How Much 'Europeanness' Remains in Contemporary Russia?

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Abstract

This article discusses the fluctuation of Russian attitudes towards Europe during the last twenty-five years. 'Europeanness' is connected to EU efforts of 'Europeanisation' and 'normalisation' of Russia on EU terms. At the same time, the EU has tried to monopolise the notion of 'Europe' and pretends to fulfil all its ideals and values. The continued expansion of the EU towards Russia's former partners, and conflicts in contested neighbourhoods, has ushered in the feeling among Russians of being 'different' ('Europeans', yet with a desire to be great, strong and feared). Russia once again plays the role of a revisionist power, thus undermining the EU claim to represent the whole of Europe. Russia may be excluded from formal European organisations, but it cannot be excluded from an 'imaginable' community of Europe as a cultural phenomenon to which many Russians still attribute personal and collective meaning.

Keywords

Europe, European Union, Europeanness, identity, Russia

This article aims to reconsider the fluctuation and composition of feelings of belonging to Europe in Russia during the last twenty-five years.[1] This period is remarkable not only due to Russia's own development, and search for a new identity out of the ashes of a supranational Soviet Union, but also due to the active role that the European Union (EU) has played in shaping and constructing the sense of Europe and European belonging among countries of the continent. Therefore, I will focus on the meaning of 'Europeanness' during the last twenty-five years in the way it was proposed by the EU. Petr Kratochvíl's instrumental definition of 'Europeanisation' could apply both to those countries that aspire to EU membership and to those that 'do not have an accession perspective': 'The definition of Europeanisation [...] can be expressed as a substantial change in policy practices and discourse (both of the elite and the wider public), concerning its own identity and its place in the world, brought about by the normative pressure or attraction of the European Union' (2008: 398).

Andrei Piontkovsky believes that 'Russia is permanently at a crossroads in its history, or standing in exasperation at a fork in the road but failing to resolve a geographical, historical, and metaphysical dilemma: is Russia part of Europe or not?' (2006: 3). In this article, I will discuss neither the civilizational and philosophical ideas regarding Russia's place in world history nor the geopolitical arena that has created an identity dilemma in Russia for more than a century. My analysis rather is devoted to understanding 'Europeanness' in Russia vis-à-vis the EU in the time of its enlargements and Russia's search for its own identity after the Soviet break-up. For the last twenty-five years, the country has undergone an uneasy search for its own identity, in which the 'Russian' question (*rysskii vopros*) and the construction of 'Russianness' has complicated the original dilemma even more. Europe presents a constant reference point for national identity and for self-presentation within and outside of Russia, as well as a direction to be chosen or rejected as Russia strives for future development.

In the early 1990s, Europe and the EU were often presented in Russia as a model for a possible and even desirable future. In the late 1990s, 82 per cent of Russians still expressed a positive attitude towards the European Union, but this changed to 70 per cent expressing negative sentiments in 2014–2015. In 2014, international commentators and Russian liberal forces expressed a certain degree of surprise and distrust regarding the results of public opinion polls showing the rise of patriotism, a high level of approval for political leadership and its assertive foreign policy by an overwhelming majority of Russians. This seeming unanimity between the political leadership and the populace disappointed those forces in Russia and outside who persistently believed in the existence of two political realms: one representing authoritative political leadership preventing Russia from transitioning towards democracy (and Western values in general) and another one embodying democracy-thirsty people previously denied the opportunity for successful democratic transition (through frauds during elections and by suppressing political opposition).

The Ukrainian crisis (2014) has accelerated and magnified the contradictory public feelings and attitudes in Russia towards Europe and the EU. This study analyses factors influencing the widespread doubt among Russians regarding their belonging to Europe. Accordingly, the article addresses the following issues: Europe as an imaginable and real community; the place of Russia within and outside of European structures and networks; and European attachments and identifications by the elites and the common people in Russia.

Sources, Measurements and Indicators

Scholars from different disciplines have actively discussed the notion of 'Europe' for decades (if not centuries) and the amount of scholarship devoted to this issue is impressive. I will modestly define my task as an examination of how the term 'European' has been used and fulfilled with meaning in Russia at elite and mass levels during the last twenty-five years. Thus my focus will be more on practical than purely ideal self-perception. Here I use a theoretical approach described by German sociologist Heinrich Best as 'historical constructivism', which argues that the articulation of mass identity is influenced by 'the practices that form the collective memory of the population' (2012: 304). Historical events and experiences are constantly constructed by political elites and interpreted by the general public. This article contributes therefore to the study of how national practices of collective identities reflect acceptance, modification or rejection of certain ideas that are proposed by political elites.

There is a variety of primary and secondary sources on European identity in different countries, including Russia. Quantitative data are mainly represented by public opinion polls conducted by Eurostat (Eurobarometer surveys). In Russia, research centres organise regular surveys that could be used for the purpose of this article. The most well known are the independent Levada Center and the pro-official All-Russia Center for Public Opinion Research (WCIOM). As Russia is a very diverse country with more than 180 ethnic groups and 278 languages, quantitative measurements do not reflect the possible variations in 'Europeanness' among numerous peoples and between Russian social strata. Quantitative researches also do not expose differences in public opinion on European countries.

To nuance a vision of Europeanness, various qualitative studies are available. Some qualitative researches on European or national identities have been commissioned by the EU (The promise of the EU 2014). A large research project that aimed at understanding the EU and European identity was conducted in 2005–2009 under the title INTUNE (including quantitative and qualitative methods). For an evaluation of 'Europeanness' in Russia beyond quantitative data I will use the results of the qualitative study that was conducted on Russian foreign policy. The study was commissioned by the Gorchakov foundation and conducted among young Russian professionals (under 30) in March–April of 2012 in twelve Russian cities. The respondents were mostly graduates of international relations programmes with profes-

sional international experience in business, non-commercial sectors, education, journalism, public service and academia. The results of this study have not been published mainly due to their very critical assessment of Russian foreign policy. Although four years have passed since the study, I believe some of the findings are still relevant. I will also use the data from qualitative research on 'Russianness' conducted among students in Tomsk in 2006 and 2014. Other indicators showing participation of Russian institutes in EU-funded programmes were taken from official EU statistics.

European Identity as Belonging to an Imaginable and Real Community

Nowadays, 'Europeanness' is most often connected to belonging to the EU. The creation of an EU identity has raised discussions both in academia and at a popular level about the difference and often confusion between the two entities. For instance, ethnologist Ullrich Kockel writes that

> [q]uestions about where and what 'Europe' is have featured prominently in the social sciences and humanities as well as in political discourse since 1989, not least in the US government's distinction between an 'old' and a 'new' Europe, the eastward expansion of the EU and the drafting of a European Constitution (2010: ix).

Certainly European identity took a more tangible form since the end of the Second World War, when the present European integrating projects started, and thus the more idealistic sense of 'European belonging' was shaped by formal structures and agreements. One could argue that, since then, 'Europeanness' could be defined through identification and association with certain agencies. The idea of 'Europe' materialised in organisations that claim to have a common value base (Cotta 2016). Some values have been transformed from moral ideas towards norms and are supported by agreements and observed by institutions which enforce those norms, for instance the Council of Europe (CE).

The concept of an 'EU identity' has attracted much attention since the Maastricht Treaty introduced EU citizenship in 1993. Although the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon enforced the concept of an EU citizenship, it did not provide additional powers to supranational institutions, nor did it guarantee the application by the EU of their Charter of Fundamental Rights. The European Commission initiated several campaigns and allocated funds to promote widespread knowledge in the

1990s and 2000s of EU citizens' rights. The main concerns from EU institutions were that EU citizens did not know their rights and thus could not use them effectively in their everyday life. The EU research agencies conduct regular public opinion polls to monitor issues of EU citizenship and related identity (EU citizenship 2016: 2, 5–7).

An analysis of available data demonstrates that EU identity is connected to the question of national identity and raises questions about which one of them is more important to people. Most Europeans value the benefits that the EU has brought about – peace and freedom of movement for people, goods and services – and highly appreciate the economic aspects of EU performance. Citizens from less developed EU countries would like to know more about their rights and the right to work in another EU country. The EU is most positively evaluated by young people who are still studying or who are managers or self-employed. Thus we could conclude that the majority of Europeans perceive the EU according to its original goals: to secure peace among European countries and close economic cooperation (The Promise of the EU 2014; European Citizenship 2014; Public Opinion in the EU 2016).

According to the results of the INTUNE project, Europeans' attachment to a 'united Europe' was higher at the level of elites than at the level of masses. The project reveals 'massive differences' among countries in all three dimensions of 'Europeanness' – political, economic and popular. Among political elites, attachment to Europe varied between 66 per cent 'very attached' in Poland to 10 per cent 'very attached' in the United Kingdom. In the management of large companies, banks, and employers' organisations, values of strong attachment to Europe differ widely between 79 per cent (France) and 10 per cent (United Kingdom), and among the general population between 46 per cent (Hungary) and 10 per cent (United Kingdom). Data on support for deepening European integration shows similar trends (Best et al. 2012).

Thus 'Europeanness' or rather 'EUness' (as a political representation of the ideal Europe) is still a 'work in progress' among EU citizens rather than an achieved reality, as the 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom on its EU membership exemplifies, resulting in a process of withdrawal from the project of European integration (see Frost in this issue).

Russia Within and Outside of European Structures

Still Russian analysts refer to Europe's omnipresence in Russian politics and the important role that Europe plays in forming Russia's self-

image. However, throughout the Soviet period, Russia was a closed country with rigid control over inner and external mobility for its citizens and foreign visitors into the country. All the interactions between European countries and Russia/the USSR were channelled through official institutions, meaning that Soviet citizens had very little first-hand experience. According to research conducted in 1989 by the Levada Center, only 10–11 per cent of Russian citizens had ever been abroad. In 2011, this number reached 15 per cent, including 12 per cent of Russians travelling as tourists, 1 per cent for business purposes (work, contracts, conferences, grants) and 2 per cent visiting relatives and friends (Gudkov et al. 2011: 49). Thus, for the majority of Russians, the image of Europe and the outside world was and still is formed by official discourse and the media, with TV having the top influence over the population.

The post-Cold War period represents a continuation of the centuries-long dilemma in Russia vis-à-vis the European choice that 'received new political accents' with the European integration (Semenenko 2013: 103). In the early 1990s, Russia established closer relations with European-wide organisations which claimed to represent Europe based on shared values, namely the Council of Europe and the European Union. In 1994, Russia signed the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation with the EU and in 1996 Russia joined the CE and introduced many changes to national law in accordance with CE conventions. The evolution of EU–Russian relations can be traced alongside concepts used in official documents: cooperation (1991–1996); strategic partnership (1996–2005); integration intentions (effort to progress towards the four common spaces[2] since 2005); and partnership for modernisation (2010–2013) (David and Romanova 2015). For the EU and CE, the core concerns in relation to Russia have been democratisation and normalisation.

In the 1990s, the EU was viewed as a unity of developed democratic countries, while Russia was a country in transition from a highly centralised state economy and one-party state towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy. The EU offered a model to be followed by Russia in its transition, and Russia eagerly relied on financial support and guidelines from an 'experienced' Europe. The most important EU programme implemented in Russia was TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States), which aimed to support its transition to a market economy, and to reinforce democracy and the rule of law through technical assistance. Between 1991 and 2006, TACIS supported the implementation of 1,500 projects in

fifty-eight Russian regions with a total sum of 2.7 billion euros. In 2007, the programme was replaced by a new financial mechanism – the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) – that allocated 11.2 billion euros for the period 2007–2013, representing an increase of 32 per cent, compared with the amount available for the period 2000–2006. ENPI differs from the TACIS scheme by enlisting more active participation from Russian authorities in the selection process and contributing to co-financing projects and their management. Russia has also participated in EU-funded regional actions, such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, the Northern Dimension and other relevant programmes.

In the process of building a relationship with European organisations, Russia was obliged to ensure that freedoms in the political and economic spheres were not separated but instead considered an essential part of a democratic regime, and therefore to develop an effective protection for individual rights against state power abuses. As stated on the Delegation of the EU to Russia website, the political framework for building a strategic partnership with Russia rests on their membership in the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the CE and their commitment to 'upholding and respecting the fundamental values and principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the market economy'. The EU has exercised its normative power; Europeanisation for Russia has meant its democratisation according to norms, values and practices within the EU.

The first years of cooperation were cheered with enthusiasm, but relations cooled down in 1994 with Russia's more insistent policy towards the 'near abroad' and a more reserved policy towards the West. The Russian public showed an increasing disappointment in Western support, which was far less extensive than initially expected. The Russian Default of 1998, the worsening of the economic situation and connected social problems as well as a new military campaign in Chechnya all contributed to inconsistency and a weakening of Boris Yeltsin and his presidency. The year 2000 opened up a new period in EU–Russian relations when President Yeltsin stepped back and his Prime Minister Vladimir Putin took office. The Second Chechen War was used by Putin to establish himself as a strong leader and legitimate 'holder of office'. Throughout the past seventeen years, Putin has enjoyed an unusually high level of popularity, even when changing positions with Dmitry Medvedev (from president to prime minister and to president again); this has been in contrast with low public trust

in other institutions (the juridical system, police, political parties, the Duma, trade unions) (Petuhov 2012).

Putin's policy towards Western countries, including its European trajectory, could be characterised by pragmatism and economisation of Russian foreign policy. This change was the product of a medium-term strategy towards the EU adopted as a response to the EU's common strategy (Strategija Razvitija Otnosheniiy 2000). Russia stressed the necessity to consolidate a multipolar world and privilege its special interests vis-à-vis security issues in Europe, the EU Eastern enlargement and its relations in the 'near-abroad'. Russian elites have interpreted political dialogue primarily as communication on a senior official level. Timophey Bordachev (2003), Director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, noted that the strategy showed that the Russian political elite viewed the EU as a main source of financial support and know-how for modernising the country, but at the same time it became clear that Russian authorities would strongly oppose any attempt to limit the country's sovereignty.

The turning point in Russia–EU relations came in 2004 when the EU actively supported the so-called colour revolutions throughout the post-soviet space. In 2005, the Russian government introduced strict legislation on NGOs receiving foreign funding. By then, NGOs were suspected of being agents of Western countries preparing for power change in the region. Even if in 2005 the EU and Russia could sign the road map for the four common spaces, this was the year that marked the current use of the concept of 'sovereign democracy' (Torkunov 2006) and the strong stand from officials in Russia against the EU and the U.S.A. interfering in Russian political life. The August 2008 war with Georgia, the Duma elections in December 2011 and presidential elections in March 2012, the Russian seizure of the Crimea in 2014 and its involvement in conflict in Eastern Ukraine – all these events present a clear departure for Russia from what was expected as a 'normal European' country (Averre 2009; Haukkala 2015; Headley 2012; Tumanov et al. 2011). As a result, Russia was expelled from the informal G8 and suspended from voting at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2014. The EU imposed economic sanctions on Russia, which have been prolonged annually.

In summer 2014 Russia introduced counter-restrictive measures on some European imported goods. Since March 2014 the EU–Russian relations were halted and most of the programmes and regular communication at an official level, including EU–Russian summits, were

suspended. The official site of the Delegation of the European Union to Russia (2016) now states that the EU aims at establishing 'understanding and common ground with Russia on the Ukrainian crisis', while Russia remains 'a *natural partner* for the EU and a *strategic player* combating the regional and global challenges' (my emphasis).

The current deterioration of EU–Russian relations did not surprise European and Russian analysts, who have habitually reflected on existing contradictions for a long time. Petr Kratochvíl in his qualitative study of the Europeanisation of the Russian elite concluded that the idea of a 'normalisation' of Russia contrasted with the elite perception of Russia being a great power and treated unfairly by the EU. Kratichvil also found that the Russian elite rejected the supra-national or decentralisational approach applied by the EU institutions. He argued that these contradictions could explain Russian elites' 'predominantly negative attitude to Europeanisation' and 'why a particular policy that would strengthen Europeanisation is inappropriate for or unacceptable to Russia' (2008: 417).

More qualitative research conducted in November 2008 in the European part of Russia confirmed these findings beyond a generally positive attitude among the majority of respondents towards the EU. Interestingly, this research revealed a gap in values perceived to be 'the most attributable' to the EU vs Russia. For the EU the distribution was as follows: market economy (56.9 per cent), human rights (48.4 per cent), rule of law (41.8 per cent), economic prosperity (39.9 per cent) and democracy (37.6 per cent). The corresponding values attributed to Russia for these categories were much lower, especially economic prosperity, rule of law and human rights. Russia's highest attributed values were: tolerance (36.3 per cent), respect for different religions (33.5 per cent), peace (32.8 per cent), respect for different cultures (30.2 per cent) and preservation of cultural heritage (26.4 per cent) (Tumanov et al. 2011: 133). Accidentally or not those values attributed to the EU by Russian respondents reflected those priorities that were put forward by the EU in its effort to bring Europe more into Russia through cooperation and EU-funded reforms.

The Europeanisation of Russian Public Institutions

The European influence over Russia is often underestimated and limited to rhetoric, but on a practical level many public institutions in Russia have been reformed according to European norms and stan-

dards, and reforms have been supported by the EU financially and institutionally. In the area of public administration, TACIS projects aimed at various levels of government, including the State Duma, the Federation Council, and the Ministries of Economy, Finance, Antimonopoly, Labour, Education and Health. Special attention was given to tax reform and legislation, tax collection and training of tax personnel. The introduction of e-Government services is another example of cooperation aimed at modernising governance and bringing transparency to power institutions in Russia. For this purpose, the EU implemented a number of projects in northern regions of Russia and at a federal level in 2004–2011. The large project 'Support to e-Government in the Russian Federation – Government-to-citizens (G2C) electronic services', 2009–2011, with a budget of 2 million euros, affected about 25,000 people, mainly civil servants, and provided training for 3,000 civil servants from fifty-three different regions. Surprisingly, many Russians are not aware of the fact that electronic government services were a result of EU–Russian cooperation.

The EU also supported special programmes targeted at promoting human rights in Russia. In 1994, Russia was included in the special programme 'European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights' (EIDHR). In 2003, the EIDHR project was designed to assist Russian state institutions in complying with the obligations of membership of the Council of Europe, as part of a tripartite programme between the CE, the EU and the Russian government. The EU has also co-financed, together with the Council of Europe, a project to support a school for the promotion of human rights and democracy among young Russian politicians, and numerous so-called micro projects. For the period 2007–2013, the EU allocated an annual budget for Russia of 150 million euros, which was three times more than the decade before. The variety of projects supported demonstrates the persistence of EU priorities for Russia: human rights and democracy education; non-discrimination projects; anti-corruption actions; protection of children rights in conflict zones; support for the NGO Golos (Movement for Democratic Rights and Liberties); monitoring the rights of conscripts and military servants; and strengthening human rights protection in the North Caucasus.

Overall, the reforms in the Russian judicial system have been greatly influenced by the EU. In 2013, Nils Muižnieks, CE Commissioner for Human Rights, gave an overall evaluation of the changes in Russia, arguing that:

> Significant legislative efforts have taken place and most notably include the adoption of a new Criminal Code (1996); a Civil Code (1996); a Code of Criminal Procedure (2001); an Arbitration Code (2002); a Code of Arbitration Procedure (2002) and a Code of Civil Procedure (2002). Other achievements include improvements in the material conditions for the work of judges (salary increase, gradual refurbishment of the court premises) and the introduction of modern information technologies in court proceedings. In 2007, an Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation was established as a separate entity within the Prosecutor's Office and, since January 2011, it has been operating as an independent structure. In 2008, a new Federal Law was enacted, establishing public monitoring commissions to oversee the human rights situation in places of deprivation of liberty. Important reforms have been undertaken to address the systemic deficiencies revealed in the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (2013: 6, 9).

Russian citizens actively practice their right to apply to the European Court of Human Rights since Russia ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1998. Russia is among the countries with the highest number of applications and judgements in the Court. Nevertheless, in the last two years the number of applications from Russia has declined: 24,102 in 2013; 15,108 in 2014 and 6,713 in 2015 (ECHR 2016). The high number of applications and cases brought by Russian citizens would not be possible without human rights education, growing awareness of human rights law in Russia and improvements in legal advising, including independent agencies. The EU and CE have established a network of CE Human Rights Centres in Russian regions since the late 1990s. Mark Entin, professor of International Law at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) and Director of the European Educational Institute, writes that 'the unity of EU and Russia in history, cultural heritage, geographical proximity' was complemented in the 2000s by 'similar approaches towards principles of law and state building, firm support to international law and primacy of human individuality' (2006: 446, 452).

EU–Russian Cooperation in Science, Higher Education and Civil Society

In 2014, the cooperation of Russia with the EU and the CE mostly ceased at an official level but remained active in society. There are two main activities that the EU continues to support financially: cooperation in science and higher education, and civil society. These activ-

ities have important practical outcomes and symbolic meanings in the promotion of Europeanisation of Russia according to both EU and CE visions, and are based on a bottom-up approach (Marquand 2009: 57–58). Cooperation in higher education includes individual and institutional levels and aims at reforming higher education, supporting direct links between Russian and European universities, promoting academic and student mobility as well as multidisciplinary EU studies. Active involvement of Russian universities in European programmes in the 1990s was important in two main respects – strategic and humanitarian. The strategic goal was determined by the fact that two-thirds of Russian scientific potential was connected to military purposes, meaning that a massive brain drain from Russia could endanger the country through a proliferation of military-related knowledge to third parties (Vodichev 2014: 124). In 2003, Russia joined the Bologna process and to a large degree tailored its higher education system to fit European standards. Many thousands of Russians and hundreds of higher education and research institutions took part and continue to take part in various educational and research activities through EU programmes such as TACIS, Tempus, Erasmus, Marie Curie, Jean Monnet Programme, Framework Programs and Horizon 2020.

According to the EU's official statistics, Russia remains the main 'third-country partner' in the context of the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research in terms of participation (453 research organisations), number of projects (291) and EU funding (63 million euros). In the period 2008–2013, Russia participated in sixty-eight Tempus projects (18 per cent of all accepted projects under Tempus IV), with a budget of 45 million euros (15 per cent of the total programme budget). Russian higher education institutions were involved in more than 48 per cent of the accepted projects in the ENPI East region (EU–Russia Common Spaces Progress Report 2013: 49, 55). In 2014, dozens of events took place within the EU–Russian Year of Science, Technology and Innovation.

To promote a better understanding of the EU in Russia, the EU set up a network of about twenty EU information centres across the country, established the European Studies Institute (ESI) at MGIMO and six EU Centres (Kaliningrad, Petrozavodsk, St Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don, Kazan and Tomsk). Today, thirteen EU information centres and three EU Centres continue their work. The ESI nominally continues to exist, but seems to have decreased its activities since EU funding ended in 2013.

Surprisingly, the Jean Monnet Programme (JMP) has boomed in Russia since 2014. The first JMP project was supported in 2007, and twenty-one projects were implemented in 2007–2013. In 2015, out of seventy-eight applications from Russia, forty-six projects were selected. According to the JMP official statistics, applications from Russia represented almost two-fifths of all applications from partner-countries in 2016. The next highest number of applications was from Ukraine with 120. Thirty-three projects were selected in 2016 for Russia. This tremendous change expresses not only the willingness of the EU to support EU studies in Russia but also growing interest from Russian universities.

Table 1: Russia' universities participation in Jean Monnet Programme, 2007-2016

Years	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Applications	1	3	14	12	19	9	n/a	n/a	78	196 (203)	n/a
Successful grants	1	2	1	1	8	2	6	1	45	33	100

The EU continually supports cooperation between European and Russian universities for the obvious reasons that they train 'educated classes', and they wish to cultivate positive attitudes towards the EU at earlier stages of personal formation. The surveys of Russian publics confirm that the highest positive attitudes towards a 'Western lifestyle' come from respondents in four groups: those who speak foreign languages (46 per cent), have been abroad (57 per cent), have higher education degrees (40 per cent) and are young (40 per cent) (Levada Center 2015). Russian universities have a high interest in academic exchange and cooperation with European countries. Reforms in Russian universities allow Russian students to continue their education in Europe. Large EU-funded programmes in the area of higher education are still open for Russian citizens and provide a real opportunity for those interested. The recent study on the perception of the EU in ten EU partner countries points at Russian academia, non-governmental research institutions and civil society as 'the crucial audiences and target groups to be contacted in order to promote EU public diplomacy initiatives. Even they admittedly 'have a limited capacity to influence the decision-making process, however they can exhort' (Analysis of the Perception of the EU 2015: 57).

Fluctuations in Russian Attitudes towards Europe and the European Union

The attitudes of Russians towards Europe and the European Union have mirrored a number of hopes and reservations in the last twenty-five years. In the 1990s, similarly to other Eastern Europeans, many Russians believed that the end of Cold War would herald a new era without 'dividing lines' in Europe. Back then, political leaders from the west and the east of Europe proclaimed the 'unity of Europe'. Still in the early 2000s, more Russians supported Russian membership of the EU than those who were against the idea: 51 per cent vs 21 per cent in 2001; 60 per cent vs 14 per cent in 2003; 45 per cent vs 30 per cent in 2004 (WCIOM 2004). Respondents believed that Russia should join the EU because of economic benefits (23 per cent), out of fear of remaining 'on the margins of Europe' (19 per cent) and due to a desire to reach the same standard of living and of democracy and human rights (18 per cent). Twelve per cent mentioned common European identity and the connection of Europe and Russia in culture and spirit. In 2004, most Russians did not see any threat to Russia coming from the EU Eastern Enlargement. However, this question raised uncertainty among respondents: 41 per cent could not foresee any positive consequences coming from the EU enlargement, while 62 per cent could not foresee any negative ones (WCIOM 2004).

The dynamics of public opinion vis-à-vis the EU is shown on a graph provided by the Levada Center (2016). The chart pinpoints all the ups and downs in EU–Russian relations starting from hopes for Russia to become a member of the EU in the early 2000s to the overwhelming disapproval of the EU in 2015.

The EU Eastern Enlargement marked an important change in relations between Russia and the EU, and influenced public and official discourse about Russia belonging to Europe. By 2004 it had become crystal clear that Russia would never be a part of the EU, and Russia refused to join the EU Neighbourhood Policy. The Eastern NATO Enlargement that preceded the EU Enlargement strengthened the security agenda between partners with added reasons for mistrust in Russia. The EU idea of a 'Bigger Europe' implemented in the EU Enlargement outbid the idea of a 'common European home' from Lisbon to Vladivostok that was put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev in the early 1990s. Yet the proximity of Russia and the EU faced the challenges of coexistence in the contested neighbourhood and with rather opposing new identities (Morozov 2008).

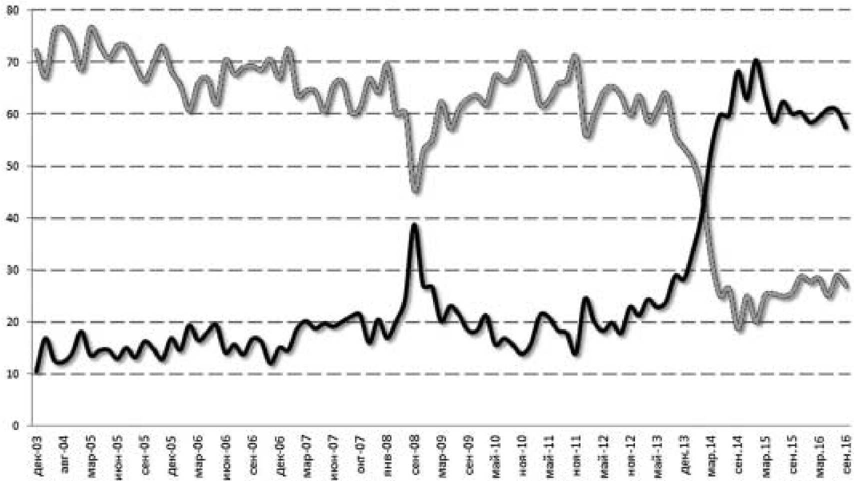

Figure 1: Russians' attitude towards the EU, 2003–2016 (black line – bad; grey line – good)

Therefore, the Eastern Enlargements contributed to a clearer distinction between the EU and Europe in Russia. Alexander Grushko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed it in the following manner:

> I would like to add a conceptual triangle that in my opinion shows the essence and the base in which relations between Russia and the EU are developing [...]. Firstly, Russia is a part of Europe. Secondly, the EU is not the whole of Europe and does not represent Europe in its entirety. And thirdly, Russia is not considering joining the EU in the conceivable future. Thus, in the context of these red lines we will try to build up a partnership (Kakimi Stanut Vnutrennie 2008: 23).

Growing divisions in Europe were reflected in the decreased number of Russians perceiving themselves as 'European' from 71 per cent in 1998 to 21 per cent in 2008 (Gudkov 2015).

The data from a qualitative study among young Russian international relations specialists regarding Russian Federation foreign policy (Otchet 2012) gives insight into the perception about the EU by new educated cadres, who used the term 'EU' and 'Europe' almost synonymously. Respondents believed that: Russia is a part of Europe and shares its cultural heritage and history; the European Union does not pose a threat to Russia; Russia has a specific (sometimes self-created) perception of being a bridge between West and East or even an interpreter of European civilization to countries of Asia, especially to Central Asia; the EU occupies the top place in regional priorities alongside

the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Respondents stressed that the 'EU and Russia should develop a closer cooperation and it should be based on realistic expectations of possibilities from the Russian side' (specifically visa issues); they would like to see 'less politics, more real steps'. Respondents would like Russia to trade less in its natural resources and diversify its economic cooperation with the EU. As one respondent said, 'I don't want to live in a country that is widely perceived as a raw-materials appendage to the rest of the world'. Most respondents believed that Russia is an integral part of Europe as a cultural, historical and civilizational phenomenon (Otchet 2012).

Respondents from Tomsk, a city located in Siberia, elaborated on what is perceived as the 'specific Europeanness' of Russia. They said that Russia probably looks sometimes like a 'different Europe, and because of this something else is expected from Russia and not from other countries of the post-soviet area'. One respondent said that 'Russia is probably that part of Europe that went far deep into Asia'. Another said that Russians are 'Eastern Europeans, but still we are Europeans and we would never reach a deep understanding with China'. Respondents stressed that China, unlike European countries, is not interested in Russian technological development, investing into society or infrastructure, and that all talks on a 'partnership with China' reflect 'deep misunderstanding about the foreign policy priorities of China'. Respondents stressed that Russia's unique placement could set an example in terms of 'adopted European cultural norms for those peoples who are very different from Europe, for example, Central Asia' (Deriglazova 2015a: 70). Many respondents mentioned stereotypes about Russia that exist in European countries. The media and Russian immigrants were named as main sources of negative images of Russia. Respondents said that Russia is often portrayed as a wild and uncivilized country; it is not well understood and insufficiently transparent. The general opinion was that the European media provides little information about real life in Russia. One respondent stressed that 'It is not a question if Russia belongs to Europe or not, but it is a starting point for further communication with us' (ibid.).

Since the Ukrainian conflict in 2014, there is hesitation amongst the Russian public in describing the country as European. Many Russians believe that Western countries perceive Russia as a country that poses a military threat (30 per cent), and is underdeveloped, unpredictable and aggressive (27 per cent). For many Russians, Europe is viewed as a possible aggressor in connection to NATO (23 per cent); it is also perceived as exhibiting high living standards (20 per cent).

The majority of respondents described relations between the EU and Russia as cold (32 per cent), tense (42 per cent) and hostile (12 per cent). Forty-nine per cent would like Russia to regain its status in the G8. Equally, the CIS and the EU were named among regions with which Russia should develop its relations (Obsctestvennoe Mnenie 2015). The growth of anti-Western sentiments among Russians was accompanied by patriotism and national pride (Gudkov 2015). Analysis of essays by Tomsk students revealed that the feeling of Russian greatness was common in 2006, and in May 2014 these sentiments had increased (Deriglazova 2015b). Public opinion polls in 2016 show however that tension and hostility towards European countries and the West is declining in Russia, which reflects a growing pragmatism among political leaders.

Data from public opinion polls in Russia have been confirmed by a study conducted in August 2015 of the EU's perception in ten EU partner-countries including Russia. The positive image of the EU in Russia was determined by economic relations, as the EU is perceived as a good partner in economics, trade, science and education exchange. Russia showed the most negative perception about the EU among the ten cases and was evidently caused by EU–Russian interaction in the political sphere mainly within the contested neighbourhood. The EU was described as arrogant, hypocritical, aggressive and having very bad relations with Russia (Analysis of the Perception of the EU 2015). The report shows that the EU is mainly perceived in Russia as an actor that cannot deal with the Eurozone crisis on its own; as being in the shadow of the U.S.A. in terms of scientific development; as a less important actor in the post-Soviet space; as a passive consumer of Russian gas and oil; as an incoherent actor that cannot speak with a single voice on matters of multiculturalism and as an actor that is still searching for its own identity through external development actions (ibid.: 57). According to a study on the attitude of Russian people towards the EU, the main source of EU criticism seems to have psychological roots: EU countries represent the ideal that Russians cannot reach in the foreseeable future and therefore they eagerly criticise all the imperfections that they have to tolerate in their own country without serious prospects of change (Gudkov 2015). Olga Gulyaeva remarks that

> to Russia, Europe is a model of individual freedom, social norms and values. In this respect, the European Union is an example of economic modernisation, economic dynamism and development. Yet, at the same time, the EU–Russia political relations are characterised by the antagonism typical of great power relations and contextualised by an under-

> standing of Russia as being in Europe, but not of Europe. For Russia, Europe is charming and frightening, appealing and repellent, the antagonist and the protagonist (2013: 188).

Thus a certain 'practical' Europeanisation impacts the everyday life of millions of Russians, for example in the approximation of laws, transborder contacts and decentralised cooperation, but it is still inhibited by the general discourse on the organisation of political space, appropriate political culture and Russia's perception of international relations and its role therein. The growing tension between Russia and the EU has reinforced the perception of the EU as being part of an 'anti-Russian West'; this has been converted by both the official discourse and the Russian media into resentment and a patriotic rush that stresses Russian exceptionalism and moral superiority over the West.

Concluding Considerations

During the period between 1991–2016, the perceptions of Russians vis-à-vis the EU and Europe have changed from admiration and aspiration to self-assertion and belief in being a different kind of Europe with a distinctive destiny. Yet the perception of Russia's 'otherness' is not only common in Russia but is also reproduced by Western societies. Discussions about the 'Europeanness' of Russia are often framed around including or excluding Russia from Europe, and, I would stress, from Europe as an imaginable or real community embodied in the EU and the CE. Russia can be excluded from the institutionalised Europe, that is from European organisations, but it cannot be excluded from its imaginable community – this will always remain a choice for Russia as a country at an official level and for Russians at a local level, in a very diverse society.

The 'Europeanisation' of Russia has taken the form of close cooperation with the EU and the acceptance of many European norms and standards. Russia has reformed its public institutions under strong European influence. At the same time, inherited authoritative values and political practices cannot be changed easily. Russians consider themselves mostly Europeans but definitely not EU-like. Russian people differentiate between the EU and Europe and do not think that the EU represents the whole of Europe nor the 'ideal Europe'. During the 1990s and early 2000s, many Russians believed that Russia should and could join the EU, but the loss of prospects for possible unification has lead to a growing sense of being 'different Europeans'.

The Victory Day in May symbolically divides today's Russia from Europe. Russia celebrates 9 May as a victory of the Soviet Union over fascism. Such a vision raises many debatable issues in war history. As Morozov writes,

> The EU views them as moments of triumph, as they form the foundation for European pride and a feeling of moral self-sufficiency. On the contrary, for Russians, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the painful reforms of the 1990s are grounds for critical self-reflections about their past and previous illusions, errors and miscalculations (2008).

The worsening of relations between Russia and the West has reinforced Russian desire to be great, strong and feared once more in a supposedly hostile environment. It is this 'great-power pride and sense of special mission' that precluded post-Soviet Russia from joining Europe (Kotkin 2016). In contrast to the late 1990s, when the possibility of Russia joining the EU and even NATO was discussed, it is now evident that for European leaders it would be 'unthinkable' to give full membership to a former enemy of NATO or to create 'serious disequilibrium' in the EU by including too big and too different a country as Russia (Marquand 2009: 49).

The EU Eastern Enlargement contributed to the exclusion of Russia from the imaginable and 'formal' Europe. EU officials insist that the EU represents the 'ideal Europe' in terms of values, norms and practises. The EU tries not only to monopolise the idea of Europe (Morozov 2008) but also to claim that its supranational institution represents a historical lesson learned from the Second World War and the Cold War. Certainly, this is also part of EU political mythology, which reinforces the assumption that the success of the integration has been responsible for the stability and prosperity of the last sixty years (Della Sala 2010: 11–12).

Nowadays, the conflict between the EU and Russia over Ukraine represents an existential crisis for both. As Sakwa (2015) rightly observes, the Ukrainian conflict symbolises the 'death' of the European project in three respects: a failure to deal with Russia in an inclusive manner, to preserve peace in Europe and to ensure Europe without dividing lines. Sakwa goes on to argue that the Russian case is similar to Germany in the twentieth century. In his opinion, the EU has transformed

> from a peace project based on an identifiable civilian agenda to a competitive geopolitical actor in which its own *raison d'état* is gradually displacing its earlier normative commitments. The contentious absorption

> of territory and the struggle to create a zone of influence that displaces the previous orientations of states looks like the classic behaviour of an imperial power, although of a distinctive 'neo-medieval' rather than the classic Westphalian sort (ibid.).

Different to Germany, however, Russia's exceptionalism was not 'bombed out' (Kotkin 2016).

In answering the question posed by this article of how much 'Europeanness' remains in Russia, I would stress the increase in nationalist feelings in Russia at the expense of a cultural European identity. Yet, paradoxically, the same can be said about many EU countries. Ironically, Europe and Russia have become somewhat closer recently, not because of Russia's approximation of EU political and economic criteria but because Europeans themselves are losing confidence in such ideals and values. If we consider 'Europenness' as a trajectory that aims to bring more freedoms, peace, prosperity and tolerance to European countries, then we could conclude that this idea is still attractive for many Russians. The problem is that for the Russian people the EU hardly represents anymore the partner that will help Russia to become a part of an 'ideal Europe'. Meanwhile, the dissolution of the 'ideal Europe' within EU countries is growing. Thus, we could conclude that in terms of practical Europeanisation Russia has became much more European than it was twenty-five years ago, even if the country's trajectory for future development turned from the West to the East.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers who helped me to strengthen arguments and who confirmed the widespread opinion in the West that 'Russia was never European, nor will be during our lifetime'. I would like to extend my gratitude to the projects that financially supported my research and provided opportunities for intensive academic interactions: (1) the project 'Man in a Changing World. Identity and Social Adaptation: Past and Present' (Russian Government grant #14.B25.31.0009) and (2) the project 'EUinDepth – EUropean Identity, Cultural Diversity and Political Change' (PIRSES-GA-2013-612619), FP7 project Marie Curie Action: International Research Staff Exchange Scheme.

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Notes

1. All translations of research material in this article are my own unless stated otherwise.
2. During the 2003 St Petersburg meeting, the EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their cooperation by creating four Common Spaces in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, covering four different policy areas: Economic issues, including the environment; Freedom, Security and Justice; External Security; Research and Education, including cultural aspects. During the 2005 Moscow summit, the EU and Russia adopted Road Maps setting out specific objectives and actions required to implement the four Common Spaces (http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/russia/eu_russia/political_relations/institutional_framework/index_en.htm).

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