

Risks and Challenges: EU Enlargement and Russia

Selected articles from Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty

PARTNERSHIP- AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT

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ESTONIA SEEKS CASTIGATION OF RUSSIAN POLICY BY EUROPARLIAMENT

Estonia's observer in the European Parliament, the ruling Res Publica party's Eiki Berg, has proposed amendments to reports on the EU's relations with Russia and the Transcaucasus, BNS reported on 7 January. He said the report on Russia must draw attention to Moscow's reluctance to apply its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU to acceding member states, thus contradicting the underlying principles of the accord. Russia should also be urged to ratify border agreements with Estonia and Latvia, Berg said. Noting the need "for developing closer contractual ties with Transcaucasus states that suffer from crises typical of transition societies and may thus become a threat to European stability," Berg said that "the European Union must provide those states with strong incentives to carry out democratization processes and economic reforms." His amendments will be put to a vote in the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee in the last week of January and then at the February session. SG

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MOSCOW MAKES GESTURE TO AVOID EU CLASH...

Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov, who is in charge of relations with the European Union, offered on 22 February to extend temporarily the conditions of Russia's existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU to the 10 states that are expected to become EU members on 1 May, the "Financial Times" reported on 23 February. Chizhov told the newspaper that Russia does not want to block EU enlargement, but it does want to change the PCA to compensate for the \$375 million that Moscow estimates enlargement will cost Russia, particularly due to worsened conditions for Russian exports of aluminum, chemicals, grain, and nuclear fuel to the acceding states. Among the prospective EU states are Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Chizhov's comments followed a EU foreign ministers' statement warning that Russia's failure to sign a new PCA covering the EU accession states by 1 May "without precondition or distinction" would have a "serious impact" on EU-Russian relations. An unnamed diplomat said the foreign ministers' statement was "a threat of sanctions," AFP reported on 23 February. JB

...AS DUMA DEPUTY SPEAKER SAYS RUSSIA SHOULD NOT BACK DOWN

Deputy State Duma Speaker Dmitrii Rogozin (Motherland) said on 23 February that Russia should not accept the EU's demands that it sign a new PCA to cover the 10 countries that are expected to join the EU on 1 May, Interfax reported. "Russia does not plan to act on the orders of Brussels. It must above all be concerned about its national interests," Rogozin said. He added that Russia must insist that it

will sign individual agreements with each of the new EU members. Federation Council International Relations Committee Chairman Mikhail Margelov called the EU's demands for a new PCA "the language of sanctions," which, he said, "is not the style now needed in relations between Russia and the European Union," Interfax reported on 23 February. Margelov said Russia plans to develop "a strategic partnership" with the EU, but wants the EU to increase quotas for Russian imports, to lower import duties on goods shipped from Kaliningrad Oblast through Lithuania, and to eliminate restrictions on Russian aircraft flying in European airspace. JB

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ESTONIA, RUSSIA HOLD TALKS ON EU-RUSSIA PCA EXTENSION

Foreign Ministry Deputy Chancellor Tiina Intelmann met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Chizhov in Tallinn on 25 February to discuss Russia's concerns about the extension of the EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the 10 new EU states, BNS reported. Chizhov stressed that the 14 points Russia sent to the EU pertaining to the extension are not demands, but rather concerns that must be resolved. Intelmann said the EU has not decided which of the issues it will negotiate with Russia, and noted that economic issues are in the competence of the European Commission. She also mentioned that Russia has not responded to Estonian comments regarding the ratification of a border treaty and the return of the Estonian presidential insignia that was taken by Soviet forces in 1941. However, she said she believes progress will be made in the joint fight against drugs, crime, and AIDS, as well as the opening of boat traffic on Lake Peipus. Both officials expressed satisfaction with the meeting. SG

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ESTONIAN PREMIER BELIEVES EU-RUSSIA AGREEMENT WILL BE EXPANDED

Prime Minister Juhan Parts told the Finnish daily "Turun Sanomat" of 8 March that he is certain the EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) will be extended to the 10 new EU states by their 1 May accession date, BNS reported. He characterized Russia's concerns regarding the situation of Estonia's and Latvia's ethnic Russian minorities as rhetoric. Estonia's integration policies, he said, can be held up as an example that allows minorities to "develop themselves, use their own language, and promote culture in Estonia." Parts denied that ethnic Russians in Estonia are barred from certain jobs, explaining that "finding a job calls for knowledge of the local culture, history, and language" and job applicants are thus not competitive if they do not speak Estonian. The prime minister also criticized efforts by current EU states to restrict the free movement of labor for citizens of the acceding states, saying fears of mass immigration are unfounded, as were similar fears expressed prior to the admission of Greece, Portugal, and Spain. SG

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RFE/RL Newsline
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NEW FOREIGN MINISTER EXPECTS FEW SHIFTS IN FOREIGN POLICY

In his first major press-conference, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on 17 March that Russia's foreign-policy course will remain unchanged, as he is quite satisfied with the results Russia has

achieved in the international arena over the last year, Russian and Western news agencies reported. "The direction of every key avenue of international life has been set up, and we will continue it," he said. In particular, he said Russia still backs the so-called road map Middle East peace plan and that Moscow's positions on North Korea's nuclear program and on the situation in Iraq remain unchanged. Lavrov repeated President Putin's statement that Russia will "protect its national interests without resorting to aggression or imperial ambitions" (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 15 March 2004). He downplayed the notion that a diplomatic rift has developed between Russia and the European Union over Moscow's reluctance to extend its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the 10 countries set to join the EU in May. Lavrov rejected the suggestion that Russia might impose economic sanctions on Latvia because of the problems that country's Russian minority faces. "The norms of international law do not envisage such sanctions," Lavrov said. VY

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RUSSIA, EU READY TO AGREE ON PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Tchishov said in Moscow on 31 March that Russia is ready to sign the EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the 10 countries scheduled to join the EU next month, Russian media reported. At the same time, an EU spokesman in Brussels said the organization is ready to authorize a declaration responding to Moscow's concerns about the EU expansion's economic impact on Russia. Until now, Moscow has insisted on negotiating separate agreements with each of the EU aspirants in response to concerns from Russia's steel industry and agriculture sector (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 25 February 2004). RC

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Monday, 5 April 2004

FRENCH PRESIDENT, PUTIN HOLD TALKS IN MOSCOW...

French President Jacques Chirac made a high-profile two-day visit to Moscow on 3-4 April, during which he and President Vladimir Putin visited the top-secret Krasnozamsk Space Control Center outside Moscow, Russian and Western media reported. Chirac was the first foreign leader ever to visit the center, "Komsomolskaya pravda" and other media reported on 5 April. Speaking to reporters on 3 April, Putin said talks between Russia and the EU have "begun solving concrete problems presented by the accession of new members to the EU," ITAR-TASS reported. The two men discussed measures for ensuing "stability in Europe and the world," Putin said. "We discussed measures to strengthen an international security system and to counteract global threats, primarily terrorism." Chirac said France is "interested in a political settlement of the situation in Chechnya, but there are problems linked to terrorism." Chirac also invited Putin to France in June to attend the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy on 6 June 1944. U.S. President George W. Bush, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Britain's Queen Elizabeth, and numerous other world leaders are expected to attend. The failure to include former President Boris Yeltsin in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994 created a minor diplomatic row. RC

...AS DO PUTIN, SCHROEDER

German Chancellor Schroeder paid a brief working visit to Moscow on 2 April, holding talks with President Putin, Russian and Western media reported. The talks focused on improving Russian cooperation with the EU. The two leaders also discussed the international donors conference on Afghanistan that was held in Berlin last week. A three-way meeting between Schroeder, Putin, and French President Chirac was canceled when Chirac last month postponed his arrival in Moscow by one day. RC

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RUSSIA-ESTONIA TALKS DESCRIBED AS POSITIVE

Special envoy to the EU Sergei Yastrzhembskii and Aleksandr Udaltsov, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Second Political Department, held talks on 13 April with a delegation from the Estonian parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, BNS reported the next day. The chairman of the Estonian committee, Marko Mihkelson, characterized the talks as positive, saying that "it could be sensed that Estonia's accession to the EU and NATO is creating preconditions for the normalization of relations." Mihkelson also said he received assurances that Russia will sign on 27 April a document expanding the membership of the Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to include the new EU members. On 12 April, the delegation discussed with members of the State Duma and the Federation Council the possible effects Estonia's accession to the EU and NATO will have on the two countries' relations. SG

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RUSSIA, EU MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD MENDING FENCES

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was in Dublin on 14 April for talks with the European Union, Russian and Western media reported. Lavrov and Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen expressed confidence that a protocol on Russia's agreement to extend its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to new EU members and a statement on the EU's recognition of Russia's concerns related to EU expansion can be signed at the 27 April meeting in Luxembourg of the new permanent Russia-EU Partnership Council, ITAR-TASS reported. Lavrov said the two sides also discussed the possible introduction of visa-free travel between Russia and the EU. He said that although the target date of 2008 has been set for such a move, "no exact date to make the transition to visa-free travel" has been established. RC

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RUSSIA AND EU DISCUSS EU ENLARGEMENT ISSUES

European Commission President Romano Prodi said after a 22 April meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow that most of the problems concerning Kaliningrad and EU enlargement have been solved, ITAR-TASS reported. Putin said an agreement was reached "on the extension of the movement of our goods to Kaliningrad and the common EU customs procedures," ORT and RTR reported. The Russian president added, however, that "some details still have to be clarified." Putin said that in general Russia would like to develop cooperation with Europe in the economic, energy, security, and humanitarian sectors and that these topics will be discussed at the EU-Russia summit in Moscow on 21 May. Prodi also said the European Commission will recommend that EU members make bilateral agreements with Russia to facilitate the issuance of visas for Russian citizens traveling to the EU. VY

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ESTONIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CRITICIZES EU'S LINE IN TALKS WITH RUSSIA

In an interview with the independent online news service EUobserver (<http://www.euobserver.com>) on 22 April, Kristiina Ojuland criticized the EU's policy toward Russia. She expressed concern about the trip that day by a delegation of European commissioners, including commission President Romano Prodi, to Moscow to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the extension of the EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the 10 new EU states. Ojuland noted that the Council of EU Foreign Ministers had initially clearly stated that the PCA should be extended automatically, but Russia refused to do so unless 14 issues, including the rights of Russian minorities in the Baltic states and trade concerns, were dealt with first. Among the Russian requests are that Estonia and Latvia simplify their naturalization procedures, grant citizenship to retired military personnel of the former USSR, continue to provide funding for secondary education in the Russian language, and give official status to the Russian language in regions with large Russian-speaking populations, BNS reported. SG

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ESTONIAN OPPOSITION DECRIES EU-RUSSIA AGREEMENT

Former Foreign Minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves of the opposition Social Democratic Party said on 23 April that the government's EU policy is a failure, and he predicted that the soon-to-be-signed EU-Russian Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) will contain references to the issue of Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia, BNS reported. Opposition Pro Patria Union Chairman Tunne Kelam said that the addition of such references would make the agreement similar to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Germany and USSR in 1939. Prime Minister Juhan Parts rejected the charges, saying the PCA will not have a separate point dealing with minorities in Estonia. On 24 April, parliamentary Constitutional Committee Chairman Urmas Reinsalu accused Ilves of scaring people with false allegations, adding that the text of the EU-Russian PCA has not yet been determined and Ilves's statements were only part of his election campaign for the European Parliament. SG

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RUSSIA, EU SIGN ACCORD ON COOPERATION

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was in Luxembourg on 27 April for a session of the Russia-EU Permanent Council at which the two sides signed an agreement to extend to the 10 countries expected to join the EU on 1 May Russia's Partnership and Cooperation Treaty with the union, Russian and international media reported. The Russian government on 26 April approved the text of the agreement and of a joint statement, Interfax and other Russian media reported. The joint statement says that the two sides "reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that EU enlargement will bring the EU and Russia closer together in a Europe without dividing lines." "Both sides underline their commitment to the protection of human rights and the protection of [ethnic] minorities," the statement says. An EU-Russia summit will be held in Moscow on 21 May. RC

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EU/RUSSIA: LANDMARK ENLARGEMENT DEAL SIGNED, BUT LOOSE ENDS REMAIN

By Ahto Lobjakas

Brussels, 27 April 2004 (RFE/RL) -- The European Union and Russia today signed an agreement extending their existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to the 10 new EU member states.

The deal -- signed this morning in Luxembourg by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and an EU delegation headed by Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen -- puts an end to months of bitter wrangling that threatened to seriously undermine relations between the two sides.

Cowen today said the agreement would put relations on a "new level." "Now that PCA has been extended to take account of the enlargement of the European Union, I believe that the EU and Russia can look forward to a productive summit in May and to bringing EU-Russia partnership to a new level. The extension of the PCA to the 10 acceding states would allow the enlarged European Union and the Russian Federation to benefit from the opportunities created by EU enlargement," he said.

As part of the deal, the EU and Russia also signed a joint statement detailing EU responses to a number of Russian concerns related to enlargement.

Russia's Foreign Minister said further EU action on minorities is needed before the Duma will ratify the agreement.

The declaration addresses various trade issues, the transit of goods to Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, and the easing of the EU visa regime for Russia.

The statement also makes reference to the protection of minorities, although it does not name any countries.

Lavrov today said further EU action on minorities is needed before the PCA extension deal can be ratified by the Russian Duma.

"I would also like to express my satisfaction that we were promised to be handed in the coming days concrete information on EU action plans for the social integration of minorities," Lavrov said. "We will have a close look at them and support them. Now it is about putting what was agreed into practice. I underscore that specifically this aspect will be taken into consideration by the Russian [Duma] at the ratification of the protocols extending the [PCA] signed by us today to the new member states."

Russia had initially demanded that the phrase "social integration" be included in the joint statement. However, spirited resistance from Estonia and Latvia -- which both have sizable Russian-speaking minorities -- prevented this. The reference in the joint statement to minorities does not name specific countries or minorities.

EU diplomats said the European Commission will now collate information about existing integration schemes for the new member states. However, they did not rule out the creation of new schemes.

Estonian and Latvian diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, warned this could give rise to demands from Russia for further talks in the coming months.

Lavrov said today Russia agrees to the extension of the PCA on a provisional basis, meaning pending final ratification by the Duma.

EU External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten today appeared to rule out what he called any further "conditionality." He repeated the EU view that the agreement to extend the PCA and the joint statement are separate issues and not conditionally linked.

"Let's be clear about terms," Patten said. "We've been discussing this joint statement in parallel to the discussions about the enlargement protocol and the application of the PCA to the 10 new member states. We haven't been talking about conditionalities, we've been talking about a parallel addressing of concerns."

Latvia yesterday took the unusual step of having a note appended to the minutes of the EU foreign ministers' meeting stating that the bloc reconfirms it meets the so-called Copenhagen political entry criteria.

The minutes are not normally made public, although RFE/RL has obtained a copy of the note.

Latvian sources say the note was deemed necessary to avoid future Russian attempts to raise the minorities issue at the EU level.

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ESTONIAN, DUTCH PRIME MINISTERS PRAISE EU-RUSSIA AGREEMENT

Juhan Parts and Jan Peter Balkenende expressed their satisfaction in Tallinn on 27 April that the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed earlier the same day in Luxembourg, BNS reported. Parts noted that the double tariffs that Russia imposed on imports from Estonia from May 1995 will thus be abolished on 1 May, when Estonia formally joins the EU. Earlier in the day, Balkenende discussed EU affairs, including the draft EU constitution, with Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas and acting President Arturas Paulauskas in Vilnius. On 26 April, Balkenende was in Riga on the first leg of his tour of the Baltic states in preparation for the Dutch EU Presidency in the second half of 2004. SG

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RFE/RL Feature Articles
Wednesday, 05 May 2004

ANALYSIS: RUSSIA AND THE EU – A PROBLEMATIC FUTURE

By Victor Yasmann

The 1 May expansion of the EU to include 10 new members -- eight of which are either former Soviet republics or former Soviet satellite states -- opens a new era in Russia's relations with the rest of greater Europe. Naturally, Russians do not share the Euro-enthusiasm of the Central and Eastern Europeans, both those who have already become citizens of a united Europe and those that aspire to do so.

This represents something of a shift in Russian attitudes. Back in the 1990s, when Russia first signed its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU, the general implication was that Russia would slowly but steadily move toward greater integration with Europe. Now, both the public and the Russian political elite seem to have changed their minds about Europe. A national ROMIR-Monitoring poll of 1,600 Russians conducted last month found that 43 percent of respondents said they do not care about EU expansion, even about the fact that the Baltic states were scheduled to become EU members, RIA-Novosti reported on 29 April. Twenty-nine percent of respondents said they viewed EU expansion negatively, while 24 percent viewed it positively. By comparison, about 60 percent of those surveyed had a negative view of NATO expansion.

The Russian political elite has even more definite views about the EU, clearly feeling that eventual Russian membership of the organization is neither possible nor desirable. "The consensus is that the present political course of [President] Vladimir Putin, which is supported by a majority of the population, excludes the possibility of integration into the EU, because Russia is not prepared to sacrifice part of its sovereignty, adopt European legislation, or make human rights a priority," "Russia In Global Policy" Editor in Chief Fedor Lukyanov told "Izvestiya" on 27 April.

Both Moscow and Brussels feel that the model of relations between Russia and the EU that emerged a decade ago must be re-envisioned.

Both Moscow and Brussels feel that the model of relations between Russia and the EU that emerged a decade ago must be re-envisioned. "Now it is obvious that the two sides represent two different political and economic systems, and the vector of Russia's development is not the one that was expected at the dawn of Russian democracy," Lukyanov said.

Lukyanov outlines at least two areas of potential conflict that could emerge as a result of EU

enlargement. First, Lukyanov noted that the EU takes seriously concepts such as the rule of law, human rights, and social justice and, therefore, it cannot help but react negatively to some antidemocratic developments in Russia's emerging "authoritarian modernization." Even if EU officials were willing to turn a blind eye to such things as Chechnya and various espionage and oligarch trials, European public opinion and legislatures would not allow them to do so for long. The EU membership of the Baltic states and the former Soviet satellites -- which are still particularly sensitive to Russia's behavior -- would only make it more difficult for the organization to ignore such issues.

The second area of potential conflict, according to Lukyanov, is the increased interest of the enlarged EU in such countries as Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, which the EU has begun calling its "new neighbors." Moscow has more or less openly stated its intention of restoring its dominance of the territory of the former Soviet Union, excluding the Baltic states. One such conflict already emerged last November, when Russia unilaterally proposed a settlement of the Transdniester conflict in Moldova, to which the EU objected. Further conflicts seem inevitable as Russia turns its attention to Ukraine's November presidential election (see <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/5/A3CC5AF6-FDE5-4032-AF08-A8D6AF4B6381.html>) and as the Kremlin proceeds with the implementation of the Single Economic Space.

Lukyanov also emphasized that the problems associated with the EU's absorption of the new members and other issues will prevent the organization from concentrating on its relations with Russia. Moreover, as Moscow Center for Political Studies analyst Dmitrii Yevstafev noted, Moscow and the EU do not have any shared experience resolving serious conflicts, such as Russia and the United States developed over the decades of the Cold War and during the post-Soviet period, "Ekspert," No. 17, reported. Moscow and Washington, he argued, managed to develop a unique political culture that was generally even tempered and restrained.

Moscow and Brussels have no such culture. "Today, even American Russophobes do not say about Russia even 10 percent [of the negative remarks] made by European moderates," Yevstafev said. "The problem is that we are responding in kind and saying the same things about Europe."

In addition to the bilateral issues mentioned above, it cannot be forgotten that there is a vast economic disparity between Russia and the EU. The union is now the largest free market in the world, while Russia's unstable economy remains heavily dependent on oil exports and other external factors. Before enlargement, trade with the EU accounted for 46 percent of Russia's foreign-trade turnover, "Izvestiya" reported on 24 February. After enlargement, that figure will be 54 percent. By comparison, Russia's share of the EU's total trade volume -- excluding energy -- is just 4 percent. In political terms, this disproportion gives the EU considerable leverage in its dealings with Moscow.

Perhaps as a means of compensating for its weak position vis a vis Brussels, the Kremlin has been cultivating its bilateral ties with the key countries of "old Europe" in recent years. Putin enjoys "special personal relations" with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, and French President Jacques Chirac.

Russia's relationships with European countries are usually more pragmatic than ideological. In the run-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March, Moscow sided with Berlin and Paris in opposing military action. However, this came precisely when Moscow needed German and French support in its long negotiations with the EU over the status of the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad Oblast, and the United States rightly recognized this factor and did not unnecessarily antagonize Moscow over Iraq.

Russia's various flirtations with old Europe irritate the European Commission, which is concerned with the unity of the EU. Lukyanov referred to the words of Frits Bolkenstein, EU commissioner for Internal Markets, Taxation, and Customs Union issues, who criticized Berlusconi for "promising Putin EU membership on his own initiative." "This is shortsighted," Bolkenstein said. "We should not be shy about saying that there are borders to the EU and that we should not encourage hopes that we can never meet." On 3 May, European Commission President Romano Prodi said virtually the same thing, stressing that although the EU wants to cooperate with Russia and other CIS members, they will never become EU members, Russian and Western media reported.

Yevstafev also raised another point regarding Russia's relations with the EU. The union's joint projects and plans with Russia were all developed when Russia was economically weak and politically diminished. At that time, Russia was viewed -- at best -- as a market for agricultural goods. Now, the EU is struggling to come to terms with a politically ambitious and economically recovering Russia because the union simply has nothing of interest to offer Moscow, Yevstafev said.

It is remarkable that Yevstafev's commentary was published by "Ekspert," an upscale weekly that maintains a somewhat liberal, but ultimately Kremlin-friendly editorial line. The weekly is part of the

financial-industrial empire of Interros holding company CEO Vladimir Potanin, who is a Putin loyalist. Yevstafiev's views are more in line with those of the nationalist-statist camp, which once had the dream of forming a pan-European bloc embracing Russia and old Europe to counterbalance the United States. Author Maksim Kalashnikov is a representative of the so-called national-revanche school who is known as "the Russian Tom Clancy" and who has long advocated the restoration of Russia's military might.

In his best-selling 2003 book, "The Wrath of Ork," Kalashnikov wrote that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the purveyors of Eurasianism -- particularly Eurasia party leader Aleksandr Dugin (see <http://www.rferl.org/specials/russianelection/bio/dugin.asp>) -- believed that it would be possible to manipulate rising anti-American sentiment in Europe, particularly in Germany. They argued that Russia and Europe could form a transcontinental bloc to counter the naval power of the United States and the United Kingdom.

Under this scenario, Europe should actively invest in Russia in order to unite its technological advantages and capital with Russia's natural resources, its remaining military-industrial complex, and its space technology. But now these dreams seem almost quaint. "Europe simply does not need Russia as it is now," Kalashnikov wrote. Even investment in Russia's energy sector is much less attractive than opportunities in Kazakhstan, Libya, Iraq, or Vietnam, he added. In addition, Europe -- mainly Germany -- gave huge state and commercial loans to the modernize the Soviet economy, but that money was largely wasted, and now Russia owes Germany billions of dollars. Obviously, all the earlier illusions are gone.

Taking into consideration Russia's enormous size and the difficulties that have been encountered in Germany's incorporation of the former East Germany, German politicians and bankers are convinced that Russia could bankrupt the country. "They don't give a damn about Eurasianism and continental brotherhood," Kalashnikov wrote.

"Previously, Europe saw Russia as a terrible bear, whose existence enabled Europe to get some benefits from the United States. Now that bear is feeble, but it still wants to eat and that poses a serious problem for Europe," he concluded.

The actual situation is not as dramatic as Kalashnikov depicts it. However, the new cohabitation of Russia and the EU has so far produced more questions than answers, and the future seems problematic.

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