

G20: Russia Part of One Big 'European Family'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Herman Van Rompuy (center left) is greeted on his arrival in St. Petersburg with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso.

ST. PETERSBURG — Speaking just hours before the formal opening of the G20 Summit, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy emphasized Europe and Russia's shared cultural and historic foundations as the main determinant of the current relationship between the two.

At a meeting held at the European University in St. Petersburg, Van Rompuy said Russia was a nation that was equal to Europe that belongs to "one European family."

He quoted Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, who famously opened his *Anna Karenina* novel with the line: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Van Rompuy went on to challenge Tolstoy's statement, however, saying that in Europe, it

appears, states can be happy with each other in their own way.

As for whether Russia can be considered part of Europe, Van Rompuy said the debate itself on whether Russia was European proved that it was, as "such collective self-examination is very European."

He also opened up about his own personal experience with Russian culture, noting that Tolstoy's other famous novel, War and Peace, was the book that "inspired him the most" in life.

It is because of this special heritage that ordinary Europeans share with Russians that there are very "high expectations" from Russia-EU cooperation.

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