The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# The Kremlin's Imaginary World

By The Moscow Times

November 21, 2011




Russian leaders have always been attracted by grand visions.

Now Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev are creating a new union with a couple former Soviet republics, building a homegrown Silicon Valley and doubling the size of Moscow. The way they speak, these are practically past accomplishments, and it would seem that Russia should share its successful modernization experience with all those backward countries that are still struggling to develop.

The reality, of course, is that the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed several documents late last week on economic integration that is supposed to become a common economic space. The economic union will standardize technical regulations and boost migration and industrial policy. The idea is that this vision will be realized by 2015 to form a Eurasian Economic Union, a pet project of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Putin.

Apparently, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko does not care what he dreams about, as long as his dream is the same as Putin's. Lukashenko chimed in with the prediction

that the goals might be met as early as 2013. Meanwhile, Medvedev — the ruling tandem member usually responsible for the future — said the goals might be met ahead of schedule if conditions are favorable.

The Eurasian Union has yet to be formed, yet Medvedev is already certain that it will not repeat the mistakes made by the European Union. First, this is because it will unite what are supposedly rapidly growing economies and, second, all of the potential members are "known commodities."

It is true that the neighboring countries are very familiar with each other, but it is no easy task to join a major economy like Russia's with the incomparably smaller Belarussian economy, not to mention the economies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In a State Duma roundtable discussion on the future union, lawmakers from the CIS states bumped the dream up another notch. They envision a union with its own court of human rights that will supposedly prosecute human rights violations much better than Strasbourg. The union will also include a unified elections monitoring agency, as well as a unified banking system and currency.

They termed the union a "big country" that could include other former Soviet republics and even other countries.

That level of fantasy has already become a general modus operandi for the Russian authorities.

In the Kremlin's imaginary, utopian world, Russia is the core of a powerful regional alliance stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. That union is a force with which the whole world must reckon, especially because the Russian military will be armed with cutting-edge technology and weapons and will overwhelm the entire world.

As it turns out, the silicon in Russia's Silicon Valley will be of an even higher grade than the U.S. original. Russia is also the creator and leader of the incredible project to build a global system for monitoring and patrolling space to protect the planet from asteroids and aliens. Russia will run the whole show from "Greater Moscow" — a huge metropolitan area that not only will look like a shuttlecock, but will function as one.

Soviet author Konstantin Paustovsky once wrote, "We need dreamers. It is time we got rid of our derisive attitude toward this word. Many people still do not know how to dream, and maybe that is why they cannot keep pace with the times."

This comment appeared as an editorial in Vedomosti.

*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/21/the-kremlins-imaginary-world-a10925