

Russia and the EU

Sir: John O'Sullivan ('Moscow's Wizard of Oz', 7 June) overlooks the elephant in the room. Why is Russia not welcome as a member of the European Union?

O'Sullivan sees Russia as somehow different and apart from all other countries in the European orbit. Further, he clearly believes the difference to be an unalterable given of the modern world. It is only because this gulf between Russia and the rest of Europe is fixed by assumption that his conference intellectuals can talk about 'the Eurasian Union', 'the wider geopolitical struggle with the Anglo-Saxons' and 'the "geo-politicians" in Moscow who chill our blood'.

I am not a fan of the EU, but no one conjures up such a vast and malign role for any of its members. These members include Germany, Britain, France and Italy, all of which have larger national outputs than Russia, and in that sense could do just as much geopolitical mischief if they were so minded. If Russia were inside the EU, it seems likely that John O'Sullivan's ruminations would become absurd.

The trouble is that the European Commission top brass do not want Russia in the EU. Nations' vote shares in the Council of Ministers are determined by population, and Russia would therefore have more votes than Germany, France or any other country. The geopolitical purpose of the EU is the redemption of Germany from its past, and the reinstatement to great power roles of Germany and France. Russian membership of the EU would ruin that. So we are condemned to the tragedy of continued tension in Europe between the western states and Russia, even though Russia (with about 10 per cent of wider Europe's output) is now so overshadowed economically that the notion of rivalry between it and the rest of Europe is ludicrous.

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