In non-Russian studies, too, thin and thick europeanisation, as well as concentric circles of rapprochement around the EU, were analyzed. However, the key was precisely the influence of the EU on the processes of europeanisation. Russia was studied (especially in the period of 2008-2012) as a case of limited EU-sation, the changes in our country were investigated, as well as its resistance to europeanisation. Finally, an interesting trend was the study of the influence of the Russian factor on europeanisation in the region of the so-called common / shared neighborhood.