

The Discursive Resistance to EU-Enticement: The Russian Elite and (the Lack of) Europeanisation

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Abstract

This article explores the discourse of the Russian elite on foreign policy in general and on the European Union in particular, and identifies the main reasons for Russia's resistance to Europeanisation. At a theoretical level, the article builds upon the study of discourse conceived in 'structural' terms, and argues that discursive incompatibility at a deeper discursive level prevents the socialisation of elite members to attitudes more sympathetic to Europe at a more superficial level. Methodologically, the research is based on content analysis of major Russian foreign policy documents, presidential speeches and, in particular, of a set of interviews with Russian foreign policy-makers and academics most frequently in touch with the European Union.

EUROPEANISATION HAS BECOME A BUZZWORD IN THE ANALYSES OF RELATIONS between the European Union and its neighbours. Indeed, the level of Europeanisation has sometimes been used as a yardstick to track the progress achieved by non-members on their route towards becoming 'normal' or 'European' societies. While Europeanisation is a notion originally applied to EU member states (Ladrech 1994), its focus has been gradually expanded to include candidates for membership as well (Featherstone & Radaelli 2003). However, Europeanisation in relation to non-members, particularly those who do not aspire to membership, has been largely ignored, and indeed, there is a lack of studies of this kind in relation to both the administrative (institutional) and the substantive (policy) aspects of Europeanisation.

Resistance to Europeanisation is particularly present in Russia (Emerson *et al.* 2005, pp. 5, 30; Bordachev & Moshes 2004) and socialisation into the system of EU values and norms has had only a marginal impact on the Russian foreign policy elite. This is quite surprising if we take into account the frequency of meetings between EU and Russian officials at all political levels and the unceasing rhetorical support for mutual co-operation, not to mention an almost universally shared conviction that there is an ever increasing overlap of interests between both