

EU Presses Its Offensive Against Russian Interests

by Rachel Douglas

Without waiting for certification of the European Union (EU) as an British imperial cat's-paw through adoption of the Lisbon Treaty—now, stunningly defeated by the June 12 Irish “No” vote—EU leaders have stepped up their challenges to Russian interests, by asserting their prerogative to act *inside* the former Soviet Union. Lisbon Treaty or no, the apostles of the EU as Empire intend to make it the arbiter of relations in East Central Europe, eclipsing the United Nations in places where the UN, or Russia under a UN mandate, has played a role since the 1990s. The result is an aggravation of tensions that threaten to pull Russia's southwest border areas, especially the Caucasus region, into a general escalation of warfare across Eurasia.

The latest EU interventions around the Republic of Georgia and its breakaway region of Abkhazia coincided with an ostensible move to seek more cooperation with Russia. On May 21, the EU agreed to resume negotiations with Russia over a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to replace the one that expired last year. Those talks on replacing the PCA will proceed at a June 26-27 EU-Russia summit, in Khanty-Mansiysk, western Siberia.

The May 30-June 6 issue of the *Economist*, the City of London mouthpiece that has vigorously campaigned for using the EU to cut Russia down to size, exulted over the success of Lithuania, a new EU member from formerly Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, for having held off this decision for months. Even after EU member Poland's new government resolved a long-standing dispute with Russia over meat exports and approved the new PCA talks, Lithuania held out until the EU formalized a pledge to monitor Russian behavior in Georgia, press the issue of guaranteed Russian energy deliveries to EU members, and force a discussion of Lithuania's demand that Russia pay reparations for deportations done by the Soviet government after World War II.

‘The Best Traditions of the Cold War’

The *Economist* article attacked Germany for wanting the cooperation talks to move ahead quickly. To be welcomed, by contrast, was the fact that, “Other countries are moving to counter what they see as Germany's overly Russia-friendly policies.” Carl Bildt and Radek Sikorski, the foreign ministers of Sweden and Poland, respectively, have launched a plan they call “eastern partnership,” which will offer preferential trade terms and other EU membership preparation enticements to Georgia, Ukraine, and even Belarus, and “Russian regions such as Kaliningrad” (which, as the formerly German city of Königsberg, is located between Lithuania and Poland).

In an editorial, the *Economist* claimed that the consolidated pool of cheap labor, created through the EU's enlargement into Eastern Europe, has helped all the member countries! “Teething troubles with a few new members,” the *Economist* said, “should not become an excuse for slamming the door on others.” Of greatest interest, the commentary insisted, is eventual EU membership for Ukraine, which is currently involved in quarrels with Russia over the Black Sea Fleet and other issues, as well as experiencing intense internecine political conflicts in Kiev itself.

Sergey Yastrzhembsky, the former Kremlin special representative to the EU, said on May 29 that the new EU-Russia talks will be “long and difficult.” A Novosti information agency release, also dated May 29, cited an unnamed Russian government source who expressed doubt that a new umbrella agreement could be reached this year.

A follow-up Novosti analysis piece, published June 9, quoted an anonymous high-ranking Russian security official, who charged that British intelligence was attempting to establish control over the EU's political institutions, and direct them against Russia. One technique being used, said the of-

ficial, is allegations of Russian spying, such as appeared in yet another article in the same issue of the *Economist*.

The *Economist* published an article titled “Can the EU defend itself?”, which said: “Russian spying in Brussels and Strasbourg . . . is far better financed, better aimed and better coordinated than ever before.” It said the efforts of Russia’s elite foreign-intelligence services have been supplemented by the Federal Security Service (FSB), which used to deal solely with internal issues, and that they involve not only intelligence officers, but also journalists, consultants, and even students.

The Russian security expert responded to the *Economist* “spy” article, saying that, “It is not a coincidence that the article was released almost immediately after EU foreign ministers had approved a mandate for talks on a deal to replace the current PCA.” The expert said that after Russia had resolved its disputes with Poland and Lithuania, London decided to fuel fear of Russia with “Cold War type” spy stories. “The British are not happy with the fact that Russia is maintaining a constructive dialogue with the main European capitals, including Paris, Berlin, and Rome,” he said. In his opinion, London has long been trying to strengthen its position in the European Union by placing British officials in key posts in the EU’s political structures, while preserving the U.K.’s special status with regard to the main mechanisms of European integration, such as the common currency, free travel, and a draft European constitution.

He said London was pursuing its own political agenda, and was attempting “to impose on European officials a system of loyalty checks and constant surveillance in the best traditions of the Cold War,” to protect its regional interests and promote far-reaching ambitions.

Attempt To Replace UN

On May 30, fifteen emissaries from EU countries arrived in Sukhumi, capital of Abkhazia, to prepare the way for mediation efforts by EU leaders to follow. The mission was part of a campaign, fully endorsed by Georgian President Michael Saakashvili, to end the United Nations mandate, under which Russian peacekeepers have policed Abkhazia since the end of its civil war with the central Georgian government in the early 1990s.

Ideologues of an “imperial European Union” under the Lisbon Treaty, such as the London-connected analyst Ivan Krastev of the Center for Liberal Strategies (Bulgaria), saw the EU’s role in Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia last Winter as a foot-in-the-door for meddling throughout western Eurasia. Crisis-monger Krastev has argued that a full-scale crisis over Kosovo’s declaration of independence—a guarantee, among other things, of increased tension with Serbia’s historical ally, Russia—is “the crisis that the European Union badly needs” to prove its “historical viability.”

One popular scenario in such circles is that the example

of Kosovo unfreeze the so-called “frozen conflicts” around autonomous regions within former Soviet republics, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Transdnestria in Moldova. The scene of fierce fighting in the early 1990s after the break-up of the U.S.S.R., each of these autonomous regions has special ties with Moscow and/or is policed by Russian peacekeepers under UN auspices, setting the stage for the governments of Moldova and, especially, Saakashvili’s in Georgia, and their EU and American backers, to accuse Russia of threatening their sovereignty.

Now, as a series of articles in the Russian daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* has documented, the EU is moving in on the frozen conflicts. In “steps that Europeans are taking quietly and without pomp in the field of mediation which quite recently was Russia’s priority,” the staff of EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana has arranged “dialogue” visits to Brussels by leaders of the breakaway autonomous regions of Transdnestria and South Ossetia, *Nezavisimaya* reported May 16. “Tbilisi [Georgia] is trying to squeeze the UN (where Russia has the right of veto) out” of the Abkhazia negotiations, the paper wrote on May 19, quoting Georgia’s State Reintegration Minister Temur Iakobashvili on how he wants the EU to step in as mediator.

Under the headline “The Unrecognized Republics Are Surrendering to the West,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported that parliamentary leader Yevgeni Shevchuk of Transdnestria had enjoyed his recent visit to EU headquarters in Brussels, which the EU cleared by removing him from a list of banned officials, and had gone on to London for consultations immediately thereafter. Shevchuk represents a different faction from that of Transdnestrian leader Igor Smirnov, suggesting that there is a fine-tuned effort to cultivate EU assets there.

On June 6, Javier Solana staged a visit to Abkhazia. And in St. Petersburg, on the sidelines of an informal Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit, the same day, Saakashvili met with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, who rejected a shift to foreign mediation of conflicts within the formerly Soviet CIS region. Medvedev told the meeting, “I think we can sort out our relations by ourselves.”

Within the past month, a deputy foreign minister of Georgia has described Russia and Georgia as being “on the brink of war” over Abkhazia, while Saakashvili himself proclaimed in May, “We are the fighting ground for a new world war.”

Saakashvili claimed an overwhelming Parliamentary victory for his party last month, but over 100,000 people have turned out in several rallies to protest vote fraud. Shalva Natelashvili’s Georgian Labor Party, which did cross the vote threshold to enter Parliament, and other opposition forces have refused to take their seats because of the fraud.

For background, see “British Imperial Strategists Push EU To Confront Russia,” EIR, March 7, 2008.