



Introduction

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Special Issue Editors

In honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (EURUS) at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, the *Canadian Journal of European and Russian Studies* is producing a special journal issue featuring research articles authored or co-authored by present and past faculty members and research associates of the Institute.

The articles in this issue, all of which are peer-reviewed¹ and open access publications as per journal policy, span a range of disciplines, topics, and approaches reflecting the diversity of research interests that faculty and students cover in the Institute. The first two articles address topics of contemporary interest in European studies and Canada-EU relations. Achim Hurrelmann's contribution "Brexit: A Critical Juncture in Canada-Europe Relations?" examines how Brexit has affected Canada's relations with both the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) in three dimensions: economics, political differentiation, and populist mobilization. Drawing on the concept of critical junctures from the theoretical toolbox of historical institutionalism, Hurrelmann concludes that while other outcomes were possible, Brexit produced only limited and incremental change (in economics and in terms of populist mobilization) or no meaningful change (in terms of political differentiation) in Canada's relations with its European partners (the UK and the EU). His article delves into explanations for this relative continuity. Turning to a different aspect of Canada-EU relations, Crina Viju-Milusevic and Agnieszka Weinar's article "Gender in the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement: Third-Generation Trade Agreements as a Gateway to Policy Coordination?" examines the degree to which the Canada-Europe Comprehensive Trade Agreement (CETA), signed in 2016, broke new ground by introducing new expectations and structures to encourage gender policy coordination between the EU and Canada. Building on previous research, the authors argue that as a new breed of 'third generation' trade agreements, CETA goes beyond traditional expectations and aspires to promote gender mainstreaming, gender equality, and the promotion of female entrepreneurs. The

¹ Due to the nature of the contributions, the peer review process for the articles and commentaries in the "Viewpoints" section were not double-blinded.

authors conclude that despite high ambitions, the results to date have been somewhat limited, with the most marked, but still inadequate, progress achieved in data collection and data infrastructure.

The remaining three research articles in the special issue deal with developments in Russia and the post-Soviet space. In their contribution, Jeff Sahadeo and Paul Gosselin provide an innovative historical study of how the Mtkvari (Kura) river shaped urban life in Tiflis (present-day Tbilisi) in the late Russian Empire. Drawing on a wide range of primary source materials, the authors highlight the symbolic, practical, and sociological significance of the river for the city. The Mtkvari River emerges not only as an important symbol of an emerging Georgian national identity within the Russian Empire but also as an actor in its own right that often thwarted efforts of the city's inhabitants to control it. Their contribution paints a vivid picture of the interaction of nature, economy, and society in this multiethnic city on the periphery of empire, capturing aspects of daily life that would later be radically transformed under Soviet rule through demographic engineering and urban restructuring.

Turning to our contemporary moment, the next two research articles by Joan DeBardeleben and Larry Black examine in different ways the reverberations of political and military tensions between Ukraine and Russia since 2014 that led to the current Russo-Ukrainian War. Joan DeBardeleben's essay "A Respite from Geopolitical Tension? Russian Media Depictions of Cross-Border Cooperation with the EU 2014-2021" shifts the focus to Russia's northern periphery, examining how intensifying geopolitical tension between the EU and Russia in the period after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 affected the depiction of cross-border cooperation (CBC) programs between Russia and the EU. Based on an analysis of Russian media coverage of CBC, the author concludes that less severe geopolitical tension may stand side-by-side with continuing cooperation at the local level, allowing Russian media to promote an image of 'normality' in EU-Russian relations. However, extraordinary geopolitical ruptures, such as Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, led to the suspension of even these lower-level linkages. The final research article by Larry Black, "The Kremlin's Responses to Anti-War Voices in Russia: Setting the Tone in the First Year of War," examines Putin regime's narrative about Russia's war against Ukraine as well as efforts by critics within Russia to counter it. The article elucidates the power of disinformation, bolstered by historical references and emotional appeals, and efforts by the state to employ nationalism to mobilize youth in support of the war. However, Black also points to the strength and determination of those engaged in opposition to the war who utilize a range of tools, including blogs, artworks, rallies, and instances of individual defiance in the face of an oppressive political system.

The issue concludes with a "Viewpoints" section, intended to spark debate and critical reflection. The article "Misreading Russia" by Leigh Sarty, a seasoned foreign policy expert, provides an interpretive analysis of the authoritarian path that Russia has taken under Vladimir Putin that led to Russia's current war against Ukraine and what he views as the failure of some Western countries to anticipate it. Joan DeBardeleben provides a commentary in response to this article. Regardless of what position the reader might take in this particular debate, we hope that this discussion, taken together with the other research articles, demonstrates the necessity of regional expertise for

providing a complex understanding of issues in this region and their larger impact on Canada and the world more generally.