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Russia's Belonging to Europe in Russian-language Studies

The topic of Russia's belonging to Europe and how it determines Moscow's relations with the EU was one of the most popular among Russian researchers. This is natural, the European nature of Russia has been in the agenda of domestic socio-economic and political work, at least since the eighteenth century. In dialogue with the EU, however, the issue acquired a special meaning because Brussels, since the 1970s, has begun to position itself as a representative of Europe as its voice. With the passage of time, this thesis was strengthened, while the EU put forward its own criteria for European (in the form of the Copenhagen criteria). Thus, Russia was faced with a situation where being in Europe became a matter not only of its internal choice, but also of recognition by a third party (of the European Union that usurped the right to evaluate others and determine who reached the necessary level to be European) .

Outside of Russia, the EU's right to determine which country belongs to Europe, and which does not, was not called into question. Russian research has evolved from the declaration of Russia's belonging to Europe and the need for Europeanisation in the 1990s through the attempts to realize that there is a European choice and to define models of Europeanization that will preserve the equality of actors in the world arena to the denial of Europeanisation and one-sided orientation towards Europe.

At the applied level, many Russian works proved not so much the belonging of Russia to Europe (it was implied by its geographical location, history and culture) but rather its right to be equal with other players (primarily the EU and the US) in determining the future of the continent and the world. These arguments were closely connected with the rhetoric of the Russian Foreign

Ministry. At a more conceptual level, it was discussed how Russia was similar to the EU and Europeans, and what was different in its mentality and political practices, how unique it was. In this context, the question arose as to what should be done for Russia to become truly European, what was the role of the EU in this process and what exactly is Russia's European choice.

At the same time, the term "small Europe" was introduced for the European Union in order to distinguish it from the "Greater Europe", in which Russia is also an integral part. The dilemma of values and interests was actively discussed as a counterbalance to the requirements of the EU about the reforms in Russia that would bring it back to Europe. Russian researchers, as a rule, called for cooperation on the basis of interests, denying the fact that the interests themselves are based on values. The reasons and nature of the challenge Russia threw to Europe were discussed. Another focus on the study of the degree of Europeanisation of Russia was the analysis of how by its very existence Russia helps the EU to define its identity. Yet one more strand of literature dealt with the inability of Russia to come up with an alternative to the European way, it contributed to postcolonial research.