

Pinpricks: Russia Pursues Hegemony in the Balkans

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"We should have a list of nine things we can do. Each is, in itself, a pinprick, but they cause anguish and pain.

– Caspar W. Weinberger (1981)

In the early 1950s, the British government adopted a new approach to conducting covert operations behind the Iron Curtain. Dubbed "pinpricks" by the head of MI6, Stewart Menzies,^[1] it employed overt propaganda and limited covert action to chip away Soviet control. *Pinpricks* was well suited to exploit political weakness, target economic vulnerability, promote dissension, and spread distrust.^[2] An intentionally cautious and incrementalist approach, *pinpricks* avoided actions that might provoke Soviet escalation and retaliation, opting instead to make Soviet satellite states more of a liability than an asset.

Russian President Vladimir Putin opts for something similar. His method is to promote instability in select geostrategic regions in which Russia seeks to avert further NATO accessions. Mr. Putin's objective is to maintain traditional Russian buffer zones, and where practicable, to expand those zones opportunistically. He sees the Balkans as a Russia-predominant sphere of influence, in which Russia historically has competed for hegemony with European and Turkish interests. He also seeks to insulate Russian economic interests in the region along with geopolitical ones. The Balkans region represents an increasingly important geopolitical bridge for Russian energy pipelines to Western Europe, especially as Russia looks to rebalance its energy transit corridor away from Ukraine.^[3] Thus, the Balkans can be said to represent, at the same time, a Russian geopolitical buffer zone and an economic staging ground.^[4] It is classic Mackinder: Russia, as a great power, endeavors to erect barriers to adversaries and buffer zones for itself.^[5]

The region traditionally has served as congenial ground for the exercise of Russian soft power, especially among Serbs for whom cultural, historic, and religious ties to Russia are strong. Headlines last year in *Blick*^[6] and *Handelsblatt*^[7] phrased it this way:

| *Hated in the West, a hero in the Balkans: "Putin is our God."*

Mr. Putin "has turned Kosovo into a key part of the narrative concerning the West's humiliation of Russia."^[8]

| *The Balkans is central to the Kremlin's narrative about the post-Cold War normative order being broken, which is deployed*

both externally and inside Russia . . . Muscular foreign policy resonates with a deep-seated view that “might is right,” only that this time around the West is on the receiving end.[9]

Understanding the Balkans sometimes requires one to reconcile seemingly conflicting perspectives. For example, Leon Aron wrote that Mr. Putin has continuously pursued “an overarching goal: the recovery of economic, political, and geostrategic assets lost by the Soviet state in 1991.”[10] James Ker-Lindsay rejects this, arguing instead that Russian policy is opportunistically agile and expedient. [11] In fact, both statements are true at the same time. Mr. Putin is dogged in pursuit of long-term objectives but flexible in adopting the most expedient means available to him at any given point in time. There is a common historical thread from Mr. Putin’s Balkan strategy back to Imperial Russia’s:

It is true that our political interests are, as they have always been and as they will never cease to be, tightly linked to those of Orthodoxy [. . .] It is an interest of the first order for us to have in our immediate neighborhood populations that are attached to us by ties of faith.[12]

That passage is from a July 1856 instruction written by Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov to the Imperial Russian ambassador in Constantinople. Today, Mr. Putin substitutes his envisioned “Russia World” (*Russkiy Mir*) for earlier notions of Mother Russia (*Matushka Rossiya*) and the Orthodox East (*Pravoslavnyi Vostok*). Contemporary expressions of Slavic sodality take forms like the Balkan Cossack Army (*Balkanskoye kazach’ye voysko* “BKV”), a paramilitary group subordinate to the Moscow-based Central Cossack Army [13] (*Tsentral’noye kazach’ye voysko*), which Mr. Putin established by presidential decree in April 2014. The BKV’s Gennady Yakovlevich Temnikov said this in September 2016:

The Orthodox people are as one. Here, we see Russians and Montenegrins and Serbs. We have defended our interests for centuries so we know the story. We’ve known it since the Battle of Kulikov. We know its heroes.[14]

“Pray to God to preserve Russia,” said the BKV’s chief of Montenegrin affairs, Colonel Slobodan Pejović, who dismissed Montenegro’s accession discussions with NATO as “unacceptable”. [15]



Confined pockets of prolonged instability give rise to conditions favorable to the piecemeal annexation of territory. [17] Russian actions in the Balkans do not always entail annexation in a strict *de jure* sense, but instead, something akin to *de facto* annexation in the manner of a vassalage or protectorate.[18] An 1895 account of “Russian armies in their piecemeal annexation” described it as “slow pressure, like the percolation of water through the sand on the banks of a river.”[19] Foreign Minister Gorchakov warned in 1864 of being drawn “from annexation to annexation with unforeseen complications.”[20] Russian statecraft has long recognized the risks associated with promoting instability.

By encouraging the aspirations of nationality with a view to . . . autonomy, we can provoke fatal complications for the future peace . . . [21]

Russia sometimes becomes a party to conflict-resolution negotiations as a means to influence confined conflicts. [22] This practice allows it to exploit ceasefire and similar agreements as a *maskirovka*, behind which it can engage in piecemeal annexations and subversion. [23] Confined conflicts are sometimes mischaracterized as proxy wars.[24] They are instead manifestations of exploiting divisions and playing one nation off against another, both longstanding Russian practices. Konstantin Mikhailovich Basiliy, who served as Imperial Russian ambassador in Constantinople in the mid-19th century, described these practices as “the awakening of nationalities, by all sorts of secret and open means, in order to sow discord between them and to detach them from the common center . . .” [25]

Mr. Putin’s pursuit of regional hegemony through instruments like confined conflicts and instability pockets is much in the style of 19th century Imperial Germany:

[I]t is fair to say that this instability was confined to his means; the end he tried to compass underwent no change. [The Kaiser's] watchword was Deutschland über alles, Germany above all things. The hegemony of the German nation in Europe, and of possible in the planet, was, and is, the ultimate goal of his policy.[26]

He seems to believe the West operates in a likewise manner in places like Ukraine. Consider this passage from an internal Kremlin document summarizing discussions about Ukraine at the 2014 Munich Security Conference:

[T]he European Union and the United States are willing to tolerate the country's disintegration, and do not consider such an involvement to be extraordinary. The notion of the EU absorbing a large Eastern European country "piecemeal" not only is discussed openly by a number of EU officials, but finds support among the ranks of Ukraine's elite as well.[27]

For a given situation to escalate on its own momentum from an isolated instability pocket to region-wide conflict is inimical to Russian interests. Secretary of State John Kerry erred when he characterized the Balkans as a "conflict zone" in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 2015 (which was extensively quoted in Russian and Balkan media outlets):

If we talk about Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, and others—Georgia, Moldova, Transdnistria—they're all in the line of fire.[28]

That Russia applies different tactics in the eastern and the western Balkans exemplifies Mr. Putin's tactical agility in the pursuit of long-term objectives. His approach in the eastern Balkans expresses a diplomatic synecdoche of a sort. "Russia's basic strategy in Transdnistria is the control of the part over the whole,"[29] as one scholar put it. By contrast, in the western Balkans, Mr. Putin "needs merely to generate instability. He realized long ago the world cares about peace only when blood spills."[30]

After all, Putin needed another conflict in which he could play the role of mediator. But Bosnia is superior even to Syria—the "Orthodox king," protecting his smaller brothers from Western and Islamic foes at the same time—it's just beautiful! Russians choke with excitement![31]

This essay considers two Russian "pinpricks" at latitudinal opposite sides of the Balkan Peninsula. In the western Balkans, there is the nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's increasingly restive constituent, the Serb Republic, better known as *Republika Srpska*. And in the western Balkans, there is the separatist Transdnistria region (*Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika*) of the Republic of Moldova, where a national presidential election is scheduled for late October 2016.

Transdnistria, the Disagreeable Suitor

"She is displeased at not finding a suitor more agreeable to her. But while despising the suitor, she accepts his hand, because there is no other way for her to go where she wants to go." [32]

And so it is with Mr. Putin. He, too, on occasion must accept uncongenial suitors who get him where he wants to go. In early September 2016, Yevgeny Shevchuk,[33] the leader of Moldova's separatist Transdnistria region—the self-declared Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (*Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika*)—issued a surprise presidential decree to implement a decade-old national referendum. Mr. Shevchuk said his intent is to carry out "the will of the Pridnestrovie people on their free accession to the Russian Federation."



(Source: UNIAN)

Renewed discussion of accession has at least as much to do with the territory's internal politics than with any hopes for reunification with *Matushka Rossiya* because Mr. Shevchuk's popularity has plunged in advance of this December's presidential election in Transnistria. While he received nearly a 74 percent majority in the 2011 runoff election, Mr. Shevchuk garnered support from only 14 percent of likely voters according to a recent opinion survey.

Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov had a tellingly ambiguous response to Mr. Shevchuk's decree:

I'm not aware of any Kremlin reaction. It's necessary to understand the basis of these actions, but lacking details, I can't comment one way or another.^[34]

That tepid reaction may reflect the Russian government's anticipation of a pro-Russian national government after Moldova's 30 October presidential election. The likely winner is Igor Dodon, who leads the Moldovan Socialist Party (*Partija socialistov Respubliki Moldova*). Mr. Dodon registered a 38.3 percent plurality in a recent opinion poll^[35] and benefits from the inability of Moldova's four pro-European Union parties to agree on a single candidate.

Mr. Dodon rejected as inadequate a promise by the national government in Chişinău to establish 100 polling stations for expatriate Moldovans.^[36] According to him, the proper standard is "one voting center for every 3000 voters." He demanded (in a 6 September statement posted on his Facebook page) that Chişinău establish 159 voting centers in Russia alone.^[37] Allegations of voting fraud will undoubtedly challenge the legitimacy of the October election's outcome. Over the past two decades, the number of Moldovans registered to vote increased by some 500,000, this in a country with a domestic population of about 3.6 million (down from slightly less than 3.7 million in 1996). As of August 2016, Moldova's Central Elections Commission reported 3,237,032 people were eligible to vote, which is based on holding a Moldovan residence permit whether or not one lives in the country.^[38]



(Source: *Novosti Pridnestrov'ya* ^[39])

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is attempting after a six-year interruption to revive the so-called "5+2" format talks between Moldova and Transnistria.^[40] The format provides for direct negotiations between Chişinău and the separatist Transnistrian government in Tiraspol (i.e., the "2") with the OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, the European Union, and the United States (i.e., the "5") acting as mediators and observers. The revived 5+2 talks got off to an inauspicious start at a two-day mid-July conference on "confidence-building measures"^[41] held in Bad Reichenhall, Germany. Moldova's Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Sergei Golovach (who chairs Chişinău's delegation) referred to members of the Transnistrian delegation as "separatists."^[42] At an early October 5+2 meeting, Transnistrian delegates accused Mr. Golovach of repeatedly referring to them as "the Taliban," an epithet they called "unbalanced and odious."^[43]

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin made clear in a July 2016 *Kommersant* interview that his country wants to see a federal Moldova, one in which Transdniestria “gradually recovers its status as part of a single Moldovan state.”[44]

[I]f Moldovan politicians . . . want to unify with Romania, then it is better to let Transdniestria go in an amicable way. If they don't want to unify with Romania but instead remain a sovereign state, one that will protect all its citizens, then it will take years but those years will not be in vain. They will go toward the restoration of [Moldova's] territorial integrity . . . [A]ny politician can say anything, but it is an undeniable fact, even for the fiercest supporters of unification with Romania, [that] if Moldova were to take a step toward Romania, this sharp turn would cause Transdniestria to fall off.[45]

His real meaning, wrote Georgiy Kukhaleyshvili in the Ukrainian online newspaper *Fraza*, is this: “Putin wants to turn Transdniestria into a scarecrow for NATO” (*Putin khochet prevratit' Pridnestrov'ye v pugalo dlya NATO*).[46] Calling Transdniestria “a firing range for Russian missiles” (*poligon dlya rossiyskikh raket*), Georgiy Kukhaleyshvili argues that the territory could play a defensive role similar to Crimea. Transdniestria's geographic location is ideal to counter NATO's forward-deployed ballistic missile defense system on the footprint of the Soviet-era Devaselu airbase in southern Romania.[47]

Russia wants to create a precedent for the incremental taking of stand-alone regions in neighboring post-Soviet states where there are separatist tendencies . . . [I]t is implicit blackmail against Ukraine. The example of Transdniestria preparing to join the Russian Federation demonstrates the possibility of repeating this scenario in the Donbas.[48]

The Ukrainian newspaper *Ukrains'ka pravda* called Transdniestria “a trump card—it can be used to destabilize both Moldova and Ukraine's Odessa region.” The Russian government's preferred outcome, *Ukrains'ka pravda* speculated, is a pro-Russian government in Chişinău. “Shevchuk fears Russia will return the enclave to Moldova, and his circle and other criminal elements will be excluded from the financial flow.[49]

That being said, Transdniestria is “not as sacred as Crimea,” wrote Vadim Dovar, who added, “An anecdote, repeated twice, isn't so funny.”[50] A commentary in the Russian online newspaper *Vzglyad* reached a similar conclusion. “The Transdniestrian referendum on joining Russia is not what it seems,” wrote Eugene Krutikov, who continued that its “desire to become part of the Russian Federation only irritates Moscow” (*stremleniye Pridnestrov'ya voyti v sostav RF tol'ko razdrzhayet Moskvu*).[51] He correctly pointed out that the 2006 referendum—which then-Transdniestrian head Igor Smirnov, who was running for reelection, purposely held the same day as the territory's presidential election—asked voters whether they supported Transdniestrian independence, which would leave it free to join the Russian Federation.[52] The sine qua non to triggering such a move was “a change in Moldova's status, for example, its unification with Romania” according to the *Vzglyad* commentary.

There's a fashionable conspiracy theory now, according to which the Kremlin manipulates everything that happens on the planet, including the behavior of hackers in the US election and the ocean tides, to say nothing of the decrees of the President of Transdniestria [. . .] But there's a geographical reality that Transdniestria has no common border with Russia and will become part of Russia only after the first nuclear explosion of World War III, or some other unexpected turn of events, among which the most promising is an alien invasion (and evil one; the invasion of friendly aliens guarantees nothing) [. . .]

Things like Shevchuk's decrees cannot blow up the situation in the region. Even Ukraine cannot do it. The only real reason for hostilities to resume or to launch a real process of integration with Russia would be a change in Moldova's status, for example, its unification with Romania. But this scenario is no more likely than the arrival of aliens. It's time for Tiraspol to learn something important: Moscow is very sensitive to unexpected attempted 'initiatives' that destroy its carefully constructed system of foreign policy vectors [. . .]

Much in Transdniestria relies on domestic intrigues, nepotism and complex investment schemes, and nothing positive can develop in such circumstances. And there's always a reason to believe it could get even worse.[53]

“Worse” might describe the prospect of Transdniestria morphing into a Balkan Kaliningrad. [54] The reference is to Russia's Baltic enclave, one that the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies' Igor Nikolaychuk calls “the single most important object in the Russian Federation's overall military infrastructure.”[55] An especially disruptive scenario would involve the deployment of Russian short-range ballistic missiles in Transdniestria. Systems like Russia's *Iskander* [56] are used for battlefield support against nearby targets. [57] In confined geographic theatres like Moldova-Romania, a hypothesized *Iskander* deployment would directly challenge NATO's missile defense system based in southern Romania, which requires defensive depth of at least 500 kilometers (the range of the *Iskander-M*). The Transdniestrian government announced in February 2010 that it was prepared to host Russian missiles on its territory. After Moldova's pro-Russia political party Equality (*Ravnopraviye*)[58] asked Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to “take measures to protect Transdniestria against new threats” [59] from NATO's planned anti-missile defenses in Romania, President Igor Smirnov stated that he was “prepared to accommodate” any Russian countermeasures.[60] In late November 2011, then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev identified a set of asymmetric countermeasures in response to NATO's European missile defense architecture. He cautioned that if those countermeasures proved insufficient

[T]he Russian Federation will deploy modern offensive weapon systems in the west and south of the country, ensuring our ability to take out any part of the US missile defense system in Europe. One step in this process will be to deploy Iskander

Another “worse” scenario might involve (despite what *Vzglyad* writes) the outbreak of a large-scale conflict along Transnistria’s eastern border with Ukraine.



Transnistria’s eastern border with Ukraine (Source: Wikipedia [62])

This would likely involve the escalation of some localized conflict. On 19 October, for example, Transnistria’s State Security Committee (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti PMR* “KGB-PMR”) announced that it apprehended six Ukrainian nationals whom it accused of “engaging in covert surveillance in the vicinity of KGB-PMR exercises” near Kamenka (*Camenca* in Romanian) on the territory’s western border with Moldova.[63]

Republika Srpska: Welcome, Orthodoxy’s Son

*Putin, our friend from St. Petersburg.
The entire Serbian Guard awaits you
Putin, Orthodoxy’s son.
Russia rises up.*

*We look to the sixteenth of October
All of blessed Serbia awaits you.
With you, comes so much that is good.
Our hope, the strength of our Orthodox faith.*

– Stanko Lacman-Barič [64]



(Source: Total Croatia News [65])

The western Balkan nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina* or “BiH”) is surrounded on all sides by Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro (all former Yugoslav federal republics). BiH’s constituent parts are, respectively, the Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska*) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (“BiH Federation”).



Republika Srpska's brief and troubled history began with its formation in the early 1990s by the Bosnian Serb Assembly (*Skupština bosanskih Srba*). That self-declared representative body of Bosnian Serbs established the "Republic of the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (*Republika srpskog naroda Bosne i Hercegovine*) in January 1992. It claimed territorial control of Serb autonomous areas and other Serb ethnic strongholds within BiH. After the BiH national government in Sarajevo refused to recognize the Republic, it held a national independence referendum in March 1992 that was boycotted by most Bosnian Serbs. The referendum passed, and an independent BiH (which included the territory claimed by the Republic) was formally recognized by the European Union the following month. The Bosnian Serb Assembly promptly declared the Republic's independence from BiH and adopted the name "Serb Republic" (*Republika Srpska*), a truncated version of its earlier one. Its early leaders (including its first president, Radovan Karadžić, later convicted of genocide and war crimes against Bosnian Muslims and Croats) intended to seek the eventual incorporation of *Republika Srpska* into a Greater Serbia. In November 1992, however, the United Nations Security Council called on member-states to recognize BiH's territorial integrity and affirmed that "any entities unilaterally declared . . . will not be accepted."^[66]

A recent commentary published by the Serbian veterans' organization Patriotic Front (*Patriotski Front*) answered the rhetorical question "What does Republika Srpska mean to Serbs?"

Serbia must not abandon Republika Srpska just as it never abandoned Bosnia. Republika Srpska is an independent Serbian state beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia, not part of some "invented nation" . . . We are grateful to Milorad Dodik [the president of Republika Srpska], who despite difficulties managed to preserve the unity of the Republika Srpska and the Serb people. We are grateful to Russian President Vladimir Putin for his support and assistance to the Serbian people, and for ensuring our national security and territory. Together we win!^[67]

"Putin's man in the Balkans"^[68] is how the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* characterized Mr. Dodik:

But one must not think that the populist wants to destroy only Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was no accident that Dodik traveled to Moscow three days before the referendum to meet the Russian President Vladimir Putin. It is about larger geopolitical plans of the Russian regime. Dodik is not alone as a vassal of Putin's interests. Similar political figures are also found in Macedonia and Serbia. Their aim is to weaken the West's position in the Balkans . . . The fact that the referendum could take place at all shows the bankruptcy of Western policy in the Balkans.^[69]

In late September, Mr. Dodik went ahead with his promised referendum ^[70] to establish 9 January—the date on which the Bosnian Serb Assembly in 1992 declared independence—as "Republika Srpska Day" (*Dan Republike Srpske*). Voters approved the measure almost unanimously (99.8 percent in favor). The referendum "shows the new geo-political balance in the Balkans," wrote *Der Standard's* Adelheid Wölfel.^[71]



Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik (Source: *Novorossia Today* [72])

The referendum was a reaction to a 2015 decision by the BiH constitutional court, which ruled that the holiday discriminated against non-Serbs because it falls on a Serbian Orthodox religious holiday. The court was responding to a November 2015 challenge by Bakir Izetbegović, a member of the BiH tripartite presidency and leader of the predominantly Bosniak (i.e., Bosnian Muslim) political party, the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije*). The referendum was “a feast for Serbian separatists”[73] in the word of one commentary. If so, it is an opportunity for Mr. Putin as well.

Supporting Serbian separatism is part of a [Russian] strategy of creating pressure within the European Union, or at least causing chaos on its periphery. Ideally for the Kremlin, Bosnian Serbs face a choice not only about independence, but also about the military means to achieve it. This gives rise to another stress point, one to distract the European Union from the Ukraine conflict, sanctions, and so on. Russia, claiming to act as a humanitarian force defending the Serbian people, would gladly introduce peacekeepers into the region, and by so doing create yet another platform to bargain with the West, along with Syria.[74]

Russia’s *Pravda* concluded, “It is apparent now that the American policy of agglomerating countries out of unagglomerative parts has failed.”[75] *Izvestia* and *Lenta* repeated Mr. Dodik’s admonition that “Republika Srpska could secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina . . . in the event of any military operations on the part of Bosnian authorities.”[76] The reference is to BiH’s hoped-for NATO accession (it joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in 2006). Republika Srpska looms large in BiH’s relationship with the security alliance. On the one hand, its threat to declare independence complicates Western political calculations about the advisability and timing of BiH’s accession. On the other hand, Russia by no means discourages speculation about the effect of Republika Srpska inside NATO.

We must not forget that Yugoslavia for years pursued a policy of “sitting on two chairs,” acting as a “Trojan horse” in the socialist camp in order to get help from the United States and NATO.[77]

So judged an August 2012 assessment by the Ljubljana-based International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), which continued:

Current political events clearly point to the existence of a BiH transversal forming a Moscow–Belgrade–Banja Luka [Republika Srpska’s capital] triangle . . . which at some point could prevent BiH joining [NATO] . . . That transversal would infiltrate into the security architecture of NATO, the European Union, and other international institutions and agencies that guarantee the security of Western countries.[78]

The Serbian media portal *b92* reported earlier this year that Kosovo—which declared independence from Serbia in February 2008—was preparing to request formally to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace program.[79] This may further complicate Western calculations about additional regional security partnerships in the western Balkans, notes a *Lenta* commentary.

The 22 February 2008 resolution adopted by the Republika Srpska parliament provides that Bosnian Serbs may secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina if a majority of UN member states and EU states recognize Kosovo’s independence.[80]

When the February 2008 resolution was adopted, Branislav Dukić—who chaired the Serb Movement of Independent Associations (*Srpski pokret nezavisnih udruženja* “SPONA”)—declared at a rally in Banja Luka:

[If] Kosovo proclaims independence, SPONA will demand the parliament do likewise and extract Republika Srpska from BiH. We have a right, which is the right of all people to self-determination, one that includes the right to secede.^[81]

That trigger—Kosovo declaring independence—had occurred five days earlier. Mr. Dukić reiterated the linkage between Kosovo and Republika Srpska:

“If Kosovo’s illegal parliament may declare independence, there’s no reason Republika Srpska’s legal parliament wouldn’t have the same right . . . In the event Kosovo unilaterally declares independence, others can do the same.”^[82]

Mr. Putin used a similar argument earlier this year about Kosovo to justify Crimea’s 11 March 2014 “declaration of independence.”^[83] Dismissing “Putin’s pseudo-analogy,” Wulf Lapins argued that it cuts two ways:

For the premise that “what Kosovo is allowed cannot be denied Crimea” means in reverse that “what Crimea is allowed must also apply to Kosovo” . . . [Mr. Putin’s] government’s implicit message, therefore, reads like a Bible verse: Knock and the door shall be opened. Not a word about how Russia herself so far has strictly denied Kosovo Albanians the right to self-determination, one she now expressly demands for the people of Crimea.^[84]

That is unlikely to sway Mr. Putin, for whom Republika Srpska is a useful instrument to influence political events in the Balkans, not as an end in itself.

[A] pro-Russian state within the EU would not, of course, be an unattractive scenario for the Kremlin either . . . Russia can use Serbia as an effective instrument with which to administer pinpricks to the EU, and thus Moscow remains willing to invest in the Russian-Serbian friendship.^[85]

All this led the Balkan newsmagazine *Nedeljnik* to warn ominously that “War is inevitable in the Balkans.”

Russia is not trying openly to alter the environment in the region. Instead, it aims to strengthen its alliances, to stop the expansion of NATO, and to defend its economic interests in the Balkans. But in the end, the result may be the collapse of the existing order in the Balkans. If the West backs Russia into a corner because of Ukraine, Moscow could precipitate a serious crisis in the region that would include both the EU and NATO simply by giving the Bosnian Serbs the “green light.”^[86]

(An Imagined) History Returns to the Balkans

And what have the centuries brought you?

Madness and experience.

To be or not to be—that is the question.

It’s always yours, Europe.

– Yuri Kuznetsov *The House* (1973) ^[87]

Mr. Putin is adept at formulating narratives to incite existential questions about European geopolitics that many Western leaders—including prominently, Mr. Obama—sanguinely maintain are relics of a bygone era. Mr. Obama has argued that Mr. Putin need merely disengage himself from Russia’s historic alignments, something that fundamentally misunderstands the temperament of Russian leaders. Pyotr Chaadaev wrote in his c.1820s *Philosophical Letters* of what he called Russia’s “differentness” (*novizny*):

It is one of the most lamentable traits of our peculiar civilization that we have yet to discover truths that are commonplace elsewhere, even among peoples that are in many respects less advanced than us. This is because we have never moved in concert with the other peoples. We do not belong to any of the great families of the human race. We are neither of the West nor of the East, and we do not have the traditions of either. We stand, as it were, outside of time . . . ^[88]

Russian *novizny* is a fundament of Mr. Putin’s Balkan narrative. He makes common cause with Orthodox Serbs and other disgruntled peoples who are “geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as ‘the other’.”^[89] Mr. Putin’s narrative competes with what Maria Todorov calls the “persistent hegemonic discourse from the West, continuously disparaging about the Balkans,”^[90] as well as the

hackneyed view that Balkan peoples “were then, and are still, unlike Europe.”[91]

For Balkan territories like Transdniestria and Republika Srpska, “independence meant the ‘return to history.’”[92]

Consequently, the illusion was that a lost line could be embraced, and lost identity could be restored, if carefully sought from a lost past.[93]

The argued “lost past” is a composite of real and imagined histories that reveals, as George Kennan wrote in the early 1990’s, “how much of today’s problem has deep roots and how much does not.”[94] It is Mr. Putin’s peculiar genius to craft disruptive narratives around imagined histories that associate Russia with a common lost past and a shared differentness.

President Obama’s hubristic declaration that the United States “doesn’t do pinpricks”[95] rings hollow, according to Lionel Beehner.

“The comment was obviously meant to reassure our allies that we have their backs and will enforce our red lines with overwhelming force if necessary . . . But ever since the winding down of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with the possible exception of Libya, it would seem the United States only does pinpricks.”[96]

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey writes, “To move the needle from a pinprick to something of lasting strategic value, the President must overcome his aversion to using force.”[97] Mr. Obama has not, alas, done so.

[T]he result is that such strategies provoke increased deception and aggression as extremists cynically exploit the democracies’ moral confusion, defense cuts, withdrawals, half-hearted ideological combat, “pin prick” military approaches, and diplomatic trust.[98]

Mr. Putin’s pinprick strategy is qualitatively different from the one Mr. Obama dismisses. While Mr. Obama “continues his policy of disengagement . . . [and has] no intention of backing his words with action,”[99] writes Gary Kasparov, Mr. Putin deals effectively in provocations and demonstrations:

[Mr. Putin’s] pinpricks in the side of NATO . . . serve the important domestic purpose of showing Russia’s population that the government stands up to the West and forges its own path internationally.[100]

And when a confined conflict goes hot as in eastern Ukraine, observes *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Mr. Putin deftly exploits pinpricks to avoid “hav[ing] to consider real concessions”[101]

The challenge faced by the United States in Transdniestria and Republika Srpska is the product of serial misjudgments about Russian intentions and inurement to Western sanctions more than anything peculiarly Balkan. The regional security environment could deteriorate quickly if today’s (somewhat) contained situation in Transdniestria becomes a larger Moldovan crisis upon the election of an abjectly pro-Russia national government, given the country’s position as a veritable geographic wedge between Romania and Ukraine.

Ballistic missile and missile defensive systems are a persistent and growing threat to regional security. Russia’s *Iskander* short-range ballistic missile system, a recent CIA research report noted, “is a weapon that can affect the military-political situation in the regions of the world when it is positioned in in states that do not have a large territory.” Were Russia to deploy *Iskander* in Transdniestria (or worse, in western Moldova), NATO would be challenged to reestablish depth for its “Aegis Ashore” missile defense system based in southern Romania.

The author contends mismanagement of the United States’ relationship with Russia over the past several years has been punctuated by rhetorical slights and bellicosity. So it is perhaps worth ending with an extended quote from George Kennan’s famous 1947 essay, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.”

In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies. It is important to note, however, that such a policy has nothing to do with outward histrionics: with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward “toughness.” While the Kremlin is basically flexible in its reaction to political realities, it is by no means unamenable to considerations of prestige. Like almost any other government, it can be placed by tactless and threatening gestures in a position where it cannot afford to yield even though this might be dictated by its sense of realism. The Russian leaders are keen judges of human psychology, and as such they are highly conscious that loss of temper and of self-control is never a source of strength in political affairs. They are quick to exploit such evidences of weakness. For these reasons it is a sine qua non of successful dealing with Russia that the foreign government in question should remain at all times cool and collected and that its demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for a compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige.[102]

Mr. Putin's *pinpricks* approach has had the inherent advantage of not requiring that Russia take and hold large territorial expanses, while at the same time (and at a lesser cost) complicating the defenders' map. It is perhaps Russia's best hope of checking NATO expansion—either by means of a blocking strategy that exploits the geographic position of separatist enclaves, or in the event a friendly government takes office in Moldova by removing it from the accession queue entirely. Western leaders must rediscover a seriousness of approach to match their purpose in the Balkans. This will require them to find ways to reengage Russia, lest pinpricks populated with missile systems mutate into something of an order of magnitude more dangerous than today's already volatile security environment.

The translation of all source material is by the author. The opening quote by Defense Secretary Weinberg is from the transcript of the 22 December 1981 meeting of the United States National Security Council. See: <http://www.thereaganfiles.com/19811222-nsc-34.pdf>, 5. Last accessed 14 October 2016.

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- [2] Official Committee on Communism (Overseas) Minutes, 15 February 1950, in The National Archives (TNA) of the United Kingdom, CAB 134/4, AC(O)(50)4th Meeting. Cited in Cormac (2014), 13.
- [3] Muhidin Mulalić & Mirsad Karić (2014). "The Western Balkans Geopolitics and Russian Energy Politics." *Epiphany*. 7:1, 87 & 103.
- [4] This dual purpose is suggested by Ioannis Michaletos. See: Michaletos (2015). "Balkans lose geopolitical importance." *Serbianna* [published online 17 October 2015]. <http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/3119>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [5] Harold J. Mackinder (1904; 2004). "The geographical pivot of history". *The Geographical Journal*. 170:4, 4298-321.
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- [7] "Putin ist unser Gott." *Handelsblatt* [published online in German 11 August 2015]. <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/russland-auf-dem-balkan-putin-ist-unser-gott/12143392.html>. Last accessed 20 October 2016. The headline read in the original German text, "Im Westen gehasst, im Balkan ein Held: «Putin ist unser Gott»."
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- [9] *Ibid.*
- [10] Leon Aron (2013). "The Putin Doctrine." *Foreign Affairs* [published online 8 March 2013]. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2013-03-08/putin-doctrine>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [11] Christopher T. Barber (2015). "Russian Foreign Policy in the Balkans," 1-2. https://www.academia.edu/12126562/Russian_Soft_Power_in_the_Balkan_Peninsula. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [12] Barbara Jelavich (1991). *Russia's Balkan entanglements 1806-1914*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 147.
- [13] Its website can be accessed here: <http://vko-ckv.ru>
- [14] "V Kotore sozdano Balkanskoye kazach'ye voysko." *Srpska.ru* [published online in Russian 12 September 2016]. <http://www.srpska.ru/article.php?nid=30064>. Last accessed 21 October 2016. One of its recruiting videos can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BVKoUrWLN8>. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [15] "V Chernogorii sozdali "kazatskoye voysko", kotoroye vozglavil rossiyskiy general." *iPress* [published online in Russian 15 February 2016]. http://ipress.ua/ru/news/v_chernogoryy_sozdaly_kazatskoe_voysko_kotoroe_vozglavyl_rossiyskiy_general_180448.html. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [16] <http://www.srpska.ru/article.php?nid=30064>. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [17] Johan Norberg & Fredrik Westerlund of the Swedish Defense Research Agency (*Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut*) have a similar thesis vis-à-vis Russian actions in Ukraine. See: Norberg & Westerlund (2014). "Russia and Ukraine: Military-strategic options, and possible risks, to Moscow." *RUSF Briefing No. 22* (April 2014). Another scholar writes that for Imperial Russia, "'annexation' was often an evolutionary, informal, and piecemeal process." See: Allen Chew (1970). *An Atlas of Russian History. Eleven Centuries of Changing Borders*. (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- [18] Chew (1970), *op cit.*, vii.
- [19] "Russia, Mongolia, and China." *Littell's Living Age*. CCV:2656 (1 June 1895) 556.
- [20] *The Annual Register* (1873). "Circular Dispatch Addressed by Prince Gortchakow to Russian Representatives Abroad" [sic] dated 21 November 1864. Appendix. Public Documents and State Papers. (London: Riverton's) 230.
- [21] *Ibid.*

- [22] Kresnar Shala (2015). Western Balkans Region and the Geopolitical Context: Russian Influence. *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung report* (22 September 2015) 5. http://www.fes-prishtina.org/wb/media/2015/Rajoni%20i%20Ballkanit%20Perendimor%20dhe%20konteksti%20gjeopolitik%20Anglisht_Krenar%20Shala.pdf. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [23] For example, Edward Lucas (who is a senior editor of *The Economist*) argued that the 17 April 2014 [Geneva Statement on Ukraine](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/joint-geneva-statement-on-ukraine-from-april-17-the-full-text/2014/04/17/89bd0ac2-c654-11e3-9f37-7ce307c56815_story.html) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/joint-geneva-statement-on-ukraine-from-april-17-the-full-text/2014/04/17/89bd0ac2-c654-11e3-9f37-7ce307c56815_story.html] “was a *maskirovka*, allowing Russia to continue its piecemeal annexation and subversion of Ukraine, while tying the West up in knots over diplomatic process and procedure.” See: Andras Radnoti (2014). “Edward Lucas: Greater Europe was always a non-starter.” Russian International Affairs Council blog [published online 30 April 2014]. http://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/westerlies/?id_4=1138. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [24] See for example: Adam Balcer (2015). “Matushka Rossiya and the Balkans.” *Aspen Review*. 2 (February 2015) 66. <http://www.aspeninstitute.cz/en/article/2-2015-matushka-rossiya-and-the-balkans/>. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [25] Jelavich (1991), *op cit.*, 150.
- [26] “Floreat Germania, Preat Europa.” *Contemporary Review* 516 (December 1908) 752.
- [27] “Predstavlyayetsya pravil'nym initsirovat' prisoyedineniye vostochnykh oblastey Ukrainy k Rossii.” *Novaya Gazeta* [published online in Russian 24 February 2015]. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2015/02/24/63168-171-predstavlyaetsya-pravilnym-initsirovat-prisoedinenie-vostochnykh-oblastey-ukrainy-k-rossii-187>. Last accessed 21 October 2016. In late February 2015, the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* published a purported Kremlin policy paper that it said was written and circulated inside the Kremlin a few weeks prior to the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. *Novaya Gazeta* has a strong reputation for investigative reporting, and six of its journalists have been murdered since 2001 (including Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot in the elevator of her Moscow apartment building in October 2006). The newspaper is owned by Evgeny Alexandrovich Lebedev (known in the West as Alexander Lebedev), a Russian businessman with extensive media holdings in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.
- [28] “Rossiya i Serbiya gotovyatsya provesti novyye voyennyye ucheniya.” *Regnum* [published online in Russian 1 March 2015]. <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1900401.html>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [29] <http://www.balkandefense.com/russias-basic-strategy-in-transnistria-is-the-control-of-the-part-over-the-whole/>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [30] “Posle Sirii. Pochemu Putin reshil rasshatat' Balkany.” *Espresso* [published online in Russian 24 September 2016]. http://ru.espresso.tv/article/2016/09/26/posle_syryy_pochemu_putyn_reshyl_rasshatat_balkany. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [31] *Ibid.*
- [32] From Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii (1863; 1886). *What's to be done?* (Boston: Benjamin B. Tucker) 55] According to the Russian intellectual Nikolai Valentinov, Lenin once told him Chernyshevskii “was the greatest and most talented representative of socialism before Marx.” See: Valentinov (1951). “Chernyshevskii i Lenin.” *Novyi zhurnal*. 26-27 (1951) 193-194.
- [33] Asked by the Russian government’s RT television channel who he preferred to win the United States presidential election, Mr. Shevchuk answered, “Between Trump and Clinton, I choose Vladimir Putin.” Yevgeniy Shevchuk: Mezhdru Trampom i Klinton ya Vybirayu Putina.” *Novosti Pridnestrov'ya* [published online in Russian 20 September 2016]. <http://novostipmr.com/ru/news/16-09-22/evgeniy-shevchuk-v-moskve-provyol-vstrechu-s-dmitriem-rogozinym>. Last accessed 3 October 2016.
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- [35] The survey found 27.5% of respondents were undecided and 11.6% indicated they would not vote. “Sondaj CBS-Axa, IDIS Viitorul: PD-salt în sondaje și suflă în ceafa PSRM.” *Deschide* [published online in Romanian 28 September 2016]. <http://www.deschide.md/ro/stiri/politic/1257/Sondaj-CBS-Axa-IDIS-Viitorul-PD—salt-în-sondaje-și-suflă-în-ciafa-PSRM.htm>. Last accessed 3 October 2016.
- [36] The Moldovan government established polling stations in Italy (25), Romania (11), Russia (8), the United States (7), France (6), Portugal & Spain (4 each), and Canada & Turkey (3 each). There are two polling stations per country in Britain, Israel, Greece, Ukraine and Germany, respectively. There is a single polling station in Ireland, Belarus, China, Czech Republic, Latvia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Poland, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Qatar, Monaco, and Japan, respectively.
- [37] <https://www.facebook.com/dodon.igor1/photos/pcb.1737874189786801/1737874066453480/?type=3&theater>. Last accessed 3 October 2016. Mr. Dodon demanded the following numbers of polling stations: Russia (159); Italy (47); United States (16); Canada (6); Germany, Spain and Ukraine (5 each); Israel (4); Romania and Greece (3 each); and Portugal (2). He would allot the remaining countries on the Chișinău’s roster one center each.
- [38] Ion Preasca & Inna Civirjic (2016). “Din cimitir în secțiile de votare.” *RISE Moldova* [published online in Romanian 9 September 2016]. <https://www.rise.md/articol/cimitirul-din-listele-electorale/>. Last accessed 13 October 2016. An updated version of the 9 September article was published under the headline “Moldovában a halottakat is megilleti a szavazati jog.” See: <https://occrp.atlatszo.hu/2016/09/28/moldovaban-a-halottakat-is-megilleti-a-szavazati-jog/>. Last accessed 13 October 2016.

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- [41] “Bavaria conference reinforces German OSCE Chairmanship’s emphasis on an outcomes-based Transdnistriean settlement process.” OSCE press release published 14 July 2016.
- [42] <http://radiopmr.org/golos/464/>. Last accessed 14 October 2016.
- [43] “Predstaviteli Tiraspolya vyrazhayut nedoumeniye v svyazi s vyskazyvaniyami chlena delegatsii ot RM.” *Novosti Pridnestrov’ya* [published online in Russian 13 October 2016]. <http://novostipmr.com/ru/news/16-10-13/pridnestrovskaya-delegaciya-v-okk-zhdyot-razyasneniy-i-oficialnyh>. Last accessed 14 October 2016.
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- [45] *Ibid.*
- [46] Georgiy Kukhaleyshvili (2016). “GEOPOLITIKUM Putin khochet prevratit’ Pridnestrov’ye v pugalo dlya NATO.” *Fraza* [published online in Russian 13 July 2016]. <http://fraza.ua/analitics/13.07.16/248506/putin-hochet-prevratit-pridnestrove-v-pugalo-dlja-nato.html>. Last accessed 13 October 2016.
- [47] For an extended discussion of the Aegis Ashore deployment in Romania, see the author’s July 2016 essay “If the Atlantic Ocean is the New Black Sea, What’s the Black Sea? Aegis Ashore and the Black Sea Region’s Changing Security Dynamic.” <http://www.fpri.org/article/2016/07/atlantic-ocean-new-black-sea-whats-black-sea-aegis-ashore-black-sea-regions-changing-security-dynamic/>
- [48] “Rossiya gotovit krymskiy stsensariy v Pridnestrov’ye.” *Hubs* [published online in Russian 12 September 2016]. <http://hubs.ua/authority/rossiya-gotovit-kry-mskij-stsenarij-v-pridnestrov-e-87735.html>. Last accessed 15 October 2016.
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- [51] “Stremeniye Pridnestrov’ya voyti v sostav RF tol’ko razdrzhayet Moskvu. Referendum PMR o vkhozhenii v Rossiyu—sovsem ne to, chem on kazhetsya.” *Vzglyad* [published online in Russian 17 September 2016]. <http://www.vz.ru/politics/2016/9/17/832723.html>. Last accessed 3 October 2016.
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- [53] *Vzglyad* (17 September 2016), *op cit.*
- [54] Grigory N. Perepelitsa (who directs a think tank associated with Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry) expresses the opposite view, arguing “Russia does not want a second Kaliningrad.” See: “Ekspert ob”yasnil, pochemu Pridnestrov’ye predstavlyayet ugrozu dlya Ukrainy.” *Glavred* [published online in Russian 14 September 2016]. <http://glavred.info/politika/ekspert-obyasnil-pochemu-pridnestrove-predstavlyaet-ugrozu-dlya-ukrainy-388320.html>. Last accessed 3 October 2016.
- [55] “Nikogda ne udastsya prevratit’ Kaliningradskuyu oblast’ v region mira.” *NewsBalt* [published online in Russian 4 April 2016]. <http://newsbalt.ru/analytiks/2016/04/kaliningrad-russia-usa/>. Last accessed 3 October 2016.
- [56] The reference is to Russia’s 9K720 Iskander-M [NATO Reporting Name: SS-26 Stone], a theater (280km range) mobile ballistic missile designed for tactical strikes on small, high value mobile and stationary land targets. It replaced the SS-23 Spider (500km range) system that was destroyed under the INF treaty. The name *Iskander* is from the Persian language name of Alexander the Great.
- [57] <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/iksander-system/>. Last accessed 25 October 2016.
- [58] Formally, the Republican Social-Political Movement “Equality” (Russian transl.: *Respublikanskaya obshchestvenno-politicheskoye dvizheniye Ravnopraviye*. Romanian: *Mișcare Social-Politică Republicană Ravnopravie*.)
- [59] “Rossiyu prosyat razmestit’ otvet na amerikanskuyu PRO v Pridnestrov’ye.” *NBM.md* [published online in Russian 15 February 2010]. http://www.nbm.md/news/main/rzmesenie_pro_pridnestrovie/default.aspx. Last accessed 25 October 2016.

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- [61] President of Russia (2011). "Statement in connection with the situation concerning the NATO countries' missile defence system in Europe." Published online in English 23 November 2011. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/13637>. Last accessed 25 October 2016.
- [62] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camenca_District#/media/File:Raionul_Camenca,_Transnistria.jpg. Last accessed 25 October 2016.
- [63] "SOTRUDNIK GPSU ZADERZHAN PRIDNESTROVSKIMI POGRANICHNIKAMI." *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti PMR* website [published online in Russian 19 October 2016]. <http://kgb-pmr.com/news/458>. Last accessed 25 October 2016.
- [64] These are the first two stanzas of a poem written by Stanko Lacman-Barič to celebrate Vladimir Putin's October 2014 visit to Serbia. It was published online by the Serbian media portal *Blic* on 14 October 2014 [<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/pesma-vladimiru-nas-putine-s-peterburga-gradacr2xz39>]. The stanzas read as follows in the original text:
- Naš Putine s' Petersburga grada,
Čeka tebe sve Srbije garda,
Naš Putine pravoslavni sine,
Što Rusiju diže u visine.*
- Čekamo te šesnaestog oktobra,
Čeka tebe sva Srbija draga,
Donosiš nam mnogo, mnogo dobra,
Naša nada, pravoslavna snaga.*
- [65] <http://www.total-croatia-news.com/item/13867-croatia-referendum-in-the-republika-srpska-in-unacceptable>. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [66] United Nations Security Council (1992). Resolution 787 (1992) adopted by the Security Council at its 3137th meeting on 16 November 1992. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N92/723/03/IMG/N9272303.pdf?OpenElement>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [67] "Čto oznachayet Respublika Serbskaya dlya Serbov?" *Srpska.ru* [published online in Russian 1 August 2016]. <http://www.srpska.ru/article.php?nid=28325>. Last accessed 19 October 2016.
- [68] Adelheid Wöfl (2016). "Republika Srpska: Putins Mann auf dem Balkan." *Der Standard* [published online in German 26 September 2016]. <http://derstandard.at/2000044974636/Putins-Mann-auf-dem-Balkan>. Last accessed 17 October 2016.
- [69] *Ibid.*
- [70] "Mijović: Izborni proces najveći kriminal u BiH." *n1* [published online in Croatian 22 September 2016]. <http://ba.n1info.com/a113976/Video/Info/Mijovic-Izborni-proces-najveci-kriminal-u-BiH.html>. Last accessed 18 October 2016. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić earlier declined to support the referendum or to intervene to prevent it. The referendum yielded its first results in BiH nationwide municipal elections, which were held several days later: Mr. Dodik's political party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (*Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata/Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata*), saw the number of municipalities under its control rise 30 percent from the previous election. The referendum and the municipal elections occurred under the cloud of some 500 thousands questionable or non-existent registered voters on the Republika Srpska rolls.
- [71] Adelheid Wöfl (2016). "Referendum in der Republika Srpska: Auch Nichtstun ist ein Signal." *Der Standard* [published online in German 21 September 2016]. <http://derstandard.at/2000044740553/Referendum-in-der-Republika-Srpska-Auch-Nichtstun-ist-ein-Signal>. Last accessed 17 October 2016.
- [72] <http://novorossia.today/141457-2/>. Last accessed 21 October 2016.
- [73] "Referendum razdora. Zhdet li Yevropu novyy bosniyskiy krizis?" *Yevropeyskaya pravda* [published online in Russian 3 October 2016]. <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/10/3/7055302/>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [74] *Ibid.*
- [75] "Banya-Luka brosil vyzov Vashingtonu." *Pravda* [published online in Russian 26 September 2016]. http://www.pravda.ru/world/europe/balkans/26-09-2016/1314238-resp_serbska-0/. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
- [76] "Respublika Serbskaya mozhet vyty iz sostava Bosnii i Gertsegoviny." *Izvestia* [published online in Russian 22 September 2016]. <http://izvestia.ru/news/633934>. Last accessed 18 October 2016. "Respublika Serbskaya prigrozila vykhodom iz sostava Bosnii i Gertsegoviny." *Lenta* [published online in Russian 22 September 2016]. <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/09/22/respsersbkajabigexit/>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
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- [81] "Studenti iz RS najavili proteste." *Univerzitet u Banjoj Luci* [published online in Serbian 14 February 2008]. <http://unibl.rs/sr/vesti/2008/02/studenti-iz-rs-najavili-proteste>. Last accessed 20 October 2016.
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Bezumiye i opyt.
Byt' il' ne byt' — takov vopros,
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