

Gagauzia: A Bone in the Throat

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E-Notes

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Romania's first envoy to the then-newly independent Moldova set off a firestorm of criticism in August that has yet to die down.^[1] Reflecting on his role in Moldova's transition from Soviet republic to nation-state, Ion Bistreanu observed that Moldova's "biggest mistake," he assessed, was to accede to Gagauzia's autonomy:

[Russia] no matter what cannot prevail in Transdnistria as easily as it did in Abkhazia and Ossetia, whether today, tomorrow or in ten or twenty years. After all the declarations, they cannot get a Crimea-type solution [in Transdnistria] . . . Perhaps that's why they've been so quiet, because there's nothing they can do. But it's good to keep a nearby place 'hot', so to speak, in order to apply pressure.

The Russians in my view haven't forgotten an idea from the 1990s, something apparent in how they've seized onto federalization in Ukraine and Moldova. At the time, the idea was, I remember [Anatoly] Lukanov saying in 1990, 'you have three republics': Gagauzia, Transdnistria, and Moldova. And something like that exists today. I think one of Moldova's biggest mistakes was to grant Gagauzia autonomous status in 1994, something that clearly can't be taken back. And Transdnistria will accept nothing less than everything Gagauzia has, which as we know includes regional autonomy. That's the big problem.^[2]

Mr. Bistreanu's comments did not receive a charitable hearing in Gagauzia (or for that matter, in Moldova's separatist Transdnistria). The news portal *Yedinaya Gagauz* offered this acerbic summation of what he had to say

—“Gagauzia’s special legal status” in Mr. Bistreanu’s view “is like a bone in the throat.”[3]

Given Gagauzis’ animadversion toward Romanian revanchism (real and imagined [4]) and creeping encroachment on its autonomous status by the Moldovan government in Chişinău, political leaders of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia intend that bone to remain well lodged. While Russia remains an outspoken supporter of Gagauzian autonomy—something it sees as instrumental to force a federal structure on Moldova—Turkish soft power intrusions are increasingly worrisome to Moscow. Of special concern is Russian Tatars’ willing role as an instrument of Turkish soft power in the eastern Balkans. Today, it continues to be true that the autonomous territory’s compact footprint belies its ability as Margaret Thatcher once said of Europe generally, “to produce more history than they can consume locally.”[5]

“History Condemned Moldova to be a State”[6]

Gagauzia—*Gagaúz Yeri* in the eponymous Gagauz language, or *Gagaúziya* in its lingua franca, Russian—is an assemblage of four small noncontiguous territories in southern Moldova. Known formally as the Republic of Moldova’s Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia,[7] it encompasses an area only two-thirds the size of Hong Kong or about half of the size of Rhode Island. With a minuscule population (161,000) the territory is of little consequence economically or otherwise, save one thing: it sits by historical accident atop a geopolitical fracture line where Russian, Turkish and Western geopolitical interests collide.



The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia has, indeed, proved a “bone in the throat” of Moldova’s Romanian-leaning majority. Its People’s Assembly (*Halk Topluşu*) is pushing back hard against what it sees as Chişinău’s concerted effort to challenge territorial laws. The Chişinău government has targeted the autonomous territory’s electoral and broadcasting codes, tax code, and the legal status of *Halk Topluşu* members.[8]

In mid-August, Ivan Burgudji—who, depending on one’s point of view, is either a criminal terrorist or a vigorous proponent of Gagauzi autonomy[9]—forcefully denounced the State Chancellery’s (*Cancelaria de Stat*) “corrupt

practice” of nullifying laws enacted by the *Halk Topluşu*. Mr. Burgudji claimed territorial laws “have equal legal status” with national laws under the provisions of the Moldovan constitution guaranteeing ATU-Gagauzia’s autonomous status and prevail when there is a conflict of laws. “All this is done with one goal in mind—to scale back the rights and powers of Gagauzia, relegating us to the status of an ordinary administrative unit,”^[10] he said, threatening to convene a September meeting “to discuss whether it was worthwhile for ATU-Gagauzia to participate in the upcoming Moldovan elections”—a reference to the country’s October 30 presidential election.^[11]

Much of the ambiguity over the meaning of the word “autonomous” is rooted in the 1994 Law on Special Legal Status of Gagauzia. While it outlined key provisions of the territory’s autonomy status—for example, it delineated the territory’s administrative boundaries and the authority of its legislative and executive branches—the 1994 autonomy statute provides little guidance as to how the national and territorial governments are meant to decide where proper authority and responsibility reside on policy and governance matters.^[12] The Chişinău government has tried more than once to defuse what it sees as the “threat” posed by Gagauzi autonomy by electing to take small measures—one slice at a time,^[13] in one view—and has produced a flurry of national laws that ostensibly are incompatible with the 1994 autonomy statute.

Oleg Protsyk notes, “the proliferation of national laws, cabinet orders and resolutions had an effect of shrinking the policy space for Gagauz self-government.”^[14] A particular problem is that the 1994 autonomy law refers all legal disputes to Moldova’s State Chancellery. The ATU-Gagauzia government in Comrat has successfully resisted Chişinău’s efforts to change the 1994 autonomy statute. It has been less successful, however, in its efforts to amend the Moldovan constitution. While Comrat achieved modest modifications to two constitutional articles, this accomplished little so far as strengthening its control over territorial affairs.

Admittedly faring better than Transdnestrian separatists^[15] in their quest for cultural and administrative autonomy, the Gagauzi failed early on to win full sovereignty within a hoped-for tripartite (i.e., Gagauzia, Transdnestria, and a rump Moldova) confederation.^[16] So, observed Charles King, the Gagauzi “in large part made a virtue out of a necessity:”

The Gagauzi do not have access to the arms caches available to the Transnistrians [sic], they live in the poorest region of Moldova and thus do not threaten the state with the loss of most of its industry and energy links (as do the separatists in Transnistria), [and] they still rely on Chişinău to subsidize the local budget.^[17]

Dumitru Diacov—the founder of Moldova’s socialist Democratic Party^[18] (*Partidul Democrat din Moldova*)—said the following in an August 2016 interview with Radio Europa Liberă:^[19]

Speaking in a strictly legal context, Moldova today is a federal republic if one takes into account Gagauzia’s status as an autonomous territory. Sometimes we cling to legalisms or to one word or another instead of focusing on how to think about the fundamental problem of the country’s territorial integrity. If you don’t have a strong economy, if you don’t have a strong military, then what should you do if you need to attract tangible resources and investment opportunities? You have to use diplomatic skills, to use the language in question.^[20]

Vadim Krasnoselsky^[21] reacted swiftly to Mr. Diacov. Transdnestria, he said, agreed to federalization in 2003 (under terms of the Kozak Memorandum^[22]) only to see it rejected by Chişinău. “The Supreme Council [of the PMR] has no intention of discussing Transdnestria’s status as part of a federal or confederated Moldova” since its proper status “is what we already have—independence.” The only configuration acceptable to the Transdnestria is integration with Russia, added Vice-Speaker Galina Antyufeeva.^[23] Ivan Burgudji responded that “there was no legitimate government of the Republic of Moldova” after the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic fell.

In the interim, the people of Gagauzia formed their own independent Gagauz Republic on 19 August

1990. Transdnistria did the same on 2 September. And only after another year was the Republic of Moldova formed on the remainder on the territory. Were it not for the fact that Gagauzia entered [the Republic of Moldova] as an autonomous region, we would now be like Transdnistria.[24]

Mr. Burgudji added that if Moldova “does not fulfill its commitments [to devolve certain powers to Gagauzia], then we need to go back to the framework of the independent Republic of Gagauzia . . . While on paper we appear to have a lot of authority, in reality we do not.” According to *Halk Topluşu* deputy Sergey Cimpoiş,

[T]he Chisinau authorities have adopted a different tactic with regard to Gagauzia. Instead of open confrontation, they smile, they promise . . . Dmitry Konstantinov [Halk Topluşu Speaker] and Irina Vlah for over a year have used one particular tactic—the two of them, they discuss problems . . . and meet with the Moldovan leadership, and something is whispered and we don’t really know what’s been agreed. The results we see are negative. I can’t blame them—they’re only renting their official powers . . . But I don’t recall any duo during Gagauzia’s existence who have been as weak politically as they are today.[25]

There are, of course, other points of view. Condemning Chişinău’s “unconditional surrender” (*bezogovorochnaya sdacha*), Serhiy Ilchenko argues that Moldova *de facto* acceded to Russian pressure to transition the country to a federal-type governing structure (which he believes has unfavorable implications for his country, Ukraine).[26] Mr. Ilchenko warns that Russia may seek to exploit Moldova’s recent European Union association agreement as a “loophole” to evade Western economic sanctions. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, he writes, admonished Moldovan authorities that “without Russia’s intervention, Transdnistria would secede” and “what are today two *de facto* territories would no longer have anything to bind them as a single state.” Mr. Ilchenko continued:

Moscow and Chişinău agreed . . . to Moldova’s *de facto* division into zones of influence, one European and the other, Russian. The latter consists of the unrecognized territory of Transdnistria and the autonomous territory of Gagauzia. [. . .] Apparently, Dmitry Rogozin went to Moldova to reach a mutual understanding. And he found one in two different places, Chişinău and Tiraspol, at the one and the same time.[27]

The presence of a Russian zone of influence on Moldova’s eastern boundary with Ukraine, Mr. Ilchenko warns, “will, like an acid, corrode the bordering Odessa region.” The separatist Transdnistrian government in Tiraspol, Mr. Rogozin said, issued warnings about “the likelihood of provocations by Ukrainian radicals” and cautioned all Moldovans “to be wary of contacts with Kyev.”

Moldova’s unification with Romania has been a persistent theme since early 1990s. Mircea Snegur, [28] Moldova’s first president, tirelessly fostered the idea of unification, declaring in an August 1991 *Le Figaro* interview:

Independence is of course a temporary condition. At first, there will be two Romanian states, but this will not last long. I repeat again that the independence of the Soviet Moldova is a step, not an end.[29]

The issue retook center stage in February 1993 when Chişinău asked Romania to replace its envoy, Mr. Bistreanu, because of incendiary public statements in which he characterized Moldova as a “temporary” country and future part of Romania.

Gagauzi resistance to Romanian hegemony is deep and longstanding.[30] It is rooted in the mass resettlement of Orthodox Christian Gagauzis at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. They left the Ottoman-

controlled Dobruja region of modern-day Romania and Bulgaria for Tsarist Russia-controlled southern Moldova and the Odessa region.

The forced migration of the Gagauz was a critical juncture in the formation of their pro-Russian political culture because this event had a significant effect on the lives of the absolute majority of Gagauz.[31]

A 1990 survey found fewer than one in five Gagauzi supported Moldova's independence from the Soviet Union (it was an even lower 13% in Transdnistria), while Moldovans were almost unanimous at the time across all regions (94-98%) in opposing the country's unification with Romania.[32] Gagauzi self-identification with the Soviet Union distinguishes them from other Russian Turkic peoples like the Crimean Tatars.

Wake Up, Romania![33]

The Gagauzi have long worried about the dual effects of thinly veiled pro-Romanian sympathies held by some Moldovan leaders and Romanian revanchist ambitions in Moldova.

The Gagauzi and Transdnistrians were initially concerned that the pan-Romanian euphoria which swept the republic during the second half of 1989 would lead to their forced "romanianization" and a quick union of Moldova and Romania. [Moldova's] new language laws were of particular concern.[34]

Among pan-Romanianists, Charles King writes, "[the word] 'Moldovan' should be no more than a regional identity in a reconstituted 'Greater Romania'." [35] This attitude manifests in maps of the country's "historic" regions that invariably show modern Moldova as part of Romania.



Gagauzi concerns over Romanian revanchism masquerading as Moldovan nationalism are not baseless. Consider this declaration from Moldova's Grand National Assembly (*Marea Adunare Națională*) held in August 1990 around the time the country declared independence from the Soviet Union. Some 300,000 people attended the mass demonstration.

There is but one formal language that is both spoken and written within the territory of the Socialist

Republic of Romania and that of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. There is only one proper alphabet of this language, the Latin alphabet. [. . .] The Grand National Assembly determines to restore the historical name of our people, one which we have borne through the ages—the ROMANIAN name—and the name of our language—the ROMANIAN LANGUAGE.[36] [Emphasis in original]

Romanian revanchists[37] have their own view of the metaphorical bone in the throat. Consider this 2012 commentary titled “Historic Romania is a bone in the throat” directed at Moldova’s then prime minister, Vladimir Filat:[38]

A lot of people are puzzled over how a man who studied in Romania and later came into power now is against his own people . . . We all know those who are against historic Romania. [. . .] After two years of gridlock, Comrade Putin and Comrade Chiril agreed Russia would contribute to President Filat’s election campaign. Of course, this ‘gift’ was conditioned on continuing the policy of exterminating the Bessarabian Romanians . . . Once you acquire a taste for power you sign treaties with the devil so as to keep yourself in control, Russia in this case being the devil.

I have said it many times, that a union [with Romania] is inconvenient for politicians in Chişinău, who would lose their comfortable chairs and the means of becoming millionaires on the backs of the people. Unfortunately, we are witnessing a new assimilation of Bessarabian Romanians as ‘Moldovans’, this time by our own people. Let’s hope this injustice does not go forward, and that Moldova unites with Romania. Then the bone in Filat’s throat will be fatal.[39]

Its author writes elsewhere:

The Gagauz unfortunately were and are victims of Russian imperialism, whom the Russians use to destabilize the situation in eastern Moldova . . . Their actions over the last twenty years have favored the Russian occupiers. They came to our land, we have them a home, and they behaved like a cowardly mob, spitting on all that is holy in this small country. So what to do? The only solution to the problem of this minority group is union . . . It will very likely become this first ethnic minority in Romania to disappear over the next generation.[40]

The United States amidst this tumult blundered undiplomatically into Moldova’s tempestuous domestic politics in August managing to alienate Moldovans and NATO ally Romania at the same time. A commentary by Lelia Munteanu, senior editor of the Romanian daily *Gândul*, sounded a warning:

Ambassador James Pettit is too experienced to fail to express in precise terms the State Department’s position. The key words are ‘Transdnistria special status’. In other words, the United States, our strategic partner, has reached an agreement with Russia on Moldova, an understanding in which Germany no doubt participated.[41]

The reference is to Ambassador Pettit’s August 26 interview with the Moldovan television station *Moldova-1*, during which he said the following:

Joining Romania, for example, as a means to get into the EU or for whatever reason, is really not a practical solution, it is a not practical choice, it is not a choice that is going to make things better . . . Moldova is not Romania, Moldova has its own unique history, it has its own unique challenges. Among those challenges there is the fact that Moldova is a multiethnic country with people

speaking different languages, of course there is the issue of Transdnistria, that is not even under central government control, but needs a special status which is an ultimate goal, but a special status within Republic of Moldova.[42]

Decrying Ambassador Pettit's remarks as "a gross insult to Romanian history," former Romanian President Traian Basescu asked rhetorically on his Facebook page, "Is U.S. Ambassador James Pettit a Moscow trumpet?" (*Ambasadorul UA James Pettit, o trâmbiță a Moscovei?*). He proceeded to excoriate Ambassador Pettit "for promoting theories not unlike Stalin and Putin's propaganda offering Moscow invaluable aid by landing heavy blows against historic realities and by supporting the obfuscation of Romanian history."[\[43\]](#)

Romanian press accounts were no less strident. Announcing "Wake up, Romania!" (*Deșteaptă-te Române!*), *Cortidianul* questioned whether Romania could rely on NATO to come to its defense in the event of Russian aggression from the direction of Moldova:

The diplomat actually argues for Moscow's antagonistic policy toward Romania, which seeks a Greater Moldova by keeping the country, formed with our Bessarabia, outside of Romania . . . We may legitimately ask then: should we provide military bases to the American as well as other NATO allies, each of which have their own agendas, expecting them to defend us, in the hypothetical, but not as unlikely as it may seem, chance that Russian army occupies Bessarabia in order to attack Romania from a unified 'Moldovan state' which, independent and sovereign, will 'of its own volition' join Russia?[44]

"A strategic partnership is not built on whispers, insidious silences, and swallowing the geopolitical frog."[\[45\]](#) That colorful opinion belongs to the Romanian sociologist and Moldova scholar, Dan Dungaciu, whose reflections were published in the Romanian daily *Adevărul* under the headline "Defend me, Lord, from my friends."[\[46\]](#) He believes the practical effect of Ambassador Pettit's recommendations is to raise a "velvet curtain" between Moldova and Romania (elsewhere, he calls it "a geopolitical curtain across the Prut"[\[47\]](#)) dividing the two countries "into separate spaces" and leading ultimately to Moldova's "Transdnistrianization." He also criticizes that lack of "synchronized" American diplomacy vis-à-vis Moldova and Romania; something which reflects, he maintains, that American diplomats who cover Moldova do not also cover Romania, but instead, Ukraine and Belarus.[\[48\]](#) Ambassador Pettit, he continued, "opened this Pandora's Box by his unwise intervention," which Russia will exploit "to stir up anti-Americanism."

As the *Gândul* commentary noted, Germany also weighed in. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier "asked Moldova and Transdnistria to approach a solution to the decades-old conflict in the former Soviet republic by a policy of small steps."[\[49\]](#) *Die Saarbrücker Zeitung* had this perspective:

In crossing the Dniester River, Frank-Walter Steinmeier briefly lost his office: he is no longer German Foreign Minister—at least for a few hours. That happened the moment the top German diplomat arrived in the Republic of Moldova's breakaway Transnistria region. Since Germany does not recognize the independence of land beyond the Dniester, he is there not as Foreign Minister, but only in his capacity as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's acting chair for conflict mediation . . .

A statue of Lenin reaches into the sky before the seat of parliament and the government. The Transdnistrian leadership welcomed Steinmeier in the Soviet style building, resplendant with its hammer and sickle on the wall. If the OSCE Steinmeier is back in Moldova and meets the Foreign Minister Steinmeier, he will have to tell him about it.[50]

A follow up story in the German language edition of *Sputnik* (part of the Russian government-controlled *Rossiya Segodnya* news agency) declared, "Transdnistria says 'No'," asserting that "there can be no question of a union

with Moldova, because Transdnistria's status was determined in a 2006 referendum in which citizens voted for the Republic's independence followed by accession to Russia."[\[51\]](#)

Utterly Russian People Who Don't Think They Should be Romanian[\[52\]](#)

Language is the confession of the people.

– Pyotr Andreyevich Vyazemsky, *Anglichanke* (1855)

Dimitar Bechev writes, "Turkey parades as champion of the Balkan Muslims while Russia claims to protect Orthodox Slavs."[\[53\]](#) And then there is *Gagaúz Yerí*, where ethnic Gagauzi (82.1% of ATU-Gagauzia residents) are neither Balkan Muslims nor Orthodox Slavs. They instead are Orthodox Turks whose ancestors migrated from the Ottoman-held eastern Balkans. The eponymous Gagauz language is a northwestern dialect of Turkish,[\[54\]](#) which today is written in a Cyrillic-based alphabet adopted in 1957 (when the territory was part of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic). Gagauz, while widely spoken, is rarely used for writing. Thus most (80%) Gagauzi are bilingual in Russian, but in contrast, very few (around 4%) are bilingual in Romanian, which is Moldova's official language.

Perceptions of Russian influence in Gagauzia (and Transdnistria) are closely tied to the prevalence of the Russian speakers there. Alexei Vorontsov writes that language serves three functions: as a transmitter of information, as an instrument of national identity, and as a cultural repository. Of these, "the famous Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin considered language the most important expression of ethno-cultural identity."[\[55\]](#) The political theorist Vadim Tsymbursky conceptualized Russia as an "island civilization" surrounded by a metaphorical sea of countries, which collectively he called the Great Limitrophe.[\[56\]](#) Synthesizing the theories of Vorontsov and Tsymbursky, cultural linguist Viktor Shaklein suggests a "Russian language limitrophe zone as natural territories of Russian civilization."[\[57\]](#)

The "language struggle" (*yazykovaya bor'ba*) manifests in many ways, writes Nikolai Starikov:

The organizers of the October Revolution knew well the value of language, and vigorously pursued language reform after they seized power in 1917-1918. Church Slavonic not only linked the different Russian dialects but was a means of communication among Orthodox Slavs, including in the Balkans, a traditional sphere of Russian influence. The Bolsheviks banned Church Slavonic, loosening ties among the Slavs and contributing to the Russian peoples' fragmentation.[\[58\]](#)

Calling Gagauzia (and Transdnistria) "parts of the country where utterly Russian people live who don't think they should become Romanian,"[\[59\]](#) Mr. Starikov decried that "Moldova is ready to sacrifice its independence and 'surrender' its territory to Romania." Russia will, however, "become strong and powerful once again, and those who advocate integration into Romania will melt away like smoke."[\[60\]](#)

Is the collapse of the Moldovan nation inevitable if the pursuit of the mythical 'European integration' continues? Yes, because half the population of Moldova—Transdnistria, Gagauzia, and the country's north—never have and never will agree to 'European integration'. . . It is clear that a significant part of the Moldovan population will not accept a new 'pro-Western' power. That means the conflict continues and will become more acute. Like in Ukraine.[\[61\]](#)

For Mr. Starikov, there is only one way forward:

No one can undermine the traditional values of the Russian people. In this, Orthodox and Muslim Russians are absolutely united. [. . .] The only way to preserve Moldova's territorial integrity is integration into the Eurasian space. Only this can erase the animosities between Moldova on the one hand, and Transdnistria, Gagauzia, and the country's north on the other. [. . .] Figuratively speaking, Russia offers Moldova a legal marriage. And the West, only cohabitation, and in the girl's

house, too, just to get the keys and everything in it. And all the while saying “I promise you we’ll get married.”[62]

In 2008, Mihail Formuzal (then *Başcan*) declared, “our people are an integral part of Russian World . . . and while it sounds paradoxical, knowledge of the Russian language is one guarantor of our self-preservation, including our ethnic identity.”[63] *Russkaya Vesna* goes further, calling Gagauzia “Russia World’s Turkic fortress” (*tyurkskaya krepost’ Russkogo mira*):

The ‘Russian Spring’ in southeast Ukraine is not the first example beyond Russia’s modern boundaries of resistance by ‘Russia World’ to official attempts to impose ethnocratic dictatorship . . . [T]here is another faithful little friend, one which unfortunately is rarely spoken of. It is Gagauzia, a small area in southern Moldova, which stubbornly resists any attempt by the Chişinău authorities to wrest it from the Russian orbit and reorient it to the West, or to be exact, to Romania. It is no accident that Ivan Burgudji calls Gagauzia the historical ‘garrison of Byzantium.’[64]

One month later, President Putin elaborated on the meaning of the term used by *Russkaya Vesna*—“Russia World” (*Russkiy Mir*)— as signifying a Russia larger than the merely territorial one:

When I say Russian people and Russian-speaking citizens, I mean people who feel themselves part of a wider so-called Russian World, not necessarily those who are ethnically Russian, but people who consider themselves Russian.[65]

Başcan Irena Vlah maintains that Gagauzia prefers cooperation, or as she put it, “nibbling from Russia’s palm.”[66] Moldova’s former ambassador to the United States, Igor Munteanu, is less kind. He insists that Gagauzia and Transdniestria are part of a Kremlin strategy to “decouple” Moldova from the European Union:[67]

Russia does not hide its strategic interest in decoupling the Republic of Moldova and the EU, abolishing the [July 2016] Association Agreement [between Moldova and the EU], and using Tiraspol as a battering ram to get a federal-type political structure to its own liking. In other words, the tail would wag the dog, and escalate these genetic political fantasies about Gagauz autonomy.[68]

The Influence of Turkic Soft Power

No house can stand, divided in two. Our common house, the Russian world, divided in two in 1917 and could not withstand it.[69]

-Vyacheslav Nikonov

While the Russian government worries about its Turkish counterpart’s seeping influence in Gagauzia, some of the more troubling (for Russia) Turkic soft power intrusions have come from an altogether unexpected direction—Russia’s own Qazan (sometimes spelled *Kazan*) Tatars. Numbering some 5.3 million people (of which 2 million reside in Russian Tatarstan[70]), the Qazan Tatars constitute the second largest nationality (nationality in the Russian sense of *natsional’nost’*, akin to ethnicity) in the Russian Federation. The *Tatar-inform* portal (operated by the Tatarstan Republic’s Ministry of Information and Communications) reported a March 2016 visit by a Gagauzi delegation “that was particularly interested in the issue of preserving and promoting the native language.” According to Razil Valeev, who chairs the Tatarstan State Council’s Culture, Science and Education Committee, “The law on languages was one of the first laws adopted in the Republic of Tatarstan, which speaks to the importance we assigned to this issue.”[71] The Gagauz delegation was in Tatarstan to attend a three-day “Days of

Gagauz culture” celebration held in the Republic’s capital, Kazan.[72]



A month earlier, a Qazan Tatar delegation attended the “Gagauzia 2016: the viability of autonomy” conference held in Comrat to mark the anniversary of the 1994 autonomy statute. There was a significant Russian presence as well. Alexei Koshel, a Moscow-based scholar associated with the group Eurasia Commonwealth, said of Gagauzia, “Friendship is what we offer and we ask nothing in return.” He called “a triumph of free speech”[73] ATU-Gagauzia’s January 2014 referendum questions on the territory’s independence (approved by 98.9% of voters), closer association with the Russia-lead Commonwealth of Independent States customs union (approved by 98.4% of voters), and closer European Union integration (rejected by 97.2% of voters).

That being said, Moscow seeks to frustrate Tatar outreach to Gagauzia. According to a 2016 *Regnum* commentary, the Tatarstan Republic’s “adoption in the early 1990s of a language law under the pretext of ‘protecting the native language’ and subsequent implementation of bilingualism:”

Turned into aggressive de-Russification and a campaign to reduce significantly the use of the Russian language in all spheres of life, especially government and education. This led to ethnic tensions and mass protests in the region, not only by Russians but also by Tatars.[74]

“The Russian language,” *Regnum* continued, “serves as the *lingua franca* of Gagauz autonomy.”

Inter-ethnic and linguistic friction is completely absent in the autonomous region. But something about this must not sit well with the a present ‘pro-Russia’ authorities in Gagauzia, so far as it is true that they have decided suddenly to adopt and implement policies based on Tatarstan’s national language laws. It is worth noting that in this, they concur with the nationalist-Russophobes in Chişinău, whose principal reproach is always that autonomous Gagauzia is somehow not ‘Gagauz’ because its people speak Russian, educate their children in Russian, and generally are pro-Russia. So Chişinău can only applaud Comrat’s ‘Tatar’ initiatives to ‘protect the native language’ (read: to de-Russify Gagauzia).[75]

“No house can stand, divided in two. Our common house, the Russian world, divided in two in 1917 was unable to withstand it,” wrote Vyacheslav Nikonov[76] in a February 2011 commentary published on *Russkie.org*, the online portal of the Institute of the Russian Diaspora (*Institut Russkogo zarubezh’ya*). The Bolsheviks, he wrote, “‘created national republics along ethnic lines . . . to negate the concept of a civil society,’ the effect of which was to reduce “the word ‘Russian’ to a mere ethnic conceptualization.”

Accordingly, many believe it impossible to create a nation-state today, when Russians are only one

of 135 ethnicities that live in Russia. [. . .] In the Soviet era, Tatars did not have a positive perception of the word 'Russian' (Russkiy). They hammered it into their heads that 'Russian' meant ethnicity, such that one could identify as a Russian or a Soviet but not both. This unfortunately remains so today, consequently we need to use these concepts very carefully . . . using the word 'Russian' to identify nationality is risky because among Tatars and people of the North Caucasus, it will be heard to mean ethnicity.[77]

A commentary published on the *Russian Line* news portal (*Russkaya narodnaya liniya*) picked up this particular theme. Vladimir Anishchenkov wrote, "We are proud that the children of many civilizations gather in our Russian world . . . The history of the Russian Empire shows that Russia not only has not been a prison of nations, Russia is a family of different peoples." [78] Mr. Anishchenkov continued:

It is time to discard the ostrich policy towards those who wish to rendezvous with us: Transdnistria, Abkhazia, Crimea, Gagauzia, Seven Rivers, the south of Western Siberia. We are afraid to offend the former fraternal republics, but they are not afraid to insult us and to betray us, to follow a duplicitous and anti-Russian policy. No developed country in the world would allow itself to speak to Russia in the manner that we allow our former republics to speak to us . . . And why, for example, could Moldova gain independence from the Soviet Union, and but Transdnistria cannot gain independence from Moldova? Who has forbidden it? Uncle Sam?[79]

Andrey Savelyev took on the matter of ethnicity in another *Russkaya narodnaya liniya* commentary: [80]

An individual who is culturally Russian is called 'Russian' (Rossiyskiy) no matter what his ethnic origin, both in Russia and beyond. This is the definition of Russian-ness. Russian identity derives not just from having Russian parents because the concept is far broader than mere ethnicity." [. . .] Russians like all ethnic-nationalities [malye narody, literally "small peoples"] living in Russia must understand they are part of the larger world only through the agency of Russian culture. It is their Russian-ness that makes them part of that world. And if they renounce their Russian-ness, all they are left is their archaic ethnic heritage. [. . .] We enter into the world as Russians, not the other way around. We can only be Russian, and will remain so.[81]

Rais Suleymanov, a pro-Russia Tatar deploras "the [post-Soviet] 'parade of sovereignties' [that] led to rampant regional separatism. Former ethnic autonomous republics declared sovereignty and began to position themselves as independent states. One of the flagships of this process was the Republic of Tatarstan." [82] Turkey, he continued, sought to build its influence within Russian territory by increasing foreign expansionism in regions populated by Turkic populations.

Turkey managed to get its most active foothold in Tatarstan, largely due to the support of national elites in the ethnocratic republic, who see Turkey as a kind of 'big brother'. [. . .] Turkish 'soft power' plays an important role in preserving Ankara's presence in Tatarstan, by which we mean a set of non-profit organizations, educational institutions, communities, religious groups, which act to guide Turkey's interests.[83]

A *Regnum* commentary, entitled "Incompetence or Betrayal?" (*Nekompetentnost' ili predatel'stvo?*), said that Gagauz authorities visited Tatarstan in early 2016 in order to assess its experience "preserving and expanding the mother tongue" and "implementing bilingualism." [84] It warned:

The pro-Russia Gagauz administration is going to de-Russify the region after several consultations

with Moldovan authorities. It intends to review the territory's language policy with the intention of rejecting the dominant position of the Russian language . . . The territory's possible de-Russification will not be a variant of Moldova's but instead the Tatar one, which was based on the implementation of bilingualism.[85]

The Russian government is watching Comrat with a mix of apprehension and alarm. In April 2016, *Regnum* warned, "the Kremlin's Gagauz partner has turned into a 'Trojan horse' against the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic," the official name of separatist Transdniestria. Calling Gagauz *Başkan* Irina Vlah "laughable and detached from reality," the *Regnum* commentary continued, "This is the first time the head of Gagauzia has been willing to act on Chişinău's side in negotiations over the Moldovan-Transdniestrian conflict settlement." [86]

Ms. Vlah corrected course in July when she participated in a two-day meeting in Moscow between Russian and Moldovan officials to discuss lifting the Russian blockade on Moldovan agricultural products (in place since July 2014 [87]) in exchange for Chişinău ending its blockade of Russian aircraft ferrying cargo and troops to and from Transdniestria. [88] A report in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* included the curious headline: "Moscow afforded the southern region of Moldova the prospect of integration into the Russian Federation" (*Moskva predostavila yuzhnomu regionu Moldavii vozmozhnosti dlya integratsii v RF*).

Qazan Tatars have their own issues with the Russian government going back to a March 21, 1994 referendum on Tatarstan independence (approved by 61.4% of voters with 81.7% turnout). Responding to Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea, the Tatar National Assembly (*Milli Mejlis*) [89] accused the Russian government of pursuing "a destructive policy targeting statehood, education, and indigenous languages," a reference to amendments adopted to Russia's education law in 2007. [90] The *Milli Mejlis* accused Moscow of conducting "a silent coup" in Tatarstan in 2002 when it forced removal of a sovereignty clause from the Republic's constitution. [91] Now, "for the sake of survival," the *Milli Majlis* demanded that United Nations and Russian recognition of the results of the 1994 independence referendum, restoration of the deleted sovereignty clause, and Russia's expulsion from the Council of Europe as punishment "for the ethnogenocide of indigenous people." [92] According to the head of the *Milli Majlis*, the historian and writer Fauzi Bayramova:

The Dobrudja Tatars, who reside in the territory of modern Romania, decided to adopt the Crimean Tatar alphabet and to call themselves Crimean Tatars. [. . .] Meanwhile, Romanian policymakers are giving very serious consideration to the possibility of joining with Moldova, especially that part of Moldovan society that would do so willingly. Given this, the Romanian Tatars' decision to unite with the Crimean Tatars looks quite logical. [93]

Front-Line Gagauzia

"A front line in the war of influence between Erdoğan and Putin." [94] That is how the Romanian newspaper *Agora* characterized Gagauzia; a view further elaborated on in a commentary on the Russian language Moldavian news portal *Budjak Online*:

[T]he idea of Gagauzia as a bridge between Turkey and Russia has always been rather whimsical . . . The apparent absence of any rationale for this idea ordained that for many years, Comrat 'bombarded' the two capitals with numerous letters, statements and declarations without eliciting any sign of interest. So what has prompted the two countries to turn to this strategy? Whether the vicissitudes of bilateral relations or something else, it is important today for Gagauzia to take full advantage of the opportunity. [95]

The commentator continued that Gagauzis "cannot talk about a special relationship with Turkey . . . they are Moldovan citizens, like every other nationality living there." [96] Responding on *Budjak Online*, a more sympathetic commentator took him to task:

It is as if the Romanian Ambassador to Ukraine ventured to say that in Bucharest's opinion, Bukovina Romanians are Ukrainian citizens like everyone else and should expect no special treatment.[97]

On the occasion of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Selim Kartal's departure from Chişinău in August 2016, another *Budjak Online* commentary titled "Mission Not Accomplished" (*Missiya ne vypolnena*) said that he was "mostly indifferent to the interests of Gagauzia."[\[98\]](#) It recalled a May 2014 visit to Moldova by Cemil Çiçek, who at the time was Speaker of the Turkish parliament:

During lunch with his Turkish guest, [Moldovan] President Nicolae Timofti 'spouted' anti-Gagauz propaganda, for example, that the Gagauz people are unwilling to learn the state language and oppose Chisinau's foreign policy. Kartal's presence failed to prevent this, and Çiçek was left with an unbalanced and non-objective view of Gagauzia. As a result, Çiçek openly advocated for NATO during private meetings with journalists in Comrat and public ones in Chişinău.[99]

Turkey's ambitions in Gagauzia, like Russia's, are hegemonic rather than territorial. Writing that "Russia and Turkey, despite a number of fundamental differences on international matters, are united by common strategic interests," the Russian language *Regnum* news agency offered this rather upbeat view:

In analyzing the actions of Turkey and Russian within the territory of Gagauzia, attention is drawn to the fact that there is virtually no cooperation there between the two countries. That is, each has secretly determined a sphere of influence, which it thinks does not encroach on the other's . . . Thus Gagauzia answers the well-known dispute whether Russia and Turkey are allies or rivals. Russia cannot substitute for Turkey in the Turkic world, just as Turkey is unable to replace Russia in the Russian world. The two countries complement each other, such that their active cooperation could create the balance necessary to maintain political stability and security in certain countries. [. . .] Gagauzia, being at one and the same time part of both the Turkic and the Russian worlds, could become a model platform for the development of Russian-Turkish relations, both regionally and globally.[100]

Can Gagauzia Swing Moldova's Presidential Election?

The simple truth is that nothing is final.[101]

-Darya Aslamova

While the ambitions of regional hegemons inside Gagauzia are mostly limited to attaining a degree of agency, the autonomous territory remains one of several centrifugal forces rending Moldova. Pro-European Union parties' inability to unite behind one of their four candidates in Moldova's presidential election scheduled for October 30 benefits pro-Russia Socialist candidate Igor Dodon. His appeal to Gagauzi voters is unambiguous:

Twenty-six years ago, the authorities did not want to but still were forced to recognize your autonomy. This is important not only for you, but for all citizens of Moldova. Many times you defended Moldova's national identity, ensuring Moldova did not just slip away into Romania and NATO, and allowing no one to extinguish our nationhood. You had to do it. Unlike the rest of Moldova, you are united. All citizens of our country have something to learn from you. As long as we are united, we are invincible. We have our own country, with its language and national identity. Moldova will survive only if we are united and remain close with our strategic partner, the Russian Federation [102]

When endorsing Mr. Dodon, Comrat vice mayor and local Socialist Party head Alexander Sukhodolskii said, “We need a president who will defend the interests of the Gagauz people, the people of the whole country.”^[103]

Mr. Dodon’s forceful denunciation of “unionism” (*unionizmom*) or unification with Romania—a Socialist campaign leaflet reads “Romanian police will not be the masters here!” (*Rumynskiy zhandarm ne budet zdes’ khozyainom!*)—has caused other candidates (in this instance, Iurie Leancă of the European People’s Party of Moldova) to complain that he seeks to “provoke discord” (*sprovotsirovat’ razdor*).^[104]

The Romanian language press warns, “Igor Dodon will be the only candidate supported by voters in Gagauzia” (*Igor Dodon va fi unicul candidat susținut de alegătorii din Găgăuzia*):

Although some dismiss the Gagauz electorate as small and insignificant, about fifty thousand, we must remember there have been enough instances when candidates lost because of a difference of one vote or a few hundred votes. These southern votes, whether fifty thousand or thirty thousand, will contribute to Dodon’s victory in the fall elections. Gagauzia certainly will not be Igor Dodon’s main lifeline but it will provide him with electoral support in gratitude for everything he did as the Socialist leader in the south.^[105]

Writing “the ‘unionist danger’ has been turned into a campaign theme, fueled by recent statements of the US Ambassador,” the Romanian online newspaper *Cotidianul* published what it claimed were “pro-Russian” slogans used in Mr. Dodon’s campaign literature:

- “Unification with Romania means the destruction and disappearance of Moldova” (*Unirea cu România înseamnă distrugerea și dispariția Republicii Moldova*).
- “Unification with Romania means civil war, because many Moldovans will resist” (*Unirea cu România înseamnă că va fi război civil, pentru că mulți moldoveni se vor împotrivi*).
- “Unification with Romania means we will permanently lose northern Moldova, Gagauzia, and Transdnistria” (*Unirea cu România înseamnă că vom pierde definitiv nordul Moldovei, Găgăuzia, Transnistria*).^[106]

While the prospects of a pro-Russian Moldovan wedged between Romania and Ukraine alarm some, it is an open question how much European governments care about the outcome of the presidential election, especially given the country’s mounting economic difficulties and endemic corruption. “For Europe,” writes Russian journalist Darya Aslamova in a pithy two-part essay, “Moldova is just an antiseptic cushion separating it from Russia.”^[107]

Romanians in the future would like to devour all of Moldova and Transdnistria. And no haggling! What is the meaning of this grandiose but very dirty game? ‘No one, in fact, cares about Transdnistria, this tiny slip of land,’ I’m told by people who understand the region’s politics. Transdnistria is a likely bargaining chip between Romania and Ukraine. If Romania and Moldova ever become a unified country, the Romanians expect to trade Transdnistria, where ethnic Ukrainians account for about half the population, for Northern Bukovina, which includes parts the Odessa and Chernivtsi regions.^[108]

Russia would likely have something to say about Moldova’s partitioning, especially by Bucharest and Kyev. Ukraine, perhaps, has more at risk in the short term than anyone else in the event a Russia-oriented government under Mr. Dodon pops up on its western border (and given its own Gagauzi population in the Odessa region^[109]). So consider this excerpt from a long and insightful analysis by the respected Ukrainian newspaper *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*:

Undoubtedly, there are forces (both within and without Moldova) that benefit from occasionally playing the unionism card, in Romania, and in Moldova and its Transdnistria region. For Chisinau

elites, this is primarily to mobilize the electorate . . . For Moscow and Tiraspol “unionism” is a favorite vehicle to disrupt negotiations on resolving the Transdniestrian conflict. [. . .] One cannot rule out the possibility that Moscow may decide to raise the stakes at some point by playing the Transdniestria card, offering the West to trade recognition of Russia’s de facto annexation of Crimea in exchange for Russia’s help in ‘pasting together’ [skleyuvanni] Moldova . . . they would likely justify it on the basis of a claimed ‘vital’ interests in the region. The Kremlin’s alternative strategy may be to escalate instability in the region.[110]

So many diverse geopolitical crosscurrents today run through Gagauzia that it is impossible to say with certainty what will happen. Manifold scenarios are all, to varying degrees, plausible. The October national presidential election may at least narrow that number. That being said, two things are a near certainty. The first is that Lilliputian Gagauzia’s outsized geopolitical importance will remain intact. And the second is that if Russia can play its 50,000-voter Gagauzi trump card in October, that bone in Romania’s throat will likely remain stuck there for the foreseeable future.

The translation of all source material is by the author.

[1] Romania was the first country to recognize the Republic of Moldova, doing so on the day as Moldova adopted its declaration of independence (27 August 1991). It did not, however, appoint an ambassador but instead was represented at the level of a charge d’affaire, no doubt reflecting Bucharest’s thoughts about the likely duration of Moldova’s status as an independent country.

[2] “Ion Bistreanu: ‘Din mentalul românilor, orice generație, orice profesie, nu putea fi scoasă ideea că Basarabia a fost pământ românesc.’” *Radio Europa Liberă* [published online in Romanian 13 August 2016]. <http://www.europalibera.org/a/27919118.html>. Last accessed 31 August 2016. Radio Europa Liberă is the Romanian language service of Radio Free Europe, which is funded by the United States government.

[3] “Rumynskiy diplomat nazval Gagauziyu oshibkoy Moldovy.” *Yedinaya Gagauz* [published online in Russian 16 August 2016]. <http://edingagauz.md/sobitiya/rumynskij-diplomat-nazval-gagauziyu-oshibk/>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.

[4] The Romanian press (and if less frequently but no less stridently, pro-Romania Moldovans) maintain a constant drumbeat for Moldova’s “unification” with Romania. Case in point, a 28 August 2016 commentary titled “Moldova’s convulsive fractures reach a boiling point 25 years after independence,” in which the author (after blaming Romania’s “loss” of Moldova on Russian perfidy in the form of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact) laments the lost opportunity for reunification after Moldova’s independence, which it also blames on Russia; and the “looming threat” that electing “pro-Russian Igor Dodon” in October’s presidential election will move Moldova farther way from Romania. See: “Opinii EVZ: Republica Moldova scindată, în convulsii, gata să dea în clocot, la 25 de ani de Independență.” *evz.ro* [published online in Romanian 28 August 2016]. <http://www.evz.ro/republica-moldova-scindata-in-convulsii-gata-sa-dea-in-clocot-la-25-de-ani-de-independenta.html>. Last accessed 8 September 2016].

[5] From Baroness Thatcher’s 9 March 1996 speech, “New Threats for Old. A Lecture on the Fiftieth Anniversary of ‘The Sinews of Peace’.” [<http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/108357>. Last accessed 8 September 2016] “The Balkans produce more history than they can consume” is frequently but erroneously attributed to Winston Churchill. It is correctly attributed to H.H. Munro (as Saki), who wrote in his short story “The Jesting of Arlington Stringham,” “The people of Crete unfortunately make more history than they can consume locally.”

[6] Charles King (1994). “Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism.” *Slavic Review*. 53:2 (Summer 1994) 345.

[7] In Gagauz, *Avtonom Territorial Bölümlüü Gagauz Yeri*. Its Russian transliteration is *Avtonomnoye territorialnoye obrazovaniye Gagauziy* and in Moldova’s principal official language, Romanian—spoken by fewer than 4 percent of Gagauzi—it is *Unitatea Teritorială Autonomă Găgăuzia*.

[8] “Găgăuzia ignoră legile Republicii Moldova—susține Cancelaria de Stat a R. Moldova.” *Discover Moldova*

[published online 2 August 2016]. <http://discovermoldova.md/stiri/stiri-moldova/gagauzia-ignora-legile-republicii-moldova-sustine-cancelaria-de-stat-r-moldova>. Last accessed 23 August 2016.

[9] In November 2008, Moldovan law enforcement authorities announced they had “identified a criminal terrorist group, which had links to members of Ukrainian criminal networks and representatives of the pro-Russian Patria Rodina movement.” The reference is to the *Partidul Socialiștilor din Moldova «Patria-Rodina»* (“Party of Socialists of Moldova ‘Motherland’”), which in 2011 was renamed the *Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova* (“Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova”). The authorities stated that they found “large numbers of rifle-launched grenades, cartridges, and 20 kilograms of TNT” along with campaign material for the Christian Democrat Peasants Party leftover from the 2005 election. The weapons cache was found in a Comrat garage belonging to Ivan Burgudji, and the authorities stated their belief that the weapons had been stored there sometime in 2003 or 2004. See: “Grupare criminală cu caracter terorist, identificată de poliția din R. Moldova.” *Telegraf* [published online in Romanian 28 November 2008]. <http://www.telegrafonline.ro/grupare-criminala-cu-caracter-terorist-identificata-de-poliitia-din-r-moldova>. Last accessed 29 August 2016. In August 2014, Mr. Burgudji refused to answer an August 2014 summons by the Moldovan General Prosecutor’s Office requiring him to explain his role in organizing an “illegal” referendum. He was subsequently charged with abuse of power and promoting national discord and disunity, which carries a sentence of three to eight years’ imprisonment. See: “Adunarea Populară a Găgăuziei îi ia apărarea deputatului Ivan Burgudji. “Chișinăul încearcă să destabilizeze situația din regiune.” *Publika.md* [published online in Romanian 19 March 2014]. http://www.publika.md/adunarea-populara-a-gagauziei-ii-ia-apararea-deputatului-ivan-burgudji-chisinaul-incearca-sa-destabilizeze-situatia-din-regiune_2055561.html. Last accessed 29 August 2016. In 2010, Mr. Burgudji was arrested upon his return to Moldova from Russia and charged with illegal weapons possession. He faced similar charges in 2008 when he was accused of conspiring to assassinate the vice-president of the Moldavian Parliament. See: “Activistul găgăuz Ivan Burgudji e din nou sub acuzare, de data aceasta – pentru păstrare de arme.” *Publika.md* [published online in Romanian 9 November 2010]. http://www.publika.md/activistul-gagauz-ivan-burgudji-e-din-nou-sub-acuzare-de-data-aceasta-pentru-pastrare-de-arme_136111.html. Last accessed 29 August 2016. In May 2005, Gagauz authorities granted Mr. Burgudji amnesty for his 2003 conviction by a Chisinau tribunal court sentence for abuse of power and malicious hooliganism, for which he was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment.

[10] “Gagauziya: Moldaviya ne mozhet proveryat’ gagauzskiy zakony na «zakonnost’».” *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 15 August 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/publikacii/3815-gagauziya-moldaviya-ne-mozhet-proveryat-gagauzskie-zakony-na-zakonnost-podrobnosti-https-regnumru-news-polit-2166510html-lyuboe-ispolzovanie-materialov-dopuskaetsya-tolko-pri-nalichii-giperssyliki-na.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016.

[11] In March 2016, Moldova’s Constitutional Court invalidated a 2000 constitutional amendment and reinstated direct presidential elections. See: “Curtea Constituțională a DECIS! Președintele țării va fi ales prin VOT DIRECT de către POPOR.” *Publika.md* [published online in Romanian 4 March 2016]. http://www.publika.md/curtea-constitucionala-a-decis-presedintele-tarii-va-fi-ales-prin-vot-direct-de-catre-popor-_2551711.html. Last accessed 29 August 2016.

[12] Oleh Protsyk (2010). “Gagauz autonomy in Moldova: the real and the virtual in post-Soviet state design,” 2. Republished in *Asymmetric Autonomy as a Tool Of Ethnic Conflict Settlement*, Marc Weller, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

[13] This method in game theory is called “salami tactics,” referring to devices used to reduce another player’s threat of actions in the same way a salami is cut, i.e., one slice at a time.

[14] *Ibid.*, 6.

[15] The Transdniestrian separatists rejected an offer by the Chișinău government of Gagauz-like limited autonomy, under which a new “Transdniestrian Self-Administered Territory” (*Pridnestrovskaia samo-upravliaemaia teritoriia*) would be formed from the five *raions* on the east bank of the Dniester River plus the city of Tiraspol. With Russia’s backing, the Transdniestrian separatists rejected anything short “of a loose Moldovan confederation, with few powers reserved for the central authorities.” [King (1994), *op cit.*, 361]

[16] Alexandru Burlaca (1993). “Gagauzia și Transnistria au propus crearea unei ‘Confederații moldovenești’.” *Republica* (6 April 1993)

[17] King (1994), *op cit.*, 362.

[18] The *Partidul Democrat din Moldova* (PDM) is closely associated with the Moldovan oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc, its Deputy Chairman. In 2015, the PDM led a split in the ruling Alliance for European Integration, which in late October forced the government of Liberal Democrat Valeriu Strelet to step down. The PDM threatened President Nicolae Timofti with impeachment if he nominated a candidate for Prime Minister without first consulting the parliamentary parties (under Moldova's constitution, the President nominates the Prime Minister). On 11 January 2016, PDM leader Marian Lupu, announced the party had formed a 56-member (out of 101) parliamentary majority, and two days later proposed Mr. Plahotniuc for the post of Prime Minister. He was quickly rejected by President Timofti, citing an April 2013 Constitutional Court ruling that "any political mandate should be based on high standards of integrity" and that "it is contrary to the principles of the State law governing appointments" to appoint individuals "about whom there is doubt about their personal integrity." ["Republica Moldova: Președintele Nicolae Timofti a respins candidatura lui Vlad Plahotniuc pentru funcția de premier." *Agerpres* [published online in Romanian 13 January 2016]. <http://www.agerpres.ro/externe/2016/01/13/republica-moldova-presedintele-nicolae-timofti-a-respins-candidatura-lui-vlad-plahotniuc-pentru-functia-de-premier-17-04-55>. Last accessed 31 August 2016] In February 2013, allegations against Mr. Plahotniuc of "involvement in illegal activities" resulted in a a vote of no confidence in the Moldovan Parliament.

[19] Radio Europa Liberă is the Romanian language service of Radio Free Europe, a broadcasting organization funded by the United States government.

[20] "Dumitru Diacov: 'Noi trebuie să muncim și trebuie să obținem un consens național'." *Radio Europa Liberă* [transcript published online in Romanian 17 August 2016]. <http://www.europalibera.org/a/27927084.html>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.

[21] He is Speaker of the Supreme Council (a unicameral parliament) of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, the official name of separatist Transnistria.

[22] Named for Dmitry Kozak, who was President Putin's deputy administrative head, the plan provided for a so-called "asymmetrical federation" with a unified defense and a single currency, among other provisions. While initially signalling that it was willing to accede to these terms, the Chișinău government eventually balked in late 2003, shortly before President Putin was to fly to Moldova to sign the agreement. The Kozak terms were rejected formally by the Moldovan government in early 2004, with the encouragement of the United States and the European Union. In mid 2005, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe attempted to rehabilitate key parts of the Kozak plan, choosing to ignore a June 2005 measure passed unanimously by the Moldovan parliament demanding Transnistria's demilitarization and democratization as a precondition of any agreement. These negotiations failed, too, and in February 2006, the PMR government announced that it would hold an independence referendum. It did so in September, with 97 percent of voters voting in favor of independence.

[23] "Pridnestrov'ye ne khochet v Moldavskuyu federatsiyu." *Nezavisimaya gazeta* [published online in Russian 19 August 2016]. http://www.ng.ru/cis/2016-08-19/1_moldavia.html. Last accessed 31 August 2016.

[24] "Ion Bistryanu: Gagauziya—oshibka Moldovy." *Zemlyaki* [published online in Russian 17 August 2016]. <http://zemlyaki.name/moldova/89983-Ion-Bistrjanu-Gagauzija-.html>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.

[25] "Deputat: Irina Vlakh i Dmitriy Konstantinov sdayut polnomochiya Gagauzii." *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 24 May 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/blogi/2775-takie-zhe-kak-i-drugie-narodnosti-pochemu-turciya-otkazala-gagauzam-v-osobom-otnoshenii.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016.

[26] "Zachem kreml' delayet iz moldovy konfederatsiyu." *Delovaya stolitsa* [published online in Russian 14 July 2016]. <http://www.dsnews.ua/world/zachem-kreml-delaet-iz-moldovy-konfederatsiyu-14072016030300>. Last accessed 25 August 2016.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Mr. Snegur served as Moldova's president from September 1990 to January 1997 prior to which—when Moldova was the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic—he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet

(1989–1990) and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (April–September 1990).

[29] Quoted in “Relațiile România-R.Moldova- când calde, când reci, condimentate cu acuzații reciproce.” *Mediafax* [published online in Romanian 25 January 2010]. <http://www.mediafax.ro/main-story/focus-relatiile-romania-r-moldova-cand-calde-cand-reci-condimentate-cu-acuzaatii-reciproce-5440851>. Last accessed 1 September 2016.

[30] Jerzy Hatlas & Marek Żyromski (2008). *Power, Administration and Ethnic Minorities: The Case Study of Gagauzian Autonomy*. (Poznan: Adam Mickiewicz University).

[32] *Obshchestvennoe mnenie: Aktual'nye problemy sotsial'noi zhizni SSR Moldova* (Chisinau:

Department of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, 1990),

[33] From “Deșteaptă-te Române! De ce afirmă americanii că ‘Moldova nu este România.’” *Contidianul* [published online in Romanian 29 A

[34] *Ibid.*, 359.

[35] King (1994), *op cit.*, 345.

[36] Nicolae Dabija (undated). “1989—Anul Când Dumnezeu a Fost Român” (“1989—The Year God was a Romanian”). *Literatura și Artă* [published online in Romanian]. <http://www.literaturasiarta.md/pressview.php?l=ro&idc=3&id=1406&zidc=3>. Last accessed 1 September 2016. The “Grand National Assembly” (*Marea Adunare Națională*) was a mass demonstration attended by some 300 thousand people in Chișinău on 27 August 1989. It was organized by a political movement known as Popular Front of Moldova (*Frontul Popular din Moldova*), which was founded on 20 May 1989. The Grand National Assembly pressured the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to adopt a language law, which it did three days later on 31 August 1989. It proclaimed “Moldovan” (Romanian) written in the Latin script as the state language. The PFM’s agitation for Moldovan to be designated as the country’s official language caused an early rift in the organization, and many Russian speaking PFM members from Transdniestria resigned by the time of the Grand National Assembly. At its second congress held in June 1990, the PFM declared itself in opposition to the MSSR government and openly declared for union with Romania.

[37] Lest anyone think elements of Romanian revanchism are not alive and well in Moldovan politics, consider Romanian Prime Minister Traian Basescu on the matter of his country’s non-recognition of Moldova’s borders. He dismissed them in May 2009 as “a consequence of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” which cost Romania its Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina provinces, parts of which today remain within Ukraine’s Odessa and Chernovitsky regions. The Russian government rarely lets such statements go unanswered. As recently as April 2016, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova said, “As we mark the anniversary of the German surrender near Stalingrad, we remember well whose side the Romanian army was fighting on.” She added [quoting the official English translation], “We note with alarm the increasingly frequent Romanian attempts to touch up (with the use of anti-Russian armamentarium) or even reassess the events of World War II.”

[http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2062408. Last accessed 31 August 2016] The ambiguous nature of that threat is well captured as *Romanian threat* or ‘*Romanian threat*’ in an April 2016 essay by Sergiy Gerasymchuk. See: “Nebezpečnyy pryklad. Yak Moldovu rozryvayut’ mizh Rosiyeyu ta EC.” *Ukrayins’ka pryзма* [published online in Ukrainian 28 April 2016]. <http://prismua.org/dangerous-example/>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.

[38] Mr. Filat founded Moldova’s Liberal Democratic Party and served as Prime Minister (September 2009–April 2013) and briefly as interim President in December 2010.

[39] “Istoria Românilor – un os în gâtul lui Filat.” Alexandrin Moiseev blog post published in Romanian 3 April 2012. <https://moiseevalexandrin.wordpress.com/2012/04/03/istoria-romanilor-un-os-in-gatul-lui-filat/>. Last accessed 31 August 2016. The “Comrade Chiril” reference is to Chiril Gaburici, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party who became Moldova’s Prime Minister in February 2015, resigning only a few months later in June 2015 after the Prosecutor General initiated a criminal investigation into charges that Mr. Gaburici has falsified his educational credentials.

- [40] “Alexandrin Moiseev: Istoria Românilor și Găgăuzii.” *Agenția de presă a românilor de pretutindeni* [published online in Romanian 2 May 2012]. http://www.rgnpress.ro/rgn_12/categorii/analize-interviuri/5520-alexandrin-moiseev-istoria-romanilor-si-gagauzii-.html. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [41] “Am citit declarația ambasadorului SUA la Chișinău, înainte de a o pronunța, în ochii lui John Kerry. Diplomația română o scaldă, conform obiceiului.” *Gândul* [published online in Romanian 29 August 2016]. <http://www.gandul.info/puterea-gandului/am-citit-declaratia-ambasadorului-sua-la-chisinau-inainte-de-a-o-pronunta-in-ochii-lui-john-kerry-15627408>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [42] INTERVIU exclusiv cu James Pettit într-o nouă ediție ‘Dimensiunea Diplomatică’.” *Moldova 1* [published online in Romanian 26 August 2016]. <http://trm.md/ro/moldova1/interviu-exclusiv-cu-james-pettit-intr-o-noua-editie-dimensiunea-diplomatica/>, Last accessed 31 August 2016. The webpage contains a link to the interview.
- [43] “Traian Băsescu: Declarația lui James Pettit, un afront grosolan adus istoriei României.” *Deschide* [published online in ERomanian 29 August 2016]. <http://deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/177/Traian-Basescu-Declarația-lui-James-Pettit-un-afront-grosolan-adus-istoriei-României.htm>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [44] *Contidianul* (29 August 2016), *op cit.*
- [45] Dan Dungaciu: „Apără-mă, Doamne, de prieteni”. Despre declarațiile ambasadorului american la Chișinău în zece puncte.” *Adevărul* [published online in Romanian 29 August 2016]. http://adevarul.ro/international/europa/exclusiv-dan-dungaciu-apara-ma-doamne-prieteni-despre-declaratiile-ambasadorului-american-chisinau-zece-puncte-1_57c44c5b5ab6550cb832935c/index.html. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [46] *Ibid.*
- [47] *Ibid.*
- [48] “Dan Dungaciu, atac la declarația ambasadorului SUA la Chișinău, James D. Pettit.” *DC News* [published online in Romanian 29 August 2016]. http://www.dcnews.ro/dan-dungaciu-atac-la-declara-ia-ambasadorului-sua-la-chi-inau-james-d-pettit_514491.html. Last accessed 31 August 2016. Dr. Dungaciu also directs the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Romanian Academy.
- [49] “Steinmeier für Politik der kleinen Schritte zur Lösung des Transnistrien-Konflikt.” *Die Zeit* [published online in German 26 July 2016]. <http://www.zeit.de/news/2016-07/26/deutschland-steinmeier-fuer-politik-der-kleinen-schritte-zur-loesung-des-transnistrien-konflikts-26162405>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [50] “Der doppelte Steinmeier auf Vermittlungsmission Außenminister und OSZE-Vorsitzender wirbt für Lösung in Transnistrien-Konflikt—Kleine Schritte der Annäherung.” *Die Saarbrücker Zeitung* [published online in German 27 July 2016]. <http://www.saarbruecker-zeitung.de/politik/themen/Chisinau-Tiraspol-Aussenminister-Bundesaussenminister-Deutsche-Aussenminister-Mobilfunknetze-Reisen-Ausfluege-Tourismus-Abenteuer-Russische-Soldaten-Sowjetrepubliken;art2825,6208381>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [51] “Transnistrien sagt „Nein“ zu Steinmeier.” *Sputnik* [published online in German 29 July 2016]. <http://de.sputniknews.com/zeitungen/20160729/311836375/transnistrien-deutschland.html>. Last accessed 31 August 2016.
- [52] From Nikolai Starikov (2014). “O reshenii konflikta v Nagornom Karabakhe.” *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russian 9 April 2016]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/64647>. Last accessed 26 August 2016. He wrote elsewhere, “In the case of an attempt to integrate into Romania, Transdnistria, Gagauzia, and northern regions of Moldova with Ukrainian and Russian populations will most likely reject such a ‘gift’.” See: Starikov (2014). “Vybory v Moldavii: itogi, prognozy.” *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 2 December 2014].
- [53] Dimitar Bechev (2016). “The Influence of Russia and Turkey in the Western Balkans.” *European Western Balkans* Op-ed [published online 7 January 2016]. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2016/07/01/the-influence-of-russia-and-turkey-in-the-western-balkans/>. Last accessed 25 August 2016.

- [54] The Gagauz language formally belongs to the western group of Oghuz Turkic and is closely related to Turkish, but with many Slavic additions, particularly Bulgarian and Russian ones.
- [55] Alexei V. Vorontsov (2010). *Russkiy yazyk v sotsial'no-politicheskom aspekte konspekt lektsiy. Lektsiya 1: Yazyk kak sotsiokul'turnoye yavleniye*. Published online at <http://l.10-bal.ru/literatura/2917/index.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2016.
- [56] Vadim L. Tsymbursky (2007). *Ostrov Rossiya. Geopoliticheskiye i khronopoliticheskiye raboty raznykhlet*. (Moscow: ROSSPEN).
- [57] Viktor Mikhailovich Shaklein (2015). "Linguistic and Cultural Geography of Limitrophe Zones with Russian Language Functioning." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*. 6:1 (February 2015) 99-102.
- [58] Nikolai Starikov (2015). "Yazykovaya bor'ba." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 4 January 2015]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/47953?print=print>. Last accessed 26 August 2016. Mr. Starikov co-chairs Russia's Great Fatherland Party (*Partiya Velikoye Otechestvo*). His ideas are by no means uniquely Russian: among some French intellectuals, "the threatening intrusion of alien culture and discourse is presented as an 'invasion,' a 'menace,' an 'attack'—sometimes even as a 'génocide' or an 'ethnocide'." [Clem Robyns (1995). "Defending the National Identity: Franglais and Francophony. In Andreas Poltermann, ed. *Literaturkanon—Medienereignis—Kultureller Tekst*. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt) 179-207] For the reference to *génocide*, see: Claude Duneton (1977). "L'anglo-américain est en train de nous avaler tout crus." *Le Monde de l'Education*. (April 1977) 10. For the reference to *ethnocide*, see: Henri Gobard (1976). *L'aliénation linguistique. Analyse tétraglossique*. (Paris: Flammarion) 41]. Bernard Cassen predicted that only American English will survive: "la seule langue qui ira réellement de soi, [. . .] soutenue par l'invasion culturelle, sera l'anglais, ou plutôt l'américain." See: Cassen (1975). "L'anglais, langue de l'impérialisme." *Le Monde de l'Education* (January 1975) 20.
- [59] Starikov (2014). "O reshenii konflikta v Nagornom Karabakhe." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 9 April 2016]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/64647>. Last accessed 26 August 2016. He wrote elsewhere that "In the case of an attempt to integrate into Romania, Transdnistria, Gagauzia, and northern regions of Moldova with Ukrainian and Russian populations will most likely reject such a 'gift'." See: "Vybory v Moldavii: itogi, prognozy." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 2 December 2014].
- [60] Starikov (2014). "Gagauziya predupredila Kishinev." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 4 February 2014]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/36286>. Last accessed 26 August 2016. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/47257>. Last accessed 26 August 2016.
- [61] Starikov (2014). "Obshchestvo pod 'yevrogipnozom'." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 15 November 2014]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/46727>. Last accessed 26 August 2016.
- [62] Starikov (2014). "Yevrointegratsiya nachinayetsya s krasivyykh kartinok, a zakanchivayetsya demograficheskoy yamoy." *Nstarikov.ru* [published online in Russia 13 November 2014]. <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/46686>. Last accessed 26 August 2016.
- [63] "Gagauziya-chast' russkogo mira." *Regnum* [published online in Russian 15 November 2008]. <https://regnum.ru/news/1084243.html>. Last accessed 27 August 2016.
- [64] "Gagauziya—tyurkskaya krepost' Russkogo mira." *Russkaya Vesna* [published online in Russian 31 May 2015]. http://rusvesna.su/recent_opinions/1401522241. Last accessed 26 August 2016.
- [65] See: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46131>. Last accessed 26 August 2016. The original transliterated text reads: "Imeyu v vidu, kogda govoryu o russkikh lyudyakh i russkoyazychnykh grazhdanakh, lyudey, kotoryye oshchushchayut, chuvstvuyut sebya chast'yu tak nazyvayemogo shirokogo russkogo mira, ne obyazatel'no etnicheski russkiye lyudi, no te, kto schitayut sebya russkim chelovekom."
- [66] The phrase belongs to ATU-Gaugauzia Bashkan Irene Vlch. See: "Irina Vlach explică de ce Găgăuzia ciugulește din palma Rusiei." *Radio Chișinău* [published online in Romanian 12 August 2016]. <http://www.radiochisinau.md/transnistria-si-gagauzia—componente-strategice-ale-kremlinului-36644>. Last accessed 23 August 2016.

[67] “Transnistria și Găgăuzia sunt componente ale strategiei Kremlinului.” *Radio Chișinău* [published online in Romanian 12 August 2016]. <http://www.radiochisinau.md/transnistria-si-gagauzia—componente-strategice-ale-kremlinului-36644>. Last accessed 23 August 2016.

[68] “Igor Munteanu: Rusia nu ascunde că miza sa strategică este decuplarea Republicii Moldova de UE.” *Adevarul.md* [published online in Romanian 12 August 2016]. http://adevarul.ro/moldova/politica/igor-munteanu-rusia-nu-ascunde-miza-strategica-decuplarea-republicii-moldova-ue-1_57ad749f5ab6550cb8b017ff/index.html. Last accessed 23 August 2016.

[69] Vyacheslav Nikonov is past chair of the Russian government-funded Russkiy Mir Foundation, a soft power initiative established in June 2007 by presidential decree and overseen by the Foreign Affairs and Education ministries, respectively. President Vladimir Putin stated upon its founding, “The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself. As the common heritage of many peoples, the Russian language will never become the language of hatred or enmity, xenophobia or isolationism.” [<http://ruskiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php>. Last accessed 3 September 2016] Dr. Nikonov also chairs the Committee on Education of the State Duma, and is a member of the Defense Ministry’s Public Council, the Internal Affairs Ministry’s Public Council, and the Foreign Affairs Ministry’s Academic Council. In addition, he is Dean of the Moscow State University School of Public Administration.

[70] Tatarstan is a semi-autonomous subject of the Russian Federation (*subyekty Rossiyskoy Federatsii*) and is part of the Privolzhsky (*aka* Volga) Federal District (*Privolzhsky federalny okrug*) in southeastern Russia.

[71] “Gagauziya namerena izuchit’ opyt Tatarstana po realizatsii dvuyazychiya v zakonotvorcheskoy praktike.” *Tatar-inform* [published online 15 March 2016]. <http://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/2016/03/15/495612/>. Last accessed 3 September.

[72] “Dni gagauzskoy kul’tury nachalis’ v Pskovskoy oblasti.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 15 June 2016]. <https://regnum.ru/news/cultura/2145005.html>. Last accessed 3 September 2016.

[73] “Obshchestvenno-politicheskiy forum «Gagauziya-2016: sostoyatel’nost’ avtonomii» posvyashchenny vtoroy godovshchine provedeniya gagauzskogo referendum.” *Gagauzinfo.md* [published online in Russian 2 February 2016]. <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=23073>. Last accessed 3 September 2016.

[74] “Nekompetentnost’ ili predateľ’stvo? Gagauziya uchitsya derusifikatsii u Tatarii.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 18 March 2016]. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2100106.html>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Vyacheslav Nikonov is past chair of the Russian government-funded Russkiy Mir Foundation, a soft power initiative established in June 2007 by presidential decree and overseen by the Foreign Affairs and Education ministries, respectively. President Vladimir Putin stated upon its founding, “The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself. As the common heritage of many peoples, the Russian language will never become the language of hatred or enmity, xenophobia or isolationism.” [<http://ruskiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php>. Last accessed 3 September 2016]

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[77] “Vyacheslav Nikonov: Russkiy, rossiyskiy, russkoyazychnyy mir XX vek okazalsya tragichnym dlya russkoy tsivilizatsii.” *Russkie.org* [published online in Russian 11 February 2011]. <http://www.russkie.org/index.php?module=fullitem&id=20961>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[78] Vladimir Anishchenkov (2008). “Derzhavnaya postup’.” *Russkaya narodnaya liniya* [published online in Russian 6 June 2006]. http://ruskline.ru/monitoring_smi/2008/06/06/derzhavnaya_postup_prodlzhenie. Last

accessed 5 September 2016.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *Russkaya narodnaya liniya* (“Russian Line”) is the self-described “Orthodox news agency” (*pravoslavnoye informatsionnoye agentstvo*)

[81] “Net nichego rossiyskogo, chto ne bylo by russkim.” *Russkaya narodnaya liniya* [published online in Russian 28 February 2011]. http://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2011/02/28/net_nichego_rossijskogo_chto_ne_bylo_by_russkim/. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[82] “Vliyaniye Turtsii v Tatarstane: faktor «myagkoy sily».” *Russkaya narodnaya liniya* [published online in Russian 23 March 2016]. http://ruskline.ru/analitika/2016/03/23/vliyanie_turcii_v_tatarstane_faktor_myagkoj_sily/. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] *Regnum* (18 March 2016), *op cit.*

[85] “Prorossiyskiye vlasti Gagauzii namereny zanyat’sya derusifikatsiyey regiona.” *Kolokol Rossii* [published online in Russian 18 March 2016]. <http://kolokolrussia.ru/novosti/prorossiyskie-vlasti-gagauzii-nameren-zanyatsya-derusifikatsiyey-regiona>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[86] “Gagauzskiy partner Kremlya obernulas’ «troyanskim konem» Moldavii protiv PMR.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 18 April 2016]. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2120811.html>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[87] On 21 July 2014, the Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (*Rosselkhozadzor*) imposed a ban on the importation of fruits and vegetables from Moldova, having earlier done so with respect to Moldovan meat. The Russian action was a consequence of Chişinău’s 2 July ratification of its European Union Association Agreement. On 17 March 2014, Vadim Krasnoselski, the speaker of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic parliament, urged Russia to annex Transnistria, following which Russian Foreign Minister Dmitry Rogozin declared Transnistria was under “blockade” by Ukraine. Russian authorities had earlier banned the importation of Moldovan wine in September 2013, after *Rosselkhozadzor* declared it dangerous for consumption. The September 2013 ban exempted products from Gagauzia.

[88] The Russian government also proposed the formation of an “Intergovernmental Trade and Economic Cooperation Commission” to include representatives from Gagauzia and Transnistria in addition to Moldova and Russia; and to settle the matter of arrearages due Gazprom from Moldova (USD477M) and Transnistria (USD4.5B). See: “Moskva predlozila Kishinevu vklyuchit’ v komissiyu po sotrudnichestvu predstaviteley Pridnestrov’ya i Gagauzii.” *Vedomosti* [published online in Russian 14 July 2016].

<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2016/07/14/649190-moskva-kishinevu-pridnestrovya-gagauzii>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.

[89] In 1992, the radical wing of the Tatar nationalist movement organized an all-Tatar *kuraltai* or congress that brought Tatars from all over the Soviet Union to Kazan. The *kuraltai* issued a declaration of independence and announced the formation of the *Milli Mejlis* or Tatar National Assembly. The *Milli Mejlis* was named after the original Tatar National Assembly established by Tatar intellectuals who attempted to found the Idel-Ural republic following the 1917 Revolution. [Elise Giuliano (2011). *Constructing Grievance: Ethnic Nationalism in Russia’s Republics*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press) 122] The *kuraltai* elected 79 members of the *Milli Mejlis*, which was proclaimed the supreme representative body of the Tatar people for periods between all-Tatar congresses. It assumed the right to pass laws and resolutions on the status of Tatarstan and the sovereignty of the Tatar nation extra-territorially, and on the status of the Tatar language and culture. At the same time, the *Milli Mejlis* assumed the right to abrogate any act of the Tatar Republic’s president or parliament. [Sergei Kondrashov (2000). *Nationalism and the Drive for Sovereignty in Tatarstan, 1988-92*. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.) 180-181] Tatarstan was the only for Soviet republic that refused to sign the 1992 Federation Treaty.

[90] These changes are explored in detail in Federica Prina (2011). “Localism or centralism? Education reform in Russia and its impact on the rights of national minorities.” *Cambrian Law Review*. 42: 113-130.

- [91] “Rezolyutsiya mitinga, posvyashchennogo 22 godovshchine referendumu o suverenitete Tatarstana.” *Informatsionnoye izdaniye vsetatarskogo obshchestvennogo tsentra* [published online in Russian 23 March 2014]. <http://tatar-centr.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/22.html>. Last accessed 1 September 2016.
- [92] *Ibid.*
- [93] “Tatary Dobrudzhi prisoyedinilis’ k Krymu.” *Argumenty nedeli* [published online in Russian 30 April 2014]. <http://an-crimea.ru/page/articles/74291>. Last accessed 1 September 2016.
- [94] Taken from the title of an August 2016 commentary in the Moldovan news portal *Agora*. See: “Găgăuzia – linia frontului în războiul de influență între Erdogan și Putin.” *Agora* [published online in Romanian 10 August 2016]. <http://agora.md/stiri/21462/gagauzia—linia-frontului-in-razboiul-de-influenta-intre-erdogan-si-putin>. Last accessed 23 August 2016.
- [95] “Russko-turetskoye «potepleniye», kak okno vozmozhnostey dlya Gagauzii: perspektivy i riski.” *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 4 July 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/blogi/3284-russko-tureckoe-poteplenie-kak-okno-vozmozhnostey-dlya-gagauzii-perspektivy-i-riski.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016.
- [96] “Posol Turtsii v RM Mekhmet Kartal zavershayet mandat: YA by ne skazal, chto k gagauzam u nas osoboye otnosheniye.” *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 20 May 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/novosti/politika/2754-posol-turcii-v-rm-mehmet-kartal-zavershaet-mandat-ya-by-ne-skazal-chto-k-gagauzam-u-nas-osoboe-otnoshenie.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016.
- [97] “Russko-turetskoye «potepleniye», kak okno vozmozhnostey dlya Gagauzii: perspektivy i riski.” *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 4 July 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/blogi/3284-russko-tureckoe-poteplenie-kak-okno-vozmozhnostey-dlya-gagauzii-perspektivy-i-riski.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016.
- [98] “Missiya ne vpolnena: o «gagauzskikh itogakh» raboty posla Turtsii v Moldove.” *Budjak Online* [published online in Russian 9 August 2016]. <http://budjakonline.md/blogi/3741-missiya-ne-vpolnena-o-gagauzskikh-itogah-raboty-posla-turcii-v-moldove.html>. Last accessed 29 August 2016. The Russian transliteration *Budjak* (*Bugeac* in Romanian) refers to an area of southern Bessarabia that is part of modern Ukraine’s Odessa Oblast, lying between Moldova and the Black Sea. For more, see the author’s April 2015 essay “A Quarrel In A Far-Away Country: The Rise Of A Budzhak People’s Republic?” [<http://www.fpri.org/article/2015/04/a-quarrel-in-a-far-away-country-the-rise-of-a-budzhak-peoples-republic/>].
- [99] *Ibid.*
- [100] “Yevraziyskaya Gagauziya, kak ploschadka dlya vzaimodeystviya Rossii i Turtsii.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 9 September 2015]. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1966341.html>. Last accessed 4 September 2016.
- [101] Darya Aslamova (2010). “Pochemu rumyny schitayut Rossiyu vragom №1, a Moldaviyu – svoey territoriyey? Chast’ 2.” (“Why Romanians consider Russia enemy no. 1, and Moldova part of its territory? Part 2.”). *Komsomolskaya Pravda* [published online in Russian 14 January 2010]. <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24424.4/594014/>. Last accessed 1 September 2016. It reads in the original Russian: *Yevropy Moldova – vsego lish’ antisepticheskaya prokladka, otdelyayushchaya yeye ot Rossii, i ona ne zainteresovana ni v kakikh mestnykh peremenakh.*
- [102] “Dodon v Komrate: Zhitelyam Moldovy yest’ chemu uchiť’sya u gagauzov.” *Gagauzinfo.md* [published online in Russian 22 August 2016]. <http://gagauzinfo.md/index.php?newsid=27581>. Last accessed 8 September 2016.
- [103] “Gagauzskiy narod vsetselo podderzhivayet kandidata v prezidenty Igorya Dodona.” *Accent-TV* [published online in Russian 31 August 2016]. <http://a-tv.md/index.php?newsid=20791>. Last accessed 8 September 2016.
- [104] “Lyanke obvinil Dodona v zapugivanii naseleniya unionizmom.” *Gagauz.md* [published online in Russian 7 September 2016]. <http://www.gagauz.md/2016/09/lyanke-obvinil-dodona-v-zapugivanii-naseleniya-unionizmom/>. Last accessed 8 September 2016.

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