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Constructivism in the Studies of EU-Russian Relations (Russian-language studies)

Constructivism as a scientific paradigm is already widely spread in Russian studies. First of all, it concerns such areas of knowledge as sociology and anthropology, which, of course, is due to the conditions of its initial articulation as "social constructivism". However, the picture is completely different when it comes to the application of this paradigm in the study of international relations. Works within the framework of constructivism are extremely rare and they exert little influence on the formation of new approaches to research. It is not surprising that even in the analysis of the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation, the authors daring to take constructivism as the basis for their study are few. Nevertheless, it is the European Union, its nature and essence, which is analysed from these positions more frequently than other objects of international studies. This, of course, is closely related to the current trends in the academic circles of Europe itself. Attempts to analyse European identity, which becomes the cornerstone of most Western EU studies, force Russian researchers to resort to constructivism, within which this category has emerged.

Despite the seemingly obvious continuation of this branch of research, the topic of EU-Russian relations through the prism of discourse analysis of identity has not yet received any serious attention in Russian-language studies. Among the academic publications, we can note a number of works devoted to the study of the interaction of discourses of Russian and European identity

from the standpoint of the postcolonial approach, and the influence of this interaction on contemporary relations.

However, the topic of identity manifested itself in regional studies. A number of academic publications, primarily in the journal "Baltic region", discussed prospects for cooperation between Russia and the EU countries in the Baltic Sea region from this exact stand point. And the degree of involvement of authors in the constructivist paradigm is different: some use constructivism deliberately, others recourse to it from time to time to support their arguments and were not methodologically consistent. Various aspects of relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, the main Russian partner in the EU, are also considered through the lens of constructivism. Moreover, the themes touched by the authors differ from apparently constructivist ones, like the discourse of the media, to the study of the articulation of geopolitical discourses, usually conceived by Russian researchers through the prism of classical realism.

Thus, gradually, constructivism is gaining ground in Russian academic literature. Authors begin to recognize the necessity of applying this paradigm, but mainly for the analysis of relations with the European Union. Moreover, sometimes we can see works, although they do not mention constructivism, but written using its basic postulates.

It is worth asking why constructivism has so many difficulties in the Russian academic space. In our view, there are several problems here. First, serious failures in the development of the theory and methodology of studying international relations in the USSR should be noted, and then, as a consequence, in the Russian Federation. Obviously, it would have been possible to overcome this problem but this did not happen, which leads us to the second point - the perception of constructivism as not so much an instrument of research but rather as an ideological creation of the West. Nevertheless, such concepts as "identity" or "discourse" have become part of the Russian-language scientific debate, but rather as terms, and not as analytical categories. That is why periodically there are works, where the very theoretical formulation of the problem immediately calls into question the possibility of its implementation.

Thus, we can summarize that constructivism as a theoretical framework for the study of international relations in general, and the relations of the European Union and the Russian Federation in particular, is still in its infancy, and the process is extremely complex and contradictory.