

# **Moscow versus Brussels: Rival Integration Projects in the Balkans**

Stephen Blank and Younkyoo Kim

As major governance problems that obstruct integration still exist across the European Union, integration into the EU cannot by itself be a panacea to the many forces at odds across the continent. At the same time, it is unlikely that the ethnic animosities that exploded across the Balkans in the 1990s have fully subsided.<sup>1</sup> There also is no doubt that the severity of today's economic crisis has diminished the EU's standing and prestige throughout the Balkans, triggering serious doubts among local governments and societies about the advisability of joining the EU, even though many of them are in the middle of that process. Indeed, a disintegrating EU, which is now a real possibility, would then export to the western Balkans (former Yugoslavia) not its institutional values but rather its instability.<sup>2</sup> Russia clearly exploits this opportunity due to the EU's failure to master its current crisis.

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1. Dan Bilefsky, "The Curse of Corruption in Europe's East," *New York Times*, 26 October 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/world/europe/26iht-romania26.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/world/europe/26iht-romania26.html?_r=0); John Peet, "EU Enlargement: Benefits and Obstacles," in Federiga Bindi and Irina Angelescu, eds., *The Frontiers of Europe: A Transatlantic Problem* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 40. The lack of integration is shown in recent political crises in Romania, Hungary's turn away from democracy, and the ongoing large-scale corruption in Bulgaria. Moises Naim characterized the latter country as a "criminalized state." Moises Naim, "Criminal States: Organized Crime Takes Office," *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2012), [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137529/moises-naim/mafia-states](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137529/moises-naim/mafia-states).

2. T. J., "Integrated Circuit," *Economist*, 12 September 2012, [www.economist.com/blogs/eastern-approaches/2012/09/balkans-and-eu](http://www.economist.com/blogs/eastern-approaches/2012/09/balkans-and-eu); Dimitar Bechev, "The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and Euro Crisis," ECFR Policy Brief 60 (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, August 2012), 1, [ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR60\\_WESTERN\\_BALKANS\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR60_WESTERN_BALKANS_BRIEF_AW.pdf).

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### The Moscow-Brussels Rivalry in the Balkans

Until 2008 Balkan security rested on a US military presence, the promise and reality of regional economic integration, EU supervision of Bosnia, and integration of the willing and qualified states into membership in the EU. Since then, all three elements have weakened, and the Balkans, most notably Greece, have been hurled into the unending crisis of the eurozone.<sup>3</sup> Many see the western Balkans as low-hanging fruit—an area in which EU policy has made a real difference in terms of stability and, at least until 2008, growth.<sup>4</sup> Slowing EU enlargement allows other actors to seize on business opportunities, score political points, and carve out niches of influence—in part, free-riding on the tremendous investment into stability already made by the EU.<sup>5</sup>

Russia, meanwhile, has returned to play its historically important regional role. Continuing democratic deficits in Balkan states' domestic governance that fosters corruption, organized crime, unresolved ethnic issues (for example, in Kosovo and Bosnia), the protracted eurozone economic crisis since 2008, and the Russian-Georgian war of that year—especially after President Vladimir Putin admitted that Russia had planned for it and incorporated separatists into its planning since 2006—all underscore the fact that the transatlantic community cannot take European or Eurasian security for granted.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Russia's return gives Balkan political forces who oppose the EU's reforming and democratizing integration project opportunities for resistance and a patron for their cause.<sup>7</sup>

In the Balkans, a Russian or Russifying project competes against an EU project, while Washington has shown little interest in the Balkans during the Obama administration, in keeping with its generally diminished interest in Eastern European politics, although it does support EU initiatives.<sup>8</sup> As

3. Gordon N. Bardos, "The New Political Dynamics of Southeastern Europe," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008): 178–80.

4. Bechev, 7.

5. Bardos, 178–80.

6. Ibid., 171–8; *Rossiia* 24, 8 August 2012, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Central Asia, *Daily Report* (henceforth FBIS-SOV), 8 August 2012; Pavel Felgenhauer, "Putin Confirms the Invasion of Georgia Was Preplanned," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 9 August 2012.

7. Bardos, 181–2.

8. Jacques Rupnik, "The Balkans as a European Question," in Jacques Rupnik, ed., *The Western Balkans and the EU: "The Hour of Europe,"* Chaillot Papers 126 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2011), 18.

early as a decade ago European analysts postulated a developing alternative Russian model in the so-called near abroad, which they called Russification and which opposed the liberal values inherent in the EU and Westernization project.<sup>9</sup> Although they were then contemplating the rise of this alternative in Transnistria and Abkhazia, the metaphor and the process apply as well throughout the Balkans. By Russification, they meant not only the integration of targeted areas' domestic structures with those of the Russian Federation but also a process aiming to stall, if not reverse, the movement toward democratic governance, genuine self-determination, and the rule of law. Mature Putinism, the contemporary crystallized version of this model, is an authoritarian, wholly corrupted, if not criminalized, regime characterized by informal deals and understandings among elites that disdains checks and balances and is increasingly willing to use repressive force to retain power.

Russia also acts vigorously to minimize the Western presence in the Balkans. Not only did Russia seek to undermine efforts to build a viable Bosnia, but its overall behavior in the Balkans was generally "fundamentally opportunistic" and had as its goal "to weaken the authority" of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the EU, and the United States. The Balkans duly served as "a convenient platform for this broader goal."<sup>10</sup> Moscow also utilizes every opportunity to keep Serbia from recognizing the "finality" of the state of Kosovo. Moscow's larger geopolitical prospect is to forestall and prevent the integration of Europe and component parts like the western Balkans into a single, democratic model.<sup>11</sup> It regards such trends as a mortal geostrategic and political blow to the modus operandi of mature Putinism as well as to its geopolitical ambitions of restoring some form of neoimperial authority in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In this struggle, energy resources and the confrontation of rival political models are Russia's weapons of choice.

9. Bruno Coppieters, Michel Huysseune, Michael Emerson, Nathalie Tocci, and Marius Vahl, "European Institutional Models as Instruments of Conflict Resolution in the Divided States of the European Periphery," CEPS Working Document 195 (Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies, July 2003), [www.ceps.be/book/european-institutional-models-instruments-conflict-resolution-divided-states-european-periphery](http://www.ceps.be/book/european-institutional-models-instruments-conflict-resolution-divided-states-european-periphery); Franco Frattini, Foreword to Bindi and Angelescu, 12.

10. Tomas Valasek, "Is Russia a Partner to the EU in Bosnia?" Policy Brief (London: Center for European Reform, 19 March 2009), [www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/policy-brief/2009/russia-partner-eu-bosniawww.cer.org.uk](http://www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/policy-brief/2009/russia-partner-eu-bosniawww.cer.org.uk).

11. *Ibid.*

What is at stake in the rival integration projects is not merely of relevance to the continuing evolution of Balkan domestic governance, regional integration, good governance, and overall ethnopolitical security. Rather, the credibility and vitality of the European integration project, of which the EU is the living embodiment, is the ultimate issue here.

The Balkans in general and the western Balkans in particular remain not just a Western question, as Arnold Toynbee wrote in the 1920s, but rather, per Jaques Rupnik, “a European question.”<sup>12</sup> Balkan security in general and the issues it comprises are inseparable from the larger quest for European and Eurasian security. As long as the Balkan states’ domestic governance and ethnic issues remain unresolved, Balkan security in general will remain unsettled and perpetuate, thereby, an unsettled or at least undefined European security situation. As was evident in the 1990s, this area clearly has the potential to undermine relations among NATO and EU members as well as East-West relations in general should a new major crisis occur here. Indeed, all of the many crises of modern Balkan history soon evolved into general crises within the European state system. Therefore, the struggles between Moscow and Brussels over integration projects in the Balkans are also part of a larger East-West struggle stretching all the way to Central Asia.

The western Balkans’ experience demonstrates that integration with Europe through the EU, if not NATO, and the general process of Europeanization are necessary and effective means of preventing further ethnopolitical conflicts.<sup>13</sup> But this region’s importance goes beyond that demonstration effect. In 2011, Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini strongly argued that the Balkans’ democratic integration into Europe is a test of the EU’s vitality going forward and that failure would reverse the progress toward democracy and conflict resolution and possibly open the way to renewed conflicts here.<sup>14</sup>

Russian policy aims at undoing the substance, if not the form, of the European settlement of 1989–99, a major component of which was the resolution of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. This is one key reason why Moscow does

12. Rupnik, 17.

13. Coppieters et al.; Frattini, x–xiii.

14. *Ibid.*

all it can to block a resolution of the Bosnian and Kosovo issues and exploits ethnic animosities whenever it can. Beyond that, Russia's effort to undo or frustrate European integration relates as well to its plans for Eurasian integration around its core. Unless it can successfully achieve the latter task, it will be decidedly hobbled in its efforts to achieve the former, even under conditions of EU crisis.

### **European versus Eurasian Integration Projects**

Moscow's Balkan activities eschew multilateralism. They reflect Russia's ambivalence toward this principle, which lies at the heart of the European project. Russia will pursue its own course, which is inherently suspicious of multilateral European integration projects. In the Balkans it has emulated its larger relationship to the EU as a whole, where its preference for dealing bilaterally with key members and smaller states rather than with a multilateral formation is clearly in evidence.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, some Russian analysts, if not the government, openly state that the NATO-Russia divisions of the Cold War remain and have not been overcome.<sup>16</sup> Sergei Karaganov, director of the semi-official Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, wrote in 2009 that not only had the Cold War not ended, it had never really finished.<sup>17</sup> Under the circumstances, Russian policy in the Balkans aims to preserve, insofar as possible, a suspended and incomplete resolution of the European and Balkan status quos. Although Russian officials claim they merely oppose NATO enlargement and seek a partnership with NATO, the idea that there could be indeterminate political spaces or so-called gray areas in Europe between Russia and NATO, spaces whose status depends not on the decision of the local governments but on agreements over their heads by the great powers, clearly signals the continuing lure for Russia of thinking in terms of spheres

15. Andrei Zagorski, "The Limits of a Global Consensus on Security: The Case of Russia," in Luis Peral, ed., *Global Security in a Multipolar World*, Chaillot Paper 118 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009), 79–80.

16. Mark Entin, "Imperatives of Constructing a New Security System in the Euro-Atlantic Region: The Russian Perspective," in Bindi and Angelescu, 211.

17. Sergei Karaganov, "The Unfinished Cold War," *Jordan Times*, 10 August 2009, [jordantimes.com/the-unfinished-cold-war](http://jordantimes.com/the-unfinished-cold-war).

of influence.<sup>18</sup> For example, throughout the entire discussion about NATO enlargement to the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Russia never sought to undertake a campaign to ameliorate its ties with the Balkan and other Eastern European states. Instead it steadfastly pursued a decision-making process with NATO and Washington over the heads of those states.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the myth that the Balkans, primarily Serbia and Montenegro, still “belong” to Russia and that the Russian Federation is a superpower continues.<sup>20</sup> Milan Simurdic cites this myth, observing that “the Balkans have long had the image of being a special sphere of Russian interests, and they will hardly get rid of this image in the near future.” And he reads this as a Russian wish to create a counterbalance to the Balkan states’ tendency toward NATO and the EU.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, even if some of these states are either full NATO and EU members or in the middle of one or both of membership processes, Moscow aims to stall or even reverse the process or hollow out the substantive integrationist impulses of these organizations themselves. Its emphasis on bilateral understandings with key EU members fits right into the objective of undermining the actual, as opposed to nominal, cohesion of the EU and, if possible, NATO. The avoidance of multilateralism reflects suspicion of multilateral venues generally and also serves as an instrument to prevent the real, rather than the nominal, integration of the Balkans into a larger European project. Moscow hopes to achieve a situation whereby Eastern European countries like those in the Balkans are effectively subordinated to the larger goals of a Russian foreign policy that aims to make deals with the West about the

18. Edina Becirevic, Nerzuk Curak, and Vlado Azinovic, “Russia Is Not against NATO; We Are against Its Expansion” [a conversation with Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko, Russian ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina], *Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe: Russia and the Western Balkans*, nos. 4–5 (2010): 6–13.

19. Jonathan Eyal, “Who Lost Russia? An Enquiry into the Failure of the Russian-Western Partnership,” *Whitehall Papers 71* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 6 April 2008), 56–62.

20. Sergey Romanenko, “Some Problems and Characteristics of Russian Politics in the Western Balkans in the Early 21st Century,” *Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe: Russia and the Western Balkans*, nos. 4–5 (2010): 15.

21. Milan Simurdic, “Russian Energy Policy and the Balkans,” Belgrade, International and Security Affairs Centre, n.d., [www.isac-fund.org/download/06e-Milan%20Simurdic%20-%20Russian%20Energy%20Policy%20and%20the%20Balkans.pdf](http://www.isac-fund.org/download/06e-Milan%20Simurdic%20-%20Russian%20Energy%20Policy%20and%20the%20Balkans.pdf).

East and isolate Eastern European states from the West in Moscow's dealings with them. As Gerhard Mangott has written, Moscow's chief aim is to convert or convince Central and Eastern European countries to accept a subordinate role as catalysts for Russia's dealings with individual Western European powers above their heads.<sup>22</sup> In this framework, "Russia is most interested in keeping regional cooperation, let alone integration, at a very low level. Historically, Russia has always profited from intraregional divisions, rivalries, and disputes."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Russia readily exploits every Balkan fissure: Greece's refusal to allow Macedonia to use its name in its formal designation and utilize instead the clumsy phrase Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM); Kosovo's unresolved situation embodied in continuing tensions among Serbia, Kosovo, and its Albanian population; and the three-sided Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian tensions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Russia readily threatens Balkan states with force if they incline toward the EU and NATO integration model. Leonid Reshetnikov, the director of the Russian Federation Institute of Strategic Studies, allegedly "Putin's think tank," recently stated that Russia opposes Montenegrin membership in NATO and added, "It is absurd that Russian missiles will have to be turned toward Montenegro in case of need, but there it is."<sup>24</sup> This is a standard Russian intimidation tactic, regularly deployed against everyone in Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In 2011, Russia's ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandr Konuzin, said, "Serbia in NATO would be a threat to Russia."<sup>25</sup> Reshetnikov also argued against membership in the EU, claiming falsely that Russia's Eurasian integration program actually offers an alternative to many Balkan and Eastern European states: the Baltic states, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, and so forth.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in a 2009 arti-

22. Gerhard Mangott, "Russian Policies on Central and Eastern Europe: An Overview," *European Security* 8, no. 3 (1999): 47.

23. *Ibid.*, 49.

24. Novica Djuric, "Reshetnikov: If Montenegro Joins NATO, Russian Missiles Will Be Turned toward It," *Politika Online*, 15 June 2013, in FBIS-SOV, 15 June 2013.

25. Quoted in Jelena Tasic, "Serbia in NATO Would Represent Threat to Russia," *Danas*, 30 March 2011, [www.b92.net/eng/insight/tvshows.php?yyyy=2011&mm=03&nav\\_id=73523](http://www.b92.net/eng/insight/tvshows.php?yyyy=2011&mm=03&nav_id=73523).

26. Djuric.

cle, argued, “NATO and then the EU too must understand that they do not operate in a vacuum and that the field of their ‘missionary’ activities is not pagan territory.”<sup>27</sup> This religious metaphor is apt, for what is at stake is not only a contest over interests and power but also a struggle over political and social values.

No doubt exists that Moscow’s Eurasian integration project is an integral, if not the fundamental, point in its foreign policy. If this project succeeds it would let Russia lay a successful claim to the status it seeks in both Europe and Eurasia. Indeed, Lavrov admitted that the project is one of the key determinants of Russia’s ability to play a competitive role in world affairs:

One principal condition for improving our competitiveness in today’s global and continuously globalizing world is enhancing cooperation and integration processes in the [Commonwealth of Independent States] area. This is especially important, as all our countries are tackling similar modernization tasks. What place we are all bound to hold in the new world order will depend largely on success here.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, in both Europe and Central Asia the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is vital to Russia’s ability to pose as a great power and to thwart liberalization and democratization along with the sovereignty of the post-Soviet and Eastern European states. Russian officials and analysts fully grasp the importance of the overall integration project and the need to prevent the rival EU program from succeeding in the Balkans. For example, a report to the Valdai Club on East-West relations stated the following:

Moscow wants to play an equal role in establishing European security order and to have a decision-making right in resolving major European security issues. Moscow expects the West to recognize Russia and the Russian-oriented security system today existing in the framework of the

27. Sergei Lavrov, “International Relations in the New Coordinate System,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 8 September 2009, [www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp\\_4.nsf/arh/8590D33B25E6294EC325762B0041E5D4?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/8590D33B25E6294EC325762B0041E5D4?OpenDocument).

28. Sergey Lavrov, speech at a meeting of the Committee of International Affairs of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 4 July 2011, in FBIS-SOV, 4 July 2011.

CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] as an equitable and integral geopolitical unit that forms, together with NATO and on the basis of parity, a coalition Euro-Atlantic security space.<sup>29</sup>

To the CSTO in this statement one should add the EEU as a vital component. In June 2013 Putin confirmed that integration with CIS countries in the framework of the EEU, which is to be created out of the existing Customs Union and Single Economic Space by 2015, remains the priority of Russian foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> But that is not the ultimate end of Russia's integration policy. In 2011, Putin envisaged the creation of the EEU to be a kind of trampoline from which Russia can catapult itself to discuss a much larger integration process with the EU for Europe that would obviously supersede both the EU and NATO while not so affecting the EEU. Accordingly, Putin wrote the following:

Russia and the EU agreed to form a common economic space and coordinate economic regulations without the establishment of supranational structures back in 2003. In line with this idea, we proposed setting up a harmonized community of economies stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, a free trade zone and even employing more sophisticated integration patterns. We also proposed pursuing coordinated policies in industry, technology, the energy sector, education, science, and also to eventually scrap visas. These proposals have not been left hanging in midair; our European colleagues are discussing them in detail. Soon the Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, will join the dialogue with the EU. As a result, apart from bringing direct economic benefits, accession to the Eurasian Union will also help countries integrate into Europe sooner and from a stronger position. In addition, a partnership between the Eurasian Union and EU that is economically consistent and balanced will prompt

29. Valdai Discussion Club, *Reconfiguration, Not Just a Reset: Russia's Interest in Relations with the United States of America* (Moscow: Valdai Discussion Club, 2009), 10, [valdaiclub.com/publication/22130.html](http://valdaiclub.com/publication/22130.html).

30. "Putin Says 'Eurasian Integration' Top Priority for Russia," RIA Novosti, 10 June 2013, cited in *Johnson's Russia List*, 11 June 2013, [russialist.org/putin-says-eurasian-integration-top-priority-for-russia/](http://russialist.org/putin-says-eurasian-integration-top-priority-for-russia/).

changes in the geopolitical and geoeconomic setup of the continent as a whole with a guaranteed global effect.<sup>31</sup>

In February 2012 he reiterated this call for “a harmonious community of economies from Lisbon to Vladivostok.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Domestic Governance**

European and Russian analysts underscore the rivalry between two competing sociopolitical systems. The struggle between rival political models involves a choice between the liberal, internationalist, and postnationalist EU model or the Putinist model of authoritarian statism and criminalized elite rule, buttressed by state, if not popular, nationalism. The EU and Russia represent rival empires with opposed systems of internal governance that contend for influence in adjoining peripheries like the Balkans. The ensuing struggle between these two empires also entails rivalry over modes of internal governance, with Russia being the challenger to the Western-imposed settlement of the 1990s.<sup>33</sup> Jan Zielonka notes the following:

The EU’s imperial policies are even more pronounced in the Balkans, even if most of the Balkan states are not yet considered as suitable candidates for EU membership. Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina are de facto semi-protectorates governed by European officials under the formal auspices of the United Nations. European institutions and EU members are by far the largest donors to these countries. They have their peacekeepers and police forces on the ground there. Most of the laws and institutions in these countries are being set up and run under EU supervision. EU officials frequently intervene in detailed economic and fiscal provisions.<sup>34</sup>

31. Vladimir Putin, “A New Integration Project for Eurasia: The Future in the Making,” *Izvestiya*, 3 October 2011, [www.russianmission.eu/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-](http://www.russianmission.eu/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-).

32. Vladimir Putin, “Rossiya i Menyaushchiysya Mir,” *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27 February 2012.

33. Jan Zielonka, “Empires and the Modern International System,” *Geopolitics* 17, no. 3 (2010): 502–25.

34. *Ibid.*, 514.

As Sabine Fischer observes of Ukraine:

Ukraine's foreign policy orientation does not only involve a choice between different partners for political and economic cooperation. It is a strategic decision between two models of development, and as such essentially a decision on the identity and future of the country. It forms part of Ukraine's state and nation-building processes, and its outcome will have a decisive impact on the future of the region, and Europe in general.<sup>35</sup>

Russian analysts like Dmitry Furman acknowledge that "the Russia-West struggle in the CIS is a struggle between two irreconcilable systems."<sup>36</sup> Furman even conceded the link to the old regime, saying, "Managed democracies are actually a soft variant of the Soviet system."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Tesmur Basilia, special assistant for economic issues to former Georgian president Edvard Shevarnadze, wrote that in many CIS countries, such as Georgia and Ukraine, for example, "the acute issue of choosing between alignment with Russia and the West is associated with the choice between two models of social development."<sup>38</sup>

The real challenge for the Balkan peninsula as a whole is, therefore, not between EU membership and a connection to Russia but rather between competing modes of governance as embodied in these rival integration plans or programs. Membership in the EU actually makes a Balkan state a more promising trade partner for Russia, because that membership offers Russia access to the wider European market through trade and investments in these countries. Indeed, as Lavrov recently stated, "Integration processes on the continent, both in the European Union and in the Eurasian Union formats, develop by the same rules; hence it is necessary to foster the objective trend towards their linking rather than try to oppose them to one another artificially."<sup>39</sup>

35. Sabine Fischer, "Ukraine as a Regional Actor," in Sabine Fischer, ed., *Ukraine: Quo Vadis*, Chaillot Paper 108 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2008), 119.

36. Dmitri Furman, "A Silent Cold War," *Russia in Global Affairs* 4, no. 2 (2006): 72.

37. *Ibid.*, 73.

38. Tesmur Basilia, "Eurasian Commentary," in Jan H. Kalicki and Eugene K. Lawson, eds., *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 166.

39. Interfax, 14 January 2013, in FBIS-SOV, 14 January 2013.

Moreover, as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania show, membership in the EU does not suffice to prevent backsliding on democratization and the “Europeanization” of domestic governance.<sup>40</sup> Instead, the real issue is democratic governance of the state, economy, and society in each particular country. Russia has steadfastly opposed such democratization for almost fifteen years. This might be the strongest point of its resistance to the EU project. As early as 1999, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeyev told a Serbian interviewer that Russia wanted to offer economic projects in energy that would bring the Balkan states together but opposed “imposition of an artificial pace of democratic development by Western countries.” Here Avdeyev anticipated the well-known Putinite idea that Russia has its own unique path to democracy, which the West should respect, along with similarly “unique” authoritarian roads to “democracy” of other similarly governed states.<sup>41</sup>

### **Economics and Energy: South Stream versus Post-Nabucco Pipelines**

Energy exports, particularly of natural gas, are Russia’s principal foreign policy instrument. Russia uses energy exports as a multipurpose security instrument, much like a Swiss Army knife that cuts in all directions.<sup>42</sup> Moscow seeks to control pipelines from Eurasia to Russia and then Europe, and thus set the price of gas to its clients.<sup>43</sup> It then tries to tie Balkan and other

40. Charles Gati, “Hungarian Rhapsodies,” *American Interest* 7, no. 3 (January–February 2012): 65–71; Denis Deletant, “Testing the Parameters of Democracy: Romania in 2013,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (April 2013), [journal.georgetown.edu/2013/04/17/testing-the-parameters-of-democracy-romania-in-2013/](http://journal.georgetown.edu/2013/04/17/testing-the-parameters-of-democracy-romania-in-2013/); Ethan Bilby, “Analysis: From the Fringe of Europe, Romania and Bulgaria Seek EU Acceptance,” *Reuters Canada*, 8 May 2013, [ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCABRE94705Q20130508](http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCABRE94705Q20130508).

41. Alexander Avdeyev, “Russia: Reliable Friend of Yugoslavia,” *Review of International Affairs* 50–51, nos. 1,087–88 (1999): 25.

42. Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation (MERF), *Energeticheskaya Strategiya Rossii Na Period do 2030 Goda* (Moscow: MERF, 2009).

43. Bertil Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia: Putin’s Foreign Policy towards the CIS Countries* (London: Routledge, 2008); Bertil Nygren, “Putin’s Use of Natural Gas to Reintegrate the CIS Region,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 4 (2008): 4–17; Oliver Morgan, “Kremlin Inc. Ready to Take on the West,” *Observer*, 6 January 2007, [www.theguardian.com/business/2007/jan/07/russia.oilandpetrol](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2007/jan/07/russia.oilandpetrol); Andrew Kramer, “Falling Gas Prices Deny Russia a Lever of Power,” *New York Times*, 15 May 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/05/16/world/europe/16gazprom.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/16/world/europe/16gazprom.html?pagewanted=all).

states into long-term contracts that restrict these states' ability to buy gas freely at real market prices. These take-or-pay clauses are vital to the Russian enterprise as a whole. This control of the pipelines, and thus of prices in the Balkans and CIS, allows Moscow to behave as a monopoly and tell gas suppliers in the CIS and Balkan countries to accept Russian prices or risk being frozen out of the market.<sup>44</sup> Russia can also offer to reduce prices provided that the targeted state rejects the EU's Second and Third Energy Packages, renounces integration with the EU, and does not switch suppliers. Thus, it offers subsidies to exclude political as well as economic competitors.

Using the revenues acquired from gas and oil sales abroad, Russia has also eagerly sought to buy up downstream assets in Europe to gain control over gas distribution networks and other "commanding heights" of European economies, for example, oil companies and industries in other key sectors that are in the process of being privatized, thereby transmuting economic clout into lasting political leverage over local governments in order to corrupt public institutions and political leaders in these countries.<sup>45</sup> One sees a conscious policy of state support for efforts to monopolize gas flows, in particular, into the Balkans, acquiring downstream assets there and in the rest of Europe, and then branching out into other industries and the acquisition of economic-political influence over these states.<sup>46</sup> In the Balkans, Gazprom and its oil subsidiary Gazpromneft are busy setting up Balkan subsidiaries.<sup>47</sup>

Moscow's goal is to use the energy weapon to rebuild Russia economically and militarily while also using it to hollow out European membership in NATO and the EU so that they are shells and cannot extend or manage security beyond their present frontiers. Meanwhile, Russia would have a free hand in its own self-appointed sphere of influence and could leverage developments throughout Europe and with the United States. It plays off individual

44. Nygren, *The Rebuilding* and "Putin's Use."

45. Ibid.

46. Franz Gerner, *The Future of the Natural Gas Market in Southeast Europe* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010); Open Source Center, *East Europe: Overview of Energy Issues, Dependence on Russia*, Washington, DC, in FBIS-SOV, 16 May 2007; Open Source Center, *Russian Oil Companies Expand Influence in Balkans with Kremlin's Support*, Washington, DC, in FBIS-SOV, 7 August 2009.

47. Interfax, 31 August 2011, in FBIS-SOV, 31 August 2011; Alexander Fatic, "A Strategy Based on Doubt: Russia Courts Southeast Europe," *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 3 (2012): 448.

members, especially Germany and Italy, against Brussels to impede any genuine European integration or coherent EU policy toward Russia. Thus, the energy business has a fundamentally geopolitical purpose for Russia, as it has previously admitted.

On 28 June 2013 Azerbaijan announced that it would pump gas from its Shah Deniz field through Turkey to Europe via the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which traverses Greece and the Adriatic Sea to Italy, rather than via the EU's proposed Nabucco West pipeline, itself a scaled-down version of the originally proposed Nabucco pipeline. That decision benefits Russia, as its South Stream project now has a clear field in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary, if not Romania, and Moscow will certainly seek to pressure these and other Balkan states to accept South Stream.<sup>48</sup> However, the TAP also provides the only viable alternative to South Stream for western Balkan states and Central Europe. Some analysts optimistically predict that it also could ultimately produce a multiplier effect to tilt the gas balance in the Balkans away from South Stream.<sup>49</sup> Clearly, Nabucco, whatever its projected virtues, never enjoyed the EU's wholehearted financial or political support; its failure was utterly predictable.<sup>50</sup> And because competing energy pipelines embody the East-West struggle for the Balkans, Baku's decision will probably aggravate that rivalry.

Finally, symbolizing the struggle between Brussels and Moscow over the Balkans, in June 2013 the EU warned Greece against selling the bankrupt Dimosia Epichirisi Paroxis Aeriou (DEPA) energy firm and its parent company Hellenic Gas Transmission System Operator (DESFA) to Gazprom, which later withdrew its offer. DEPA ultimately went to Azerbaijan.<sup>51</sup> The temporal proximity of these decisions involving Greece, Russia, and Azerbaijan raise the possibility that there might have been an arrangement among

48. Vladimir Socor, "Gazprom One Winner from Nabucco Demise," *Asia Times Online*, 3 July 2013, [www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/MID-04-030713.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MID-04-030713.html).

49. Ilian Idvassiliev, "The Choice—TAP vs. Nabucco West: Strategic Implications for Central and Eastern Europe," *Written and Said* (blog), 22 June 2013, [idvassilev.blog.com/2013/06/22/the-choice-tap-vs-nabucco-west-strategic-implications-for-central-and-eastern-europe/](http://idvassilev.blog.com/2013/06/22/the-choice-tap-vs-nabucco-west-strategic-implications-for-central-and-eastern-europe/).

50. *Ibid.*; Socor, "Gazprom One Winner."

51. Philip Pangalos, "Greek Agency Hits Back at Gazprom," *Euroinvestor*, 10 June 2013, [www.euroinvestor.com/news/2013/06/10/greek-agency-hits-back-at-gazprom/12367606](http://www.euroinvestor.com/news/2013/06/10/greek-agency-hits-back-at-gazprom/12367606); Vladimir Socor, "Gazprom Withdraws from Tender for Greek Gas System," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 20 June 2013, [www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=41051&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=cd90df7997b239de705623ca979a6788#.U5r5F\\_u0afB](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41051&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=cd90df7997b239de705623ca979a6788#.U5r5F_u0afB).

them: in return for yielding to EU pressure, Greece would assign those properties to Azerbaijan, which would then choose a gas pipeline route through Greece that was least unpalatable to Russia, namely, the TAP line.<sup>52</sup> Romania's bitter reaction to an EU statement of consolation clearly suggests its sense of covert EU complicity, if not incompetence, in this matter.<sup>53</sup>

The Balkans' current geostrategic importance is due to its being the heartland of the confrontation between rival energy pipelines: Russia's South Stream pipeline that opened on 7 December 2012 and the competing Western pipeline schemes, such as the Trans-Anatolian pipeline (commonly referred to by its acronym, TANAP) originating in Azerbaijan, the EU's Nabucco pipeline, and the TAP. Each Balkan state does its utmost to ensure that pipelines traverse its territory.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, decisions to rely mainly on one or another pipeline project, as in Azerbaijan's announcement on 28 June 2013, are as much geopolitical decisions with domestic economic-political outcomes than purely economic ones. At stake in pipeline decisions are not just energy supplies but rather decisive leverage over economic-political affairs in Balkan governments. Similarly, any future enlargement of either the EU or of Russia's proposed EEU possesses as much geopolitical as domestic economic content and repercussions.<sup>55</sup>

Russia also wants Europe to rescue its energy sector from the trap it has fallen into due to the global recession and its combination of depressed demand and prices for gas and simply accept Russian dominance of supply routes of gas to Europe. Stanislav Tsygankov, head of Gazprom's International Business Department, told a foreign affairs roundtable the following in Moscow in 2009:

52. "Conversations with US and Azeri Analysts," [Bulgarian] *Mediapool.bg*, 29 June 2013, [www.mediapool.bg/полезните-и-горчиви-уроци-след-избора-на-тап-пред-набуко](http://www.mediapool.bg/полезните-и-горчиви-уроци-след-избора-на-тап-пред-набуко)-news208210.html.

53. Sebastian Zachmann, "Relations between Basescu and Barroso Have Cooled," *Adevarul Online*, 1 July 2013, in FBIS-SOV, 2 July 2013.

54. Mersel Bilalli, "Utter Isolation," *Dnevnik*, 16–17 October 2010, in FBIS-SOV, 17 October 2010.

55. Federiga Bindi and Irina Angelescu, "Introduction: Defining the Frontiers of Europe from a Transatlantic Perspective," in Bindi and Angelescu, 2; "Putin Sets Russia's APEC Summit Priorities in the *Wall Street Journal* Article," *Voice of Russia*, 5 September 2012, [voiceofrussia.com/2012\\_09\\_05/Putin-sets-Russia-s-APEC-summit-priorities-in-The-Wall-Street-Journal-article/](http://voiceofrussia.com/2012_09_05/Putin-sets-Russia-s-APEC-summit-priorities-in-The-Wall-Street-Journal-article/).

The Energy Summit held in Sofia in April [2009] was a kind of touchstone that revealed the true position of the European Union on these issues. Whereby keeping in mind the latest events, we no longer find general words sufficient with respect to Gazprom's efforts to diversify natural gas delivery routes to Europe. We expect unequivocal support of specific projects from the EU, primarily at the practical implementation stage of the North Stream project, as well as the planned South Stream gas pipeline. If Europe is truly concerned about its energy security, it should understand that the only way to ensure it is to diversify the gas delivery routes, thus balancing out the significance of each of them.<sup>56</sup>

Moscow essentially demands that Europe give it a free hand to decide how it will supply gas and dominate European gas supply.<sup>57</sup> Moscow wants the EU to include the South Stream pipeline as one of its priority projects to prevent any other rival pipeline from coming into being.<sup>58</sup> South Stream should therefore have a special status.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, Gazprom seeks exemptions from EU law for the various branches of the South Stream pipeline throughout Europe (which clearly includes much of the Balkans and would create an "EU-free" zone of Russian influence there). The exemptions Gazprom seeks would exclude the EU from any participation or supervision of the pipeline and ensure that it is almost or equally as opaque as other Russian energy ventures.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, the Russian energy sector is enmeshed in corruption at home and abroad. Anders Aslund observed that Gazprom, perhaps Russia's key foreign and economic policy instrument, is run in a way that resembles an organized crime syndicate, or is in fact one.<sup>61</sup> In addition, there is an extensive record of linkages between Russian energy firms, organized crime, polit-

56. Stanislav Tsygankov, head of Gazprom's International Business Department, speaking in the roundtable discussion, "The Energy Industry and the Crisis," *International Affairs* (Moscow), no. 4 (2009): 81.

57. *Ibid.*, 78–82.

58. ITAR-TASS, 19 May 2009, in FBIS-SOV, 19 May 2009.

59. Interfax, 1 June 2010, in FBIS-SOV, 1 June 2010; Interfax, 21 June 2013, in FBIS-SOV, 21 June 2013.

60. *Ibid.*, both items.

61. Anders Aslund, "Why Gazprom Resembles a Crime Syndicate," *Moscow Times*, 27 February 2012, in FBIS-SOV, 29 February 2012

ical subversion projects, and influence peddling from the Baltic to the Balkans. Indeed, Russia makes no effort to hide the fact that its energy policies are a lever for acquiring enduring positions of political influence in Balkan governments.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, Moscow pits Balkan countries against each other in order to stimulate competition among them to offer Moscow the best terms for shipping gas to them through Russian-dominated pipelines, in particular the anticipated South Stream pipeline. Russian diplomacy typically promises each state that if it joins Russian energy plans it will become a hub or major player and/or otherwise accrue considerable revenues from the energy trade. In 2009 Dusan Bajatovic, general manager of Serbia's state energy company, Srbijgas, said that construction of the South Stream pipeline through Serbia would have a capacity of between 36 billion cubic meters (bcm) and 41 bcm, four times the originally announced amount; that both sides had agreed to build several large storage facilities in Serbia with capacity up to 7 bcm to serve as distribution centers; and that Serbia could earn \$750 million annually from gas transit revenue taxes and become a hub for Russian gas to Europe.<sup>63</sup> Russia has also made similar potential arrangements with Greece and Turkey.<sup>64</sup> Greek prime minister Kostas Karamanlis publicly embraced the idea that the Burgas-Alexandropoulos oil pipeline and South Stream gas pipeline would turn Greece into an energy hub.<sup>65</sup> Russia made the same pitch about becoming an energy hub to Bulgaria, according to Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko:

We do not doubt that the implementation of those three projects is exceptionally important for Bulgaria itself. The projects will allow Bulgaria to become a very important energy center in South Europe and a powerful

62. Ministry of Energy; Gerner; Open Source Center, *East Europe*; Open Source Center, *Russian Oil Companies*; Stephen Blank, "Russian Energy and Russian Security," *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2011): 173–88.

63. Associated Press, "Serbia Seen as Hub for Russian Gas in Europe," *Hurriyet*, 23 October 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=serbia-seen-as-hub-for-russian-gas-in-europe-2009-10-23](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=serbia-seen-as-hub-for-russian-gas-in-europe-2009-10-23).

64. ITAR-TASS, 10 September 2009, in FBIS-SOV, 10 September 2009; United Press International, "Putin Sees Turkey as Energy Hub," 15 September 2009, [www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Energy-Resources/2009/09/15/Putin-sees-Turkey-as-energy-hub/UPI-54861253031000/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2009/09/15/Putin-sees-Turkey-as-energy-hub/UPI-54861253031000/).

65. ITAR-TASS, 28 September 2009, in FBIS-SOV, 28 September 2009.

energy transit junction in Europe. I think that Bulgaria's current leadership, which has in mind the country's long-range national interests, must excellently understand this.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, if every Balkan state is a hub, none of them are, and the initiative rests solely with Russia. Nonetheless, Moscow continues to employ this tactic throughout the region, with at least some success.<sup>67</sup>

### **Ethnopolitical Security**

Paradoxically, it is the EU integration program that offers these states, often for the first time, the genuine opportunity to govern themselves, however imperfectly, and then pool that sovereignty with the EU's other members. The EU also offers not only genuine democratization but also, perhaps more important, the prospect of peace and prosperity and, equally, the withering away of the conflict mentality that has plagued the area for centuries. Ultimately the EU's project entails the desecuritization of the Balkans—the removal of the internal conflicts that are the precondition for external pressure and games. When individual states or proto-states like Bosnia refuse to accept the legitimacy of their interlocutors' and neighbors' viewpoints, they set the stage for conflict that invariably drags outsiders in. But when integrated and aware of their common linkages, hopefully they tend to desecuritize issues and make them less a matter of zero-sum games and conflicts over security, thereby fostering peace, prosperity, stability, and democracy.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, remarks and actions by people such as Reshetnikov not only betray a high-handed, patronizing attitude toward Balkan countries they also suggest that key members of the Russian elite have little knowledge about them and are not hesitant to display this ignorance in public. Reshetnikov denounced Balkan efforts to join the EU, saying falsely that one must first be

66. Tsvetana Krusteva, "Interview with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shmatko," *BTA Radio-televizionen Monitor Online* [in Bulgarian], 17 September 2009, in FBIS-SOV, 17 September 2009.

67. Vladimir Socor, "After Joining EU, Croatia Will Be More Attractive for Russian Energy Interests," *Balkans.com*, 21 June 2013, [www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniqueNumber=177121](http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniqueNumber=177121).

68. Peter M. E. Volten, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Destabilization, Some Analytical Remarks and an Outline," in Stefano Bianchini, ed., *From the Adriatic to the Caucasus: The Dynamics of (De)Stabilization* (Bologna: Longo Editore Ravenna, 2001), 13–9.

a member of NATO to join the EU and again labelled Serbian NATO membership a betrayal of Orthodox civilization as well as the subjection of Serbia to NATO without any benefit. Russia would also then have to target a NATO-member Serbia with missiles.<sup>69</sup>

On 15 September 2011, on the eve of the European Union Rule of Law Mission's takeover of the Kosovo customs' points Brnjak and Jarinje, Russian ambassador to Serbia Konuzin created a diplomatic scandal in Serbia. Speaking at the Belgrade Security Forum, Konuzin berated the audience and program leaders for not criticizing the takeover's alleged violation of United Nations Resolution 1244 and other UN Security Council decisions and asked if there were any real Serbs in the audience. He told another Serbian audience in Lazarevac that while Serbia needs to cooperate with other countries on economic matters, it should not do so to the detriment of Russian-Serbian relations, "because that could prove more harmful than useful."<sup>70</sup> Sadly, such behavior typifies that of Russian policymakers in the Balkans and elsewhere. Numerous Russian ambassadors in Eastern Europe and the CIS repeatedly and publicly insult their host countries' sovereignty; assert that they feel they have the right, if not duty, to interfere publicly in their hosts' domestic governance; and make abundantly clear that they do not truly believe in their host country's genuine independence and sovereignty. They continue the Soviet, if not tsarist, tradition whereby Russian ambassadors to clients or small states near Russia acted more like proconsuls than like diplomats.<sup>71</sup>

Failure to advance on European integration aggravates the European crisis and gives Russia greater opportunities for advancing its view, which ostensibly is a Europe without dividing line. However, the underlying intent is to have a Europe that can serve as an unlimited integrator of the CIS—a disunited Europe that provides ample opportunities for Russia to integrate the CIS into European activities, contrary to many European states' desires—leaving the CIS an unchecked factor supporting disintegration in the Bal-

69. Veliko Mladinovic, "Reshetnikov: If Serbia Joins NATO, It Will Become Legitimate Target for Russian Missiles," *Press Online*, 20 June 2013, in FBIS-SOV, 20 June 2013.

70. Stephen Blank, "A Scandal in Serbia?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 1 November 2011.

71. Stephen Blank, "The Values Gap between Moscow and the West: The Sovereignty Issue," *Acque et Terre*, no. 6 (2007): 90–5.

kans. The recent revelations of Russia selling Azerbaijan \$1 billion in armaments even as it stations troops in, and sells weapons to, Armenia highlights the application of this policy toward conflict resolution across Eurasia. Richard Giragosian observes that

Russia is clearly exploiting the unresolved Karabakh conflict and rising tension in order to further consolidate its power and influence in the South Caucasus. Within this context, Russia has not only emerged as the leading arms provider to Azerbaijan, but also continues to deepen its military support and cooperation with Armenia. For Azerbaijan, Russia offers an important source of modern offensive weapons, while for Armenia, both the bilateral partnership with Russia and membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) offers Armenia its own essential security guarantees.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, as noted, Russia readily threatens Balkan states with force if they reject its key policy objectives.

Although Russian officials piously deny that Russia interferes in Bosnia's internal affairs—but at the same time saying that, after all, the EU is doing so too—they also deny that they are attempting to blackmail politicians there or seek to block NATO through its ties with Bosnian Serbian leaders in Bosnia's Republika Srpska (RS). But they do not deny Moscow's interest in opening the entire Bosnian territory to Russian investment.<sup>73</sup> Similarly they deny, despite Moscow's visible interest in the RS, that they are undermining the sovereignty of Bosnia, even though Moscow recognizes the RS's sovereignty. Indeed, Russia's ambassador to Bosnia claims that there can be no possibility of a strong and efficient Bosnian state without recognition of entities like the RS, even though in practice recognition of entities like the RS undermines Bosnia.<sup>74</sup> Moscow also sees opportunities to safeguard the RS either as part of a divided Bosnia-Herzegovina or of a future wider Serbian territory—another sign of its opposition to the post-Dayton and post-

72. Richard Giragosian, "Cause for Concern: The Shifting Balance of Power in the South Caucasus," *RSC Special Analysis* (Yerevan, Armenia: Regional Studies Center, 25 June 2013), 1.

73. Becirevic, Curak, and Azinovic, 9.

74. *Ibid.*, 11.

Kosovo status quo.<sup>75</sup> In this context Moscow sees in the RS a strong protector of its revisionist policies and opponent of further Euro-Atlantic integration, even though the Bosnian government has opted for that alternative. The Serbian leader Milorad Dodik firmly opposes NATO membership for Bosnia and Euro-Atlantic integration in general.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, he is on record as saying that he will block Bosnian entry into NATO unless Serbia approves, and he knows full well Serbia will not do so unless he approves; thus he becomes the key player in this intricate minuet.<sup>77</sup>

As it conducts this “dialectical” policy, Russia seeks to close down the EU’s Office of the High Representative (OHR), revoke the “special powers” that allow the OHR to govern in a very strong manner, and transform it into an office of a special EU representative, all this allegedly on the grounds that Bosnia’s citizens can govern themselves without foreign interference. This, of course, would allow Dodik and the Serbs to block any progress whatsoever either toward democratization or Euro-Atlantic integration in Bosnia. Shutting down this office along with the Hague Tribunal as part of this process would also terminate all of that tribunal’s investigations into war crimes during the 1990s, for ethnically rivalrous judicial institutions will hardly bring, let alone try, such cases in the future.<sup>78</sup> This kind of politics exemplifies how Moscow plays the nationalist card and its endlessly supple policies on questions of sovereignty and territorial integrity in Eastern Europe.<sup>79</sup>

There are similar Russian policies with regard to the Kosovo issue. In mid-2011 Moscow openly attacked the concept of a “greater Albania” as being opposed to the interests of the international community in strengthening security in the Balkans and made this statement at both its embassy in Serbia (which opposes the idea due to its implications for the former Serb-

75. *Ibid.*, 22; Radovan Vukadinovic, “The Geopolitics of Orthodox Solidarity,” *Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe: Russia and the Western Balkans*, nos. 4–5 (2010): 19–24.

76. Becirevic, Curak, and Azinovic, 22–3; *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Newslines*, 5 February 2007.

77. FBIS-SOV, 29 September 2012.

78. *Dnevni Avaz*, 11 February 2012, in FBIS-SOV, 11 February 2012.

79. “Interview with Russian Ambassador to Serbia Aleksandr Konuzin: ‘NATO Not Only Option for Serbia,’” *Vecernje Novosti*, 5 February 2010, in FBIS-SOV, 5 February 2010; ITAR-TASS, 12 November 2010, in FBIS-SOV, 12 November 2010.

controlled province of Kosovo) and Albania. Strangely, Moscow acted thusly despite there being no Albanian statement or action to provoke the riposte. Possibly Moscow intended to warn Serbia about supporting the idea that was launched by Serbian president Boris Tadic in his talks with Albania as an offer for bilateral talks with Tirana and to make progress on resolving the Kosovo issue. Albanian papers reported that Moscow was concerned not because a greater Albania with some unspecified dimensions might emerge out of part of Kosovo but rather because Serbia sought a way out of its own dead end on the Kosovo issue.<sup>80</sup>

This commentary observed that Moscow opposes any effort to resolve the Kosovo issue, not for reasons of principle but rather because Moscow wants to perpetuate a state of conflict in the Balkans between Serbia and Kosovo that will prevent consolidation of a stable new Balkan order based on peaceful relations among all the former Yugoslavia's components. Moscow also seeks to play a Balkan card against NATO and the EU by blocking conflict resolution. Moscow's third, and possibly greatest, concern is that Serbia, unencumbered by the Kosovo question, might then follow the path of democracy and full integration into the Euro-Atlantic zone.<sup>81</sup> Consequently,

Russian diplomacy is raising all sorts of obstacles to every step of Serbia's real or virtual advance toward European or Atlantic integration. During Prime Minister Putin's Belgrade visit on 23 March this year [2011], Serbia was formally and publicly threatened that, if it joined NATO and allowed an Atlantic antimissile system to be stationed on its territory, Russia would then train its nuclear missiles on Serbian territory. This clear threat from Russia toward its only strategic ally in the Balkans gives the measure of Moscow's concern and its attempts to impede any alternative of Serbia going toward Atlantic integration. Russia has been trying to tie Serbia to it by all sorts of agreements and enticements, ranging from power projects to the offer of military accords or a treaty of friendship and cooperation. These efforts have been stepped up recently and have assumed such expressions as to make some consider Russia's policy toward Serbia as

80. Shabhan Murati, "Serbia Sells It, Russia Does Not Give It," *Gazeta Shqiptare*, 27 June 2011, in FBIS-SOV, 27 June 2011.

81. *Ibid.*

“colonialist and degrading” according to a definition by the former Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and the Chairman of the Liberal Party, Cedomir Jovanovic.<sup>82</sup>

This policy clearly also then caught Albania in its vise, because a pro-Western Albania, though not nearly as important as a similarly inclined Serbia, is nonetheless a negative for Russia, as it too would foster democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration. This episode shows that in large measure Russian-Albanian relations are hostage to the twists and turns of Moscow’s relations with Serbia on all matters having to do with the unresolved Kosovo situation.

## Conclusions

As Hannes Adomeit has suggested, it is probably not a coincidence that Putin’s call for the EEU, the centerpiece of Moscow’s integration program, came less than a week after a 2011 summit of the EU and the members of the Eastern Partnership countries (minus Belarus) in Warsaw. As he notes, this economic union seamlessly fits into Kremlin efforts to counterbalance the attractiveness and influence of the EU in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>83</sup> Given the importance to Moscow’s dreams of being a pole in the multipolar world order, which it ceaselessly proclaims, the formation of such a continental bloc as the EEU is essential to the survival of the Putin system, and the sharpest conflicts with the EU occur in those borderlands closest to Russia or most strategically important to it, particularly Ukraine.<sup>84</sup>

Russia’s effort to roll back or at least mitigate the consequences of the Balkan conflict resolution processes are also integral parts of its larger European policy to forestall any further advances in European integration

82. *Ibid.*

83. Hannes Adomeit, “Putin’s ‘Eurasian Union’: Russia’s Integration Project and Policies in Post-Soviet Space,” CIES Neighborhood Paper 4 (Geneva: Center for International and European Studies, 2012), 3.

84. *Ibid.*, 5–6; Rika Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, “Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union, and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation, or Rivalry,” Chatham House Briefing Paper (London: Chatham House, August 2012), 10–3.

and create a sphere of Russian influence dominated by governments whose makeup, policies, and structures resemble those of Russia. To the extent that the western Balkans remain unintegrated into Europe, European security in both its external manifestations and in the domestic governance of many Balkan states—and not only those emerging out of the former Yugoslavia—will remain incomplete. As Hannes Adomeit observed elsewhere, while Moscow endlessly insists that European security cannot be made without or against Russia, it also is true that European security cannot be made *with* Russia.<sup>85</sup>

85. Hannes Adomeit, “German-Russian Relations: Balance Sheet since 2000 and Perspectives until 2025,” Note du Cerfa 98 (Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, October 2012), 7.