

Chapter 8.

The Image of Germany in the Russian Press and in the Eyes of the Russian Political Elite

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Introduction

In recent years, Russia has intensified its economic, political and sociocultural contacts with Germany and with the European Union as a whole. The Laboratory for Political Research at the State University/Higher School of Economics has analyzed the image of Germany and the European Union as portrayed by the Russian media and Russian political elite.

We have posed the following questions:

- What is Germany’s place in the public consciousness, as shaped by the media?
- How does the Russian press present Germany to its readers?
- How do the Russian media correlate the image of Germany with ideas about the EU?
- What does the Russian political elite think about the European Union?

At the first stage, we conducted a content analysis of six Russian periodicals, three of them considered to be the leaders of the business press (*Vedomosty* and *Kommersant* newspapers and *Expert* journal) and three described as mass publications (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Komsomolskaia Pravda* and *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*.) This content analysis, which included both qualitative and quantitative aspects, produced a set of the descriptions of Germany supplied by the Russian press in the last nine years, which were correlated with the image of the EU as a whole.

At the second stage, 100 respondents (deputies of the State Duma, officials at the Presidential Administration, prominent political observers, political analysts and editorial staff of the business press) were surveyed about their opinions, ideas and positions on the Russia-EU relationship.

At the third stage, the information obtained by the content analysis was interpreted through 30 expert interviews with Russian political analysts.

Germany and the European Union in the Russian press

Germany in the Russian press

Our approach to characterizing the image of Germany assumed that Germany *occupies a special place in the information and news sphere of Russian society*: the media present Germany as Russia’s main political ally and economic partner¹ and as a culturally kindred country.

To verify this assumption we analyzed how the Russian press referred to the EU and its member-states.

We covered all issues of the selected publications appearing between January 2000 and April 2009² to determine the frequency with which each of the EU member-states had been mentioned and to analyze the monthly references to each country.

It turned out that “Germany,” “France,” “Italy,” “Spain” and “the EU” were mentioned much more frequently than the others.

In the period under review, Germany was mentioned 48,536 times with an average monthly coverage level of 433.5; France: 41,315 times, with a monthly average of 369.9; Italy: 28,655 and 255.8 respectively; Spain: 22,047 and 196.8; and the EU: 16,116 and 143.9. Other EU members (Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK) were mentioned less than 10,000 times in the period under review, with a monthly average level of 100.

To facilitate the graphic display we have limited ourselves to the first five objects: Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the EU.

The reference dynamics of each of the selected countries (Fig. 1) demonstrates a linear trend with a rising pitch common to all. This obviously reflects the recently raised level of Europe’s political, economic and social importance for Russia and its citizens.

It should be noted that a considerable number of the upward and downward slopes of reference dynamics for each of the countries coincide, since some of the articles treat the EU countries as a group and are concerned with the EU image as a whole.

Secondly, the level of reference to the EU is the lowest among the selected objects. At the third stage of the project nearly all experts agreed that the *“most important decisions referred to by the business press are identified with individual countries while the EU administrative structures are mostly engaged in drafting and issuing all sorts of declarations and legal acts related to the general principles of cooperation on the Union’s territory.”*³

Thirdly, Germany is the EU leader as far as the number of references in the Russia press is concerned; this is true for each of the 112 months under study, with the exception

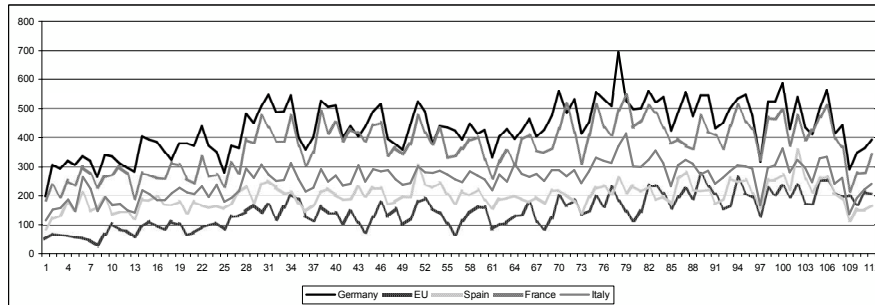
¹ The term “main” as applied to content analysis means an object with the most pronounced positive connotations in publications as compared with all other similar objects.

² We used Integrum, the electronic database of the Russian press, www.integrum.ru.

³ Here and elsewhere italics and quotation marks are used to mark expert interviews.

of November 2005 when the mass disorders in the Parisian suburbs pushed France ahead of Germany.

Fig. 1 References to Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the EU in the Russian Press



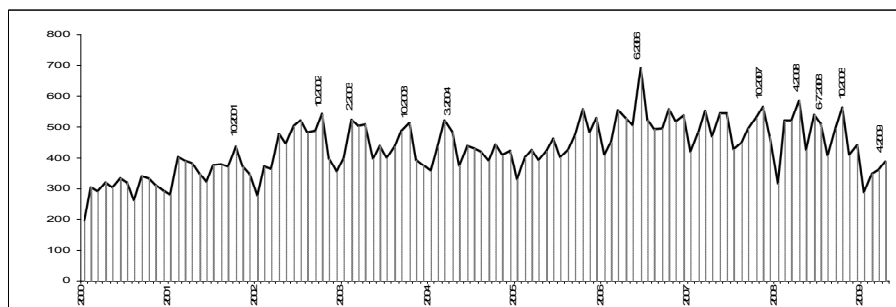
Germany's absolute leadership among EU members as the most frequently mentioned country is a weighty argument in favor of our hypothesis that Germany holds a special place in the information and news sphere of Russian society.

The following qualitative data and comparison between the reference peaks of Germany and France, its closest rival as far as the reference levels are concerned, support our hypothesis. The nature of the specific events behind the reference peaks and their comparison invite the conclusion that these countries are treated differently by the Russian media.

Fig 2 shows the month-by-month reference dynamics (with dated reference peaks) of Germany in the Russian press. There are 11 peak dates: October 2001; October-November 2002; February 2003; October 2003; March 2004; June 2006; October 2007; April 2008, June-July 2008; October 2008 and April 2009.

The maximal number of references (693) is dated June 2006. It seems that the events which took place in Russian-German relations during these months and which received media coverage played a key role in shaping the modern image of Germany in Russia.

Fig. 2. Germany's Reference Dynamics in the Russian Press



The events that took place in the specified periods are described below; we have concentrated on the latest events which affected, to the greatest extent, the image of contemporary Germany in the Russian press.

1. October 2001. President Putin's visit to Germany (which began late in September) and his speech in German at the Bundestag. The positive reaction of German parliamentarians was put in a nutshell by the title "Putin vzyal Reichstag" (Putin has Taken the Reichstag) (*Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 2001–10–12.)

2. October-November 2002. A regular meeting of Vladimir Putin and Gerhard Schroeder, who discussed the political situation in Chechnya. The talks between Putin and Schroeder, who actively supported Russia's policy in Chechnya, stand apart from the talks of the President of Russia with other key political figures of the European Union.

In its 2002–11–13 issue *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, in an article entitled "Druzia poznayutsia v Chechne" (Chechnya as a Test of True Friendship), quoted Chancellor Schroeder as saying: "The ongoing constitutional process in Chechnya should be supported by all means available" and "it opens a road toward a peaceful political settlement in the republic." *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (2002–11–12) likewise concentrated on this constructive partnership when writing about the planned discussion of the situation in Chechnya: "Putin and Schroeder will not ignore the subject in Oslo."

According to *Kommersant* "in front of the journalists, Herr Schroeder said that he sided with the Russian president in his anti-terrorist struggle. 'This has always been the case, this is our position now and it will remain so in the future,' he added. 'I am very much interested in the political process in Chechnya. This is a good initiative that should be supported'."

3. February 2003. Vladimir Putin and Gerhard Schroeder launched the Year of Russian Culture in Berlin. In an article "Moskva-Berlin i obratno" (Moscow to Berlin and Back) (2003–02–07) *Nezavisimaia gazeta* wrote: "The cultural marathon will last for two years... Tomorrow the presidents of the two countries will launch the Russian-German cultural meetings in Berlin at a gala ceremony."

Kommersant supplied its generally critical article "Vladimir Putin otkryl Rossiiu v Germanii" (Vladimir Putin has Opened Russia in Germany) with certain positive comments: "Because of numerous slips of the tongue and thanks to the fact that German is not completely alien for Vladimir Putin the gala occasion turned out to be less dull than expected."

4. October 2003. Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schroeder visits Yekaterinburg. Despite its ironic or even critical treatment of the event *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, on the whole, offered a positive assessment of Russian-German relations: "...Russian-German relations are going ahead... We all know that Germany invests more money in Russia than any other country; today it is our main creditor and investor."

The interview with *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* of the German Ambassador to Russia, Hans-Friedrich von Pletz, confirmed the highly positive nature of Russian-German relations: "**Corr.:** Recently you said that today Russian-German relations are better than ever

before... **H.-F.P.:** This is true.” The interview confirmed that Russia correctly regarded Germany as the principal negotiator representing EU interests in the Russian Federation.

The extremely neutral article in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* (2003–10–09) entitled “Putin i Schroeder: doroga k kharmu” (Putin and Schroeder on the Road toward the Temple) was accompanied by a photo showing the two politicians hugging one another.

5. March 2004. The presidential campaign in the Russian Federation raised a number of media references to Germany. As presidential candidate, Vladimir Putin frequently referred to Germany to illustrate the foreign policy achievements of his first term as President.

6. June 2006. The peak of references is explained by the wide media coverage in Russia of the Football World Cup, which opened in Germany on 9 June 2006.

7. October 2007. On 15 October 2007 President Vladimir Putin arrived at Wiesbaden in Germany for the ninth round of Russian-German talks to discuss, among other things, the prospects of the Nord Stream project.

Its article “Nemetskie dengi v Rosii ne propadut” (German Money Won’t Disappear in Russia), *Expert* (2007–10–22) quoted Vladimir Putin as saying that the coming change of power in Russia in 2008 would not undermine Russia’s reliability for German investors. It should be added that none of the analyzed publications quoted the critical comments of German top officials about Russia’s election system.

On the eve of the talks *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* carried an article “Putin sveriaetsia s Merkel” (Putin Synchronizes Positions with Merkel) which said that the Russian government expected breakthroughs in Wiesbaden.

8. April 2008. The President of the Ukraine, Victor Yushchenko, recalled two Ukrainian ambassadors. On 5 April 2008 the Ukrainian Ambassador to Russia Oleg Demin and the Ukrainian Ambassador to Germany Igor Dolgov were dismissed from their posts. Some of the publications quoted experts as saying that the Ukrainian ambassador to Germany was recalled because of Germany’s support of Russia’s negative position towards NATO membership for the Ukraine.

On the next day (2008–04–06) a correspondent of *Komsomolskaia Pravda* wrote: “...Germany was Russia’s main supporter and the main opponent to the plan of NATO’s accelerated expansion.”

9. June 2008. On 19 June 2008 the German football team reached the semi-finals in the EURO-2008. The Turkey-Germany match was widely covered in the media in expectation that the winner was to play against Russia in the final.

10. July 2008. Abkhazia rejected the settlement plan suggested by Germany’s Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier; this event invited highly varied media comments. *Kommersant* covered it under the title “Abkhazia otverglia nemetskiy poriadok” (Abkhazia Rejected the German *Ordnung*) in a negative vein unrelated, however, to Germany. The article dealt not so much with the plan and its shortcomings as with relations between Georgia and Abkhazia. *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* described the situation negatively in its article “Khoroshiy plan pri plokhoy igre” (A Good Plan for a Bad Game); the German plan, however, was described in neutral-positive terms.

11. October 2008. The German football team defeated Russia in the World Cup qualifying round. The media coverage, however, cannot be described as negative. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* quoted one of the German footballers as saying: “The Russians fought till the end. The victory hung by a thread.” *Komsomolskaia Pravda* wrote: “Despite its excellent game the Russian team lost to Germany in the second half.”

12. April 2009. President Dmitry Medvedev meets German Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss developments related to Ukraine’s gas pipeline system. The discussion took place on the eve of the G-20 London summit; both sides concentrated on the current economic relationship between the two countries and the future of the European pipeline system in the context of the “gas war” between Russia and Ukraine. The heads of state confirmed that trade between the two countries had decreased and explained this by the global crisis. This created a positive connotation: “*There are objective external factors which slow economic cooperation between the two allies.*”

The Russian media refer to Germany as the country which sides with Russia in its conflict with the Ukraine. The press emphasized that the “*Russian authorities did not interpret Germany’s involvement in signing the EU-Ukraine Brussels Declaration about the latter’s gas pipeline system in negative terms.*” *Kommersant* (2009–04–01) quoted Dmitry Medvedev in the title of one of its articles “My ne obodelis i ne nadulis” (We are not Offended and not Sulking.)

By comparison, here is the list of events that increased the number of press references to France. The references peaked 13 times: June 2002; October 2002; February 2003; March 2004; November 2005; March 2006; July 2006; November 2006; May 2007; October 2007; April 2008; July 2008; October 2008.

1. June 2002. The Socialist Party of France lost the general elections. The country’s image is best described by the title carried by *Kommersant* (2002–06–10) “Frantsia snova zasnula” (France Falls Asleep Again): “According to forecasts the right will win in France, a traditionally left country, which will end the ‘coexistence era’ between a right President and a left Parliament and, correspondingly, a left Cabinet.”

2. October 2002. The scandal around the book by Nicholas John-Gorlin *Rose Bonbon*, about a pedophile serial killer who preyed on children, being openly sold in bookshops across France. In its article “Frantsia mozhnet poteriat markiza de Sada” (France Might Lose Marquise de Sad) *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (2002–10–10) wrote: “By the end of this week French Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy should adopt a final decision about the book.”

3. February 2003. A new plan of action of the governments of France and Germany in relation to Iraq was made public. The media widely announced Vladimir Putin’s statement that Russia was prepared to closely cooperate with France and Germany to achieve a peaceful settlement in Iraq. The Russian president, however, pointed out that “the unilateral use of force will cause intense sufferings of the Iraqi people and increase tension in the region.” *Vedomosti* (2003–02–11) in its article “Iraq: khod za Putinyim” (Iraq: Putin’s Move) offered a slightly negative image of France as Russia’s diplomatic

rival: “Today France has assumed the role which was traditionally Russia’s, that of a country on which Washington relies for brokerage in the UN.”

4. March 2004. The ruling party of France lost regional elections. In an article “Frantsia ozadachila Shiraka” (France Left Chirac Puzzled) *Vedomosti* (2004–03–30) wrote: “Experts believe that the French voters demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the economic reforms of Jean-Pierre Raffarin’s Cabinet.”

Kommersant (2004–03–30) was more neutral. The article “Vybory vo Frantsii” (Elections in France) said: “As could be expected, the right was routed, which means that President Chirac will have to reshuffle the Cabinet.”

5. November 2005. A wave of mass disorders in one of the Parisian suburbs began on 7 November and went on for several days.

The article “Emigrantskaia revoliutsia vo Frantsii” (An Émigré Revolution in France), which appeared in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, offered the following comment: “A large part of the national elite is watching, with great interest, how Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy tries to cope and is hardly on his side.”

6. March 2006. Massive student protests against the reform of the labor market in France caused by the program of modernization of the labor market and the struggle against unemployment suggested by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and supported by the French president. The article “Frantsia na poroge vseobshchey zabastovki” (France on the Verge of a General Strike) (*Kommersant*, 2006–03–15) said: “The national assembly of the students of France voted to continue the protests against the government’s policy in the employment sphere.”

7. July 2006. A wave of protests raised by the Law On the Rights of Migrants. A quote from *Komsomolskaia Pravda* reflects the negative attitude shared by the Russian media: “The country will open doors only for those it needs; the majority of poor and unemployed will remain outside.”

8. November 2006. Nomination of the Socialist Party’s presidential candidate; a woman was nominated for the first time in French history. On the whole, the event received positive coverage. *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* carried an article “Sotsialisty golosuiut za zhenshchinu” (The Socialists Voted for a Woman) generalized: “[Ségolène] Royal promised to open a new page in the history of France if elected the country’s first female president.”

9. May 2007. Nicolas Sarkozy wins the presidential elections in France. *Kommersant* (2007–05–08) summarized the general neutral tone of the Russia media by writing in the article “Frantsia smirilas so svoim vyborom” (France has Accepted its Choice): “The opponents of the new president from the poor suburbs demonstrated that they would never let him relax.”

10. October 2007. The first official visit of President of France Nicolas Sarkozy to Russia. The French president’s statements about his country’s support of Russia were accepted with a great deal of criticism and irony. *Vedomosti* (2007–10–10) wrote: “Today President of France Nicolas Sarkozy assured us that at no time has France looked at stable Russia as a threat to peace.”

11. April 2008. On 4 April the French luxury yacht *Le Ponant* was captured by Somali pirates. The media coverage was extensive but neutral.

12. June 2008. President Sarkozy’s decision to return France to NATO military structure was covered in starkly negative terms.

13. October 2008. France accuses Russia of a failure to live up to its obligations under the “Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan.” *Vedomosti* (2008–10–11) quoted Foreign Minister of France Bernard Kouchner as saying: “Russia has failed to completely fulfill its obligations to pull out its troops from Georgia. The Russian troops left the buffer zones yet never returned to the positions held before the conflict.”

The qualitative analysis of the reference peaks suggests the following. The peaks of references to France coincided with events inside the country that belonged to the sphere of its domestic policy and were mostly prompted by social activities of various population groups and the state’s response to them. Russia was related to three out of 13 events (dated to February 2006, October 2007 and October 2008); in two cases out of three the relations between the two countries bordered on conflict.

The peaks of references to Germany were all caused by Russian-German bilateral relations or demonstrations of their mutual support. Of the events related to Germany only, two received ambiguous coverage (the football match that Russia lost to Germany and the failed settlement plan between Abkhazia and Georgia submitted by the German foreign minister). In all other cases Germany was described as Russia’s true ally on the international scene; as a reliable economic partner in all large-scale joint projects, a reliable investor and Russia’s largest trade partner in the EU. The Russian media often used the following logical construct: “Russia and Germany act together (cooperate, confront or defend themselves) against a third side.”

This means that the original hypothesis about Germany’s special place in Russia’s media and mass consciousness has been confirmed by Germany’s quantitative domination over other EU countries in the Russian press, and by the qualitative descriptions of the events which caused the reference peaks.

Summing up the results of the content analysis, the experts identified four blocks of factors that contribute to Germany’s special image in the Russian mass consciousness:

Historical Factors

The majority of experts agreed that the Russians have long forgiven the Germans the human losses of World War II and that “*the old enmity has been replaced with a strong feeling of shared historical destiny and a common experience of global catastrophe.*” The experts believe that Russians have gradually come to look at Germany “*as a country which, after reunification, is coping with similar grave problems to post-Soviet Russia.*”

Social Factors

The experts pointed out that “Germany is the largest European country of incoming migration and has a large Russian-speaking diaspora”, with the number of Russian speakers in Berlin alone at over 200 thousand. This means that quite often Russians “learn about life in Germany from members of the Russian diaspora, who live comfortably, run successful businesses and are generally satisfied with their living standards.”

Economic Factors

Trade between Russia and Germany is developing at a good pace: their trade turnover is the EU’s largest. “The economic wellbeing of the ruling regime mainly depends on the export of hydrocarbons to Germany.” The experts deemed it necessary to point to the exclusive economic ties between the elites: “Today, Herr Schroeder, formerly top bureaucrat of the German state, fills one of the top posts in the Russian business sector.”

Political Factors

The experts believe that the favorable image of Germany that is taking shape in Russia results from an underlying positive attitude to Germany. “Germany is probably Russia’s only European partner which tries to understand its problems and to take them into account in the European context.” “The German statesmen, political elite and intellectuals are sincere in their desire to see Russia as a democratic and law-governed state and as a strong partner in numerous bilateral, European and global issues.”

The experts have pointed to “Berlin’s special position on Iraq and the Nord Stream” as one of the reasons of the growing trust in Germany among the Russian elite and society as a whole.

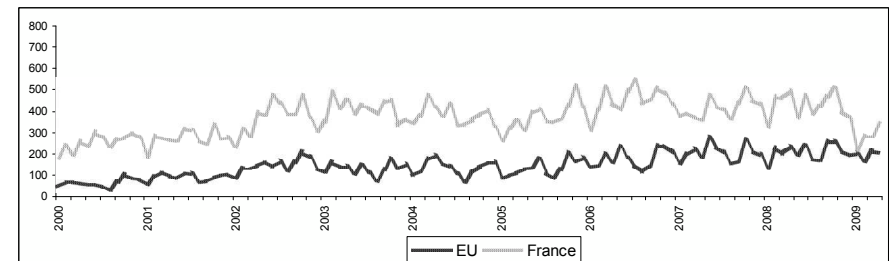
The image of Germany and ideas about the European Union

In order to correlate the image of Germany with ideas about the European Union as a whole in the minds of readers of the Russian press, we formulated a second working hypothesis: the Russian public regards Germany as the key EU player. There are two aspects in the “Germany as key EU player” formula: First, the readers perceive it as the country with the greatest weight in European decision-making. Second, relations with it are the pivotal and strategic element of Russia’s relations with the EU as a whole. This hypothesis is verified by the statistical analysis of the correlation between the references to the EU and to its individual members.

Let us go back to Fig. 1. No statistical analysis is needed to see that there is a certain similarity between the dynamics of references to the EU and to its member states, both in the general trend toward a higher reference level, and in the synchronization of some of the reference peaks for each country and for the EU.

An analysis of the correlation between the reference dynamics to the country which the public associates with the EU (its key element) and the EU reference dynamics provides a statistical assessment of which of the countries can be thusly described. A closer correlation means a larger number of articles in which both this country and the EU are mentioned (see Figs. 3, 4.) Since the hypothesis of Germany’s special place in Russia’s political consciousness has been confirmed, a paired comparison of the dynamics of references to Germany and the EU with those of France (Germany’s closest neighbor as far as the reference lever is concerned) and the EU will be enough to verify the new hypothesis.

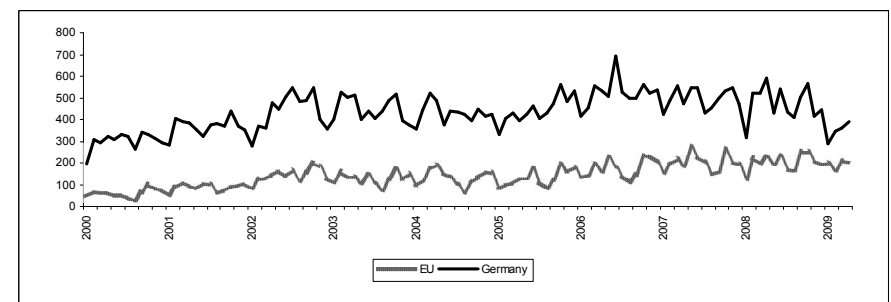
Fig. 3. Comparative Reference Level of France and the EU in the Russian Press



This assessment requires the following procedure: we shall subtract the number of references to the EU from the number of references to France and Germany. The results support the following assertion: the straighter the line of the resultant values, the greater the correlation between the reference dynamics of these countries and the EU.

Indeed, let us surmise, for example, that the reference dynamics of the two objects coincides with the difference between the reference levels (for example, monthly average level for Germany is 433.4 while for the EU, 143.9.) In this case subtraction of the values for one of the objects from the values of another will produce a straight line.

Fig. 4. Comparative Number of References to Germany and the EU in the Russian Press



To find out the reference level of which of the countries is closest to the EU reference level we shall use the method of least squares and build linear trends for the corresponding temporal rows (Fig. 5).

The resultant models of trends are the following.

For Germany:

$$R_G = 0.0721 \times m + 285.39,$$

where m – month, R_G – the level of reference to Germany in the Russian media per month m , $m = 1, 2, \dots, 112$.

For France:

$$R_F = 0.1379 \times m + 217.2,$$

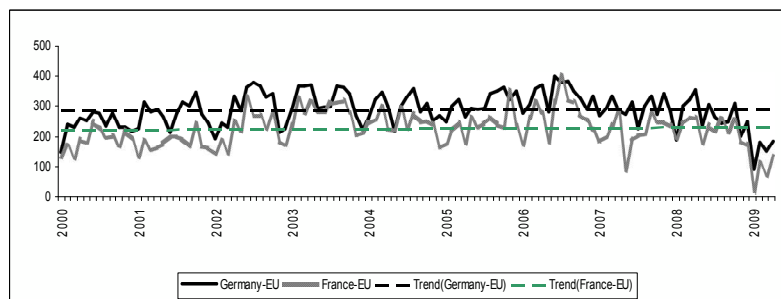
where m – month, R_F – the level of reference to France in the Russian media per month m , $m = 1, 2, \dots, 112$.

We subtract the corresponding model values from the temporal rows, square the remainders and add them together.

The sum of quarters for Germany is $\sum \text{Res}(R_G) = 363903.9$; for France, $\sum \text{Res}(R_F) = 403970.3$.

Since $\sum \text{Res}(R_G) < \sum \text{Res}(R_F)$ we can conclude that the reference dynamics for Germany is much closer to the EU reference dynamics. This means that the news which covers EU developments refers to Germany (in a statistically significant number of cases) more often than to France (Germany's "closest neighbor" as far as the reference level is concerned.) Since the greater frequency of references corresponds to a higher association level, the results produced by data processing confirms the hypothesis that Russia's mass consciousness looks at Germany as the key EU player.

Fig. 5. Subtraction of the Corresponding Values of EU References from the Reference Dynamics for Germany and France. Construction of Linear Trends



Content analysis of the press revealed that Germany and the EU were mentioned together in a large number of articles, such as publications covering the Germany-chaired Russia-EU summit.

Our experts offered the following explanations:

First, "Germany is one of the most influential EU and NATO members," a "strong power" and the "core of the European Union" which "contributes to the generally accepted identification of Germany with the European Union".

Second, "a bilateral dialogue with Germany rather than with the EU as a whole is much more constructive." "Germany is not merely the EU core but a country open for contacts precisely with Russia; it does not permit diplomatic blunders" and is "tolerant of blunders of others".

Third, "there is an impression that Germany is the country that blocks anti-Russian policies in Europe. Germany is Russia's protector."

The European Union as Seen by the Russian Political Elite

An analysis of information carried by the Russian media about Germany, France and the EU has demonstrated that Germany, seen by the Russian media as the key EU player, is automatically perceived by the recipients of information as identical to the EU. The converse is also true: the Russian audience bases its perception of the European Union on materials related to Germany.

The poll of 100 members of the Russian political elite (20 members of the State Duma; 60 political experts and 10 political journalists) was based on the identified factors. It was conducted in the form of personal interviews; the respondents were offered seven blocks of questions related to the EU-Russia relationship:

- I. Crisis in Georgia
- II. EU Energy Security
- III. Democracy and the Rule of Law
- IV. Visas and Illegal Immigration
- V. The EU and Russian Clash over History
- VI. Potential EU Enlargement
- VII. Economic Issues

I. Crisis in Georgia

It seems that the respondents have not yet acquired a stable image of the countries involved in the conflict, which explains the large variation in responses offered by the members of the Russian political elite about the role of the EU in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and its impact on the future of the Russian-EU relations.

Block 1					
Do you agree with the following statements?			Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
1.	Crisis in Georgia	The EU fully supported Georgia	59	33	8
2.		The EU was the key mediator	51	39	10
3.		The EU remained neutral and served a counter-balance to the US position	50	47	3
4.		The EU will eventually recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states	37	49	14
5.		The status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia will remain a problem in EU-Russia relations in the long-term perspective	53	39	8

On the one hand, the majority of the respondents (59 percent) agreed with the statement that during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict the EU was on Georgia's side. On the other hand, 51 percent of the polled agreed that during the hostilities the EU remained neutral and counter-balanced America's Georgian bias. Fifty percent of the polled looked at the EU as a mediator and peacemaker and agreed that its brokerage was successful.

The experts could not agree on the conflict's political repercussions. For example, nearly half of the polled (49 percent) disagreed with the statement that eventually the EU would recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. At the same time, over half of the respondents (53 percent) insisted that in the near future the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia would remain a stumbling-block in the EU-Russian relationships.

II. EU Energy Security

The low level of EU trust in Russia is one of the main problems in the Russia-EU relationship related to energy security.

Block 2					
Do you agree with the following statements?			Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
6.	EU Energy Security	The EU treats the Russian energy companies wishing to invest in the EU energy sector unfairly, while all other companies enjoy preferential treatment on the EU market	47	37	6
7.		Russia is the EU's most reliable and valuable partner in the energy sphere; their relations are developing more or less constructively	38	56	6
8.		The EU's intention to diversify its energy sources is wise, which means that Russia should not worry about alternative sources and the pipelines planned by the EU	47	49	4

9.		The EU does not trust Russia to the extent that it might launch alternative energy projects, even if more expensive and less attractive than the Russian ones	66	28	6
10.		The EU should allow more Russian investments in its domestic systems of energy transit, supply and distribution	78	17	5

More than half of the respondents (56 percent) believe that the EU level of confidence in Russia as a source of energy fuels is fairly low. This is best illustrated by the EU investment policy: the domestic European energy-distributing systems remain closed to Russian investors. 57 percent are convinced that companies of other countries receive preferential treatment on the European market while investors from Russia are not welcome. Two-thirds (66 percent) insist that the EU is involved in alternative energy projects because it does not trust Russia and will launch them even if they prove to be much more expensive and less attractive than the Russian projects.

The polled disagreed over the best response to the above: 47 percent of the experts said that the fact that the EU was looking for alternative energy suppliers and routes should not cause concern while 49 percent disagreed with this: they did not see the EU intention to diversify energy sources as economically expedient. The majority (76 percent) was convinced that the EU should offer Russian investors wider opportunities in the European energy transit, supply and distribution systems.

III. Democracy and the Rule of Law

The answers demonstrated that the Russian political elite regards democracy and the rule of law as the country's domestic issues to be sorted out without assistance from abroad or interference of foreign partners.

Block 3					
Do you agree with the following statements?			Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
11.	Democracy and Rule of Law	While accusing Russia of illegal activities on its territory (i.e. the Litvinenko case), the EU uses Russian NGOs as its agents of influence and exploits their closure by the Russian authorities as a pretext to accuse Russia of violations of democratic principles	30	65	5
12.		The EU and Russia are engaged in a more open and constructive dialogue on democracy, human rights and the rule of law than 3-5 years ago	30	55	15

13.	The EU should not impose its own standards of democracy, the rule of law and human rights on Russia and should bear in mind Russia's specifics	46	51	3
14.	The EU should keep away from political, legal and social developments in Russia and concentrate on economic cooperation	61	37	2

Over half of the polled (55 percent) pointed out that in the last 3 to 5 years the dialogue between the EU and Russia on democracy, human rights and the rule of law has become less open and less constructive. At the same time, 46 percent of the polled agreed that the EU should keep in mind the Russian specifics and refrain from imposing on Russia its own ideas of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. 61 percent of the polled supported the statement that the EU should keep away from the issues related to Russia's political, legal and social development and that the Russian-EU partnership should concentrate on economics.

Nearly two-thirds of the polled (65 percent) disagreed with the statement that the European Union used Russian NGOs as their agents and exploited their closure by the Russian authorities as evidence of the violation of democratic principles in Russia.

IV. Visas and Illegal Immigration

Practically all the polled agreed on issues related to the visa regime in Russia and the EU. The absolute majority (82 percent) was convinced that the abolition of the visa regime between the EU and Russia would be a great step toward overcoming mutual prejudice and mistrust.

Block 4					
Do you agree with the following statements?			Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
15.	Visas and Illegal Immigration	The EU has simplified the visa procedures for Russians	52	35	13
16.		Abolishing visas will represent a significant step toward removing the prejudices and suspicion between the EU and Russia	82	10	8
17.		The EU and Russia should work together toward the abolition of visas between them	76	21	3
18.		Slow and complicated bureaucratic procedures make visa facilitation ineffective	63	20	17

Over half of the polled (52 percent) agreed that the EU countries had simplified the visa procedure for Russian citizens; about three-quarters (76 percent) agreed that the EU and Russia should work together to abolish the visa regime. The majority of the polled experts (63 percent) are convinced that the lengthy and fairly complicated visa-issuing procedures rendered ineffective any attempts at visa facilitation between Russia and the EU.

V. The EU and Russian Clash over History

The polled agreed that Russia and the EU should arrive at a shared opinion of World War II and that fascist commemoration marches in some of the EU member-states should be banned. The experts found it hard to agree on how the European Union treated the role of the Soviet Union in World War II. Forty-two percent agreed that the EU countries failed to fully appreciate the role of the U.S.S.R. in liberating Europe from fascism.

Block 5					
Do you agree with the following statements?			Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
19.	EU and Russian clashes over history	The EU does not fully appreciate the role of the USSR in liberating Europe from fascism	42	50	8
20.		The EU should not tolerate fascist commemoration marches in its member-states	86	12	2
21.		Russia's formal recognition of the crimes Committed by the communist regimes in the former Eastern Bloc would improve the EU-Russia relationship	33	57	10
22.		The EU and Russia should develop a shared idea of World War II, particularly in regard to memorials and veterans	78	15	7

The majority of the experts (86 percent) believed that the European Union should ban fascist commemoration marches in the member-states. According to 78 percent of those surveyed, the European Union and Russia should pool forces to arrive at a concerted opinion about World War II related, among other things, to monuments, memorials and veterans.

At the same time, 57 percent of the respondents disagreed that relations between the EU and Russia would improve if Russia assumed responsibility for the crimes committed by the communist regimes in the countries that had belonged to the socialist camp.

VI. Potential EU Enlargement

The experts found it hard to agree about potential EU enlargement into the Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Our poll demonstrated that there is no agreement about whether the EU would take Russia's interests into account when moving eastward.

Block 6					
Do you agree with the following statements?		Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	
23.	Potential EU enlargements	The EU does not take Russia's interests and opinions into account when discussing the intentions of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to join the EU	52	34	14
24.		The EU takes Russia's opinions into consideration and is not going to take any active steps in helping these countries to join without consultations with Russia	39	55	6
25.		Each country has the right to join any organization or alliance, which means that Russia cannot interfere with the EU's enlargement plans	58	36	6
26.		If the EU pursues its eastward enlargement without consulting Russia, confrontation will become inevitable	67	28	5

Nearly half of the polled (52 percent) believed that when discussing the EU membership plans of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the European Union disregarded Russia's interests and opinions. At the same time 39 percent of the polled believed that the EU took Russia's position into account and would never start a procedure of EU membership for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova without consulting Russia first.

On the one hand, over half of the polled (58 percent) insisted that any country was free to join any organization or alliance, which meant that Russia could not impose its will on Europe when it came to EU enlargement. On the other hand, about two-thirds (67 percent) of the respondents were convinced that continued EU eastward enlargement without consulting Russia would make confrontation inevitable.

VII. Economic Issues

Block 7				
Do you agree with the following statements?		Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
27.	Russia offers a secure investment environment to European businessmen	44	47	9

28.	Russia is strong enough to proceed with economic modernization on its own	16	81	3
29.	Russia will suffer less of the world economic crisis than the rest of the world	13	78	9
30.	Russia's economy needs diversification to become less dependent on the energy sector	72	26	2
31.	Western companies investing in Russia suffer less bureaucracy than Russian companies in the EU	33	52	15

Only 13 percent agreed with the statement that Russia would suffer less of the global crisis than the rest of the world. Nearly two-thirds (72 percent) of the polled were convinced that Russia's economy should be diversified to be less dependent on the energy sector. The majority (81 percent) resolutely disagreed with the statement that Russia was strong enough to carry out modernization without support from abroad.

Only 44 percent believed Russia to be a secure place for foreign investments; merely one-third (33 percent) were convinced that the European investors in Russia suffer less administrative red tape than Russian companies in Europe.

Conclusion

On the whole, both the image of Germany presented by the Russian media and the Russian political elite's ideas about this country rest on a solid factual foundation and, to a great extent, correspond to reality.

The results of the content analysis allow us to state that Germany holds a special place (among other EU members) in the Russian media. It is presented as a culturally close neighbor, chief political ally and economic partner in Europe. A statistical analysis of the correlation between the reference levels of the EU and Germany in the Russian press has demonstrated that Russian readers look at Germany as a political heavyweight on the European scene with the greatest impact on decision-making.

Our findings have shown that the Russian political elite disagree about the European Union. They failed to arrive at a common opinion: Whether it was in Russia's interests to deal with a weak or a strong union; whether the EU was a reliable partner or a player dependent on Russia's energy resources; whether the EU was an effective political alliance or an amorphous actor in world politics.

The poll revealed the following problems and political issues as a source of tension between Russia and the EU:

- The status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia
- EU eastward enlargement without consultations with Russia
- Russia's fairly low confidence level in the EU as far as its energy security is concerned
- Russia's low investment attractiveness for the EU.

In addition, the following actions of the European Union might create tension in Russia EU relations:

- Attempts of the EU to interfere in Russia's political, legal and social development
- Fascist commemoration marches in the EU member-states
- Lengthy and complicated bureaucratic visa procedures, which reduce to naught the simplified procedures already instituted between Russia and the EU.