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LIAISONS DANGEREUSES - Political Relationships in the NATO, Russia and Ukraine triangle

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8) ABSTRACT

This study investigates the political interactions between three crucial actors on the European security arena: NATO, Russia and Ukraine. The point of departure is that Russian-Ukrainian relations are heavily dependent on the policy of NATO. Russia-NATO relations are likewise dependent on the position of Ukraine, and finally Ukraine-NATO relations are strongly influenced by Russian foreign policy. The term triangle is used in the report to illustrate this interdependence. In chapter one the dynamics of the security considerations in the triangle are analysed in a chronological manner from 1991 until today. Chapter two analyses Ukrainian foreign policy from 1994 until today, with a special emphasis on the relationship between foreign policy identity and dominant domestic economic interests. Chapter three analyses the absence of a coherent Russian strategy for how to prevent Ukraine – NATO rapprochement despite the domestic Russian consensus on this issue. We reach three broad conclusions in this study. First, geopolitical predicaments establish the frames within which states can act, but they are insufficient to predict foreign policy. This is especially the case in Russia. Second, economics is at least as decisive as security politics for forming the relations between the corners of the triangle, but both Russia and Ukraine seem to be able to handle contradictions between their economic and political orientations by operating according to contradictory logics simultaneously. And third, the NATO and the Western governments' logic of integrating to stabilise is often not understood, neither in Russia nor in Ukraine.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this report we analyse the relations between three actors of utmost importance for European security: Russia, Ukraine and NATO. Our aim with the report is twofold:

First, we want to analyse the dynamics of what we have termed a triangular relationship. This is done in chapter two. The main emphasis in this part of the report is on how the policy of one of the actors can be interpreted as a direct response to a policy initiative by one of the other actors. We are also here particularly interested in bringing out the chronology of relations in the triangle.

Second, we want to look in more detail at the domestic sources of the policies of Ukraine and Russia. This is dealt with in the chapters three and four respectively. In chapter three we analyse how Ukraine's choice of a relatively pro-Western and pro-NATO policy can be explained as a result of the changing interest among dominant domestic economic groups. In particular we try to illuminate the interplay between ideology and business interests in the formulation of foreign policy. In chapter four we centre on the difficulties of translating perceptions and preferences into actual policy. We analyse what we see as an apparent paradox in Russia's policy towards Ukraine. On the one side there is broad agreement across the Russian political spectrum on the need to try to prevent a rapprochement between Ukraine and NATO. However, on the other side, despite this agreement Russia has not been able to pursue any form of coordinated and consistent policy towards Ukraine.

A political phenomenon is best explained by seeking causes at multiple levels of analysis. In explaining the policy choices of Russia, Ukraine and NATO, it was therefore natural to seek causes for action both at the level of international structure and at the level of the state. This is the main focus of the present report.

2 THE DYNAMICS OF THE TRIANGLE

2.1 Period I – 1991-1993

The period from 1991 to 1993 was dominated by the reactions to the end of the Cold War. The main actors were still unsure on their future roles, because the political structure of Europe had been dramatically and suddenly changed. The bi-polar system was a thing of the past, and both multipolarity and unipolarity were seen as taking over, depending on the issue area in focus. Concerning security, unipolarity, at least in Europe, seems to be the must fruitful model in describing and explaining the relations between the main actors and their behaviour on the international arena.

Both Russia and Ukraine expressed an ambition to be part of the ”western world” (”Europe” or ”civilisation”). NATO was one of the main institutions in this context, and the new Russian government very clearly stated its goal of NATO membership some time in the future.

The government in Moscow continued Gorbachev’s policy of wanting to be part of the ”European House” and to orient Russia towards democracy and market economy. The foreign policy under foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev, who underlined that Russia would initiate ”a completely fresh policy of unrestrained partnership and integration with the West”(Bazhanov, 1997), was completely dominated by ”atlanticist thinking” (Sergounin 1997). This policy could be seen both as a means and as an end in itself. It was a means to modernise Russia, because these ”rich, developed, civilised countries were indispensable for economic, spiritual, and political resurrection of Russia” (Bazhanov, 1997). It was also an end in itself because it would make Russia a ”western” and ”civilised” state. The Western world was in this context seen as a major source of aid, taking the form of something like a new Marshal Plan. A strategic partnership with the West was also seen as important for a democratic development inside Russia.

In order to be seen as a possible applicant for membership in the ”West”, Russia chose a foreign policy of ”accommodation”. That is, adopting the views of the Western states on the major international political issues. The West became a political and economic model, and Western experts were consulted in most areas. This ”atlantist” policy line, however, was controversial from the start. Many in Russia did not see the country as a future ”western” state, but as something different both from the East and the West (”Eurasianism”). Eurasianist thinking presented Russia as an alternative to the West and Western ideas.

Western reactions were initially positive, welcoming Russia’s break with its communist past. However, they were also very much dominated by scepticism. Really integrating Russia into the Western world would involve high costs, mainly, but not only in the economic area. Integrating the German Democratic Republic into the Western world already seemed very costly, and integrating Russia could cost many times more. The possible political costs of making Russia an integral part of the Western security decision making system, i.e. becoming a member of NATO could also turn out to be very high. As the Russian political scientist Alexander Arbatov made clear already in 1991: ”Russia’s entry would simply make the alliance fall apart” (Adomeit, 1994).

The new Ukraine, under president Kravchuk’s government, concentrated on ’state and nation building’. In addition Ukraine also tried to establish close ties to European political and economic structures, partly because this could strengthen the striving towards state building. These early efforts to establish close ties failed. One important reason for this failure was that Ukraine did not give up its nuclear weapons. This created tensions in the relations with the West, especially the USA. Ukraine, instead of being seen as a serious applicant for membership in the institutions of the Western world, was seen as a potential threat to European stability. Ukraine’s relations with NATO and the Western world at large remained strained. Consequently, NATO supported Russia in its policy to recover the strategic weapons from Ukraine.

Ukraine's nuclear weapons policy therefore strengthened NATO's and USA's "Russia first" policy. Ukraine was mainly seen as a threat of chaos in the European periphery, not as a constructive partner. Ukraine instead sought to build up a "zone" of neutral states, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, between the West and Russia. But this turned out to be futile, because these states did not want to be caught *between* Russia and West, they wanted to be a *part of* the West.

Apart from the bilateral conflict concerning the military heritage from the Soviet era, Ukraine was a relatively minor concern for Russia in these years. Because of the Western scepticism towards Ukraine, there was no need for Russia to fear possible Western influence, or control over Ukraine. And because Ukraine had little backing from the West, there was also little need for taking Ukrainian interests into consideration in the formulation of foreign policy. In this way it was a parallel between Russian policy towards Ukraine, and Western/NATO policy towards Russia. It was also a parallel between Russia's and Ukraine's relations with the West. Both wanted to become part of the West, but neither was seen as a serious applicant because of the costs integration of these countries would inflict on the Western institutions like NATO.

2.2 Period II – 1993-1996

The year 1993 was in many ways a turning point in relations between the corners in the Russia-Ukraine-NATO triangle. The "honeymoon" period of 1991-93 with high rhetoric and illusionary ambitions was over. The pro-Western faction in the Russian foreign policy establishment lost its influence. Both the Russo-Ukrainian and the NATO-Russian relations soured, and at the same time Ukraine initiated a policy that gave her the possibility to exploit the deterioration of NATO-Russians relations. The result was a triangular power game whose logic more and more became zero-sum, based on the premises of the Realist school in international relations.

The causes of the new development can be seen both in the Russian disappointment with the Western scepticism towards the Russian ambitions in having a sort of "Marshall Plan" for Russia, and in letting Russia take part in the main Western political institutions and decision making processes. This problem was underlined during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia where Russia, as a member of the "Contact Group", was part of the efforts to come to a *diplomatic* solution to the conflict. Russia, however, was not an insider in the decision making process leading to the use of force by NATO. As seen from Moscow, Russia was nice to have when the West was in need of diplomatic backing, but should have no say when it came to actual decisions.

Russian threat perceptions in our first period had to a great degree been focused on the threats from Muslim fundamentalism and related challenges coming mainly from Central Asia and Caucasus. This had underlined the common interests with the Western countries. From 1993 onwards threats from these same regions still were seen as important, but the focus had changed. The interests of the ethnic Russians now became more important, mirroring the nationalistic revival in Russian politics. The loss of Russian influence in areas with Russian population and the possibility that states in this area, "the Near Abroad", could link with

outside powers and thereby pose a possible security threat to Russia, were important aspects of the new threat perceptions.

The uncertain situation in Russia placed the possibility of NATO enlargement an even more urgent issue for potential applicants. Most potential applicants had earlier had their relations with NATO institutionalised in NACC (North Atlantic Cooperation Council), an institution that had become little more than a forum for discussion. As a result of the turbulence in Russia, some states, like the Baltic states, again raised the issue of NATO enlargement. Since the main powers in NATO were not ready for an enlargement, a new institution, Partnership for Peace (PfP), was the result. Here, the former Warsaw pact countries could have more differentiated relations with NATO, and these relations could possibly lead to membership in the future.

As seen from NATO, PfP meant building a ”network” linking the various European non-member states to NATO. The gap between membership and non-membership could be narrower for the states that wanted to join NATO. The links could both be closer and more varied, resulting in a situation where most non-members became integrated into the NATO system but without the formal military guarantee of Article 5. Security for PfP members, however, could improve, since a potential aggressor could never be sure of NATO’s reaction. It this way Russia’s ability to influence other states by the threat of use of military force became more limited. Thus, Russian influence in Europe could be reduced, especially in Central-Europe.

For Russia PfP meant new challenges. PfP in itself was an institution that reduced Russia’s position to one among many states in the periphery. Surely the PfP states could have different types of treaty-arrangements, but this did little to change the reality that Russia was the weaker part in the arrangement in relation to NATO. Russia now to a much greater degree than in the preceding period saw herself not as one of many peripheral states, but as a centre herself. A centre, that had to be respected as such. Russia could try to *shield* itself from NATO by refusing membership in PfP, but Russia wanted to have an impact on the European political arena and therefore wanted to be listened to. Russia, therefore, first hesitated to join in order to signal displeasure, but then opted for membership in order to have influence. The main strategy, however, was to be seen as an external resource that NATO had to go to when in need. In this way Russia could demonstrate its continued importance. Many important decisions, however, especially with respect to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, were taken without Russian participation. This soured the relations even more, because it underlined Russia’s lack of influence.

Russia’s lack of influence on NATO and US policy became more and more visible over time. The expansion of NATO towards the east became a troubling possibility for Russia during this period, because NATO time and again underlined that Russia surely would be listened to but was not to have any right of veto. This underlined and strengthened the Russian perception of NATO as a potential military threat. Washington’s neglect to consult Russia before the air strikes against Libya in 1993, the Serbs in Bosnia in 1995, and Iraq in 1996, also showed the limits of Russia’s influence on important international security issues in this period.

As seen from the West, relations with Russia were still mainly a centre-periphery phenomenon, meaning that the possible instability of Russia was the major challenge. Most countries in the CIS were also seen in the same context. These countries were regarded more as possible trouble spots than as possible partners. The political implications were that Russian attempts to ”stabilise” these areas were regarded rather favourably, mainly because the Western countries had no stomach, and little resources, to do this ”job”. The ”Near Abroad” still was seen as a Russian ”backyard”, a view Russia wanted the West to legitimise.

On the other hand, the developments in Russia in a more nationalistic and anti-western direction caused concern in the West. The prospect of a ”red-brown” coalition taking over in Russia was now seen as a possibility, although still a distant one. Therefore Russia also increasingly came to be seen in a classical East-West balance of power context, where a too strong Russia might be a cause of concern. In other words, a return to a zero-sum thinking in Western-Russian relations was developing in parts of the Western political establishment. The development of a new strong Russia could be hindered in different ways.

One would be to try to prevent the build-up of the Russian economy. Many Russians today are seeing this as an explicit Western strategy. They fear that the West wants to destroy the Russian industry, and make the country into a producer of raw material and energy for the West. Although no result of a vicious western strategy, it is difficult to deny that this to some degree has been the result of the marketization of the Russian economy. It is, however, more conceivable that US has developed a new sort of ”soft” containment, what John Feffer calls ”containment light”, in order to reduce Russian power and influence (Feffer, 1999).

Another could be the ”containment light” strategy that was formulated most explicitly by Zbigniew Brzezinski: ”The central goal of a realistic and long-term grand strategy should be *the consolidation of geopolitical pluralism within the former Soviet Union”* (1994: 79). According to Feffer, ”Containment light has consisted of a three-tiered effort to isolate Russia: from its neighbours, from Europe, and from the international community more in general. The Clinton administration’s policy of ”geopolitical pluralism,” designed to strengthen key neighbours to Russia such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan, has driven wedges into the loose confederation of post-Soviet states. By pushing ahead recklessly with the expansion of NATO, the US government is deepening the divide that separates Russia from Europe. This, in effect, builds a new Iron Curtain down the middle of Eurasia. Instead of consulting with Russia over key foreign policy issues such as the Iraq bombings and the policy toward former Yugoslavia, Washington has attempted to steer Moscow into a diplomatic backwater where it can exert little global influence” (Feffer 1999).

Few will probably agree with Feffer in that there is an explicit NATO strategy behind this policy, though some people, like Brzezinski, reason very much along geopolitical lines. Many more however, would agree that the picture painted by Feffer is the *result* of US and NATO policy. Given Moscow’s traditional scepticism towards the outer world, these actions could be seen as much more of an explicit strategy.

This development in the Russian-Western relations was probably one of the causes for the new developments in Ukrainian foreign policy during 1994. In an American/NATO policy of

”geopolitical pluralism”, Ukraine had to be the main pillar. Such a policy implicated that the US should abandon the Bush administration’s ”Russia first” policy, and adopt a more ”even handed” policy towards Russia and Ukraine (Brzezinski 1994: 80). As Brzezinski underlined: ”It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an Empire” (Brzezinski 1994: 80). In the context of ”geopolitical pluralism” in the CIS, Ukraine was not only a country in the periphery but increasingly came to be seen as a potential strategic partner countering the power of Russia inside the CIS. This development gave Ukraine new possibilities for political manoeuvring if it played it’s political cards right. It was therefore very important for Ukraine not to be seen as an irresponsible partner. Some early results of this development were the signing of the trilateral nuclear accord between USA, Russia and Ukraine in January 1994, and the ratification of START treaty in February. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was ratified later, in November 1994.

Ukraine adopted a policy of *accommodation*, *cooperation* and *integration* in its relations with the West and NATO. This policy could be seen as part of a strategy aiming for membership in the central institutions of NATO and the European Union. The politics of accommodation was seen as a beginning, making the costs of integration as seen from the West seem lesser. Cooperation was also important, beginning with membership of PfP in February 1994, as the first of the CIS countries. Ukraine soon became a very active partner in the PfP process, with a steadily growing list of military exercises both within and outside, but in the ”spirit of” the PfP framework. The cooperation with NATO also grew rapidly, and in 1995 a NATO-Ukraine agreement was signed covering a variety of areas:

- the development of a special partnership between Ukraine and NATO;
- regular bilateral consultations with NATO (in the16+1 formula, i.e. the 16 NATO countries plus Russia) and *ad hoc* consultations on issues of special mutual interest;
- joint cooperation in non-proliferation, arms control, defense economy, environment, and science and technology;
- the opening of Ukrainian diplomatic and military missions and a special NATO information center in Kyiv, as well as establishing joint working groups on a permanent basis,
- locating some permanent NATO bodies within the framework of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NAAC) and PfP in Kyiv, and holding occasional NACC/PfP sessions in Ukraine;
- regular bilateral visits of high-ranking Ukrainian and NATO officials, including visits by the Ukrainian Minister of Defense and Chief of the General Staff to NATO headquarters and SHAPE. As an example of this development we can notice that NATO’s first ever information centre outside a NATO country was started in Kyiv in1995. (Ukraine has a liaison officer at SHAPE in Mons) (Larrabee, 1996, p 148)

In March 1994 a Partnership agreement with the European Union was agreed upon, making a closer economic cooperation a possibility. The initiation of limited market reforms in Ukraine in November 1994 can be seen in the same context.

Developments like these helped to ease the concern in the West, and made it possible for Ukraine to open up a road that could lead to an even more intimate relationship.

Ukraine had originally been very sceptical towards the idea of an enlargement of NATO, fearing that such an enlargement would lead to massive pressure from Russia for re-establishing her dominance as a sort of compensation. But, especially after President Bill Clinton's visit to Kyiv in May 1995, the Ukrainian position changed. One could guess that the views of Clinton's adviser on security policy, Zbigniew Brzezinski, were of some importance here. Ukraine also established ever-closer relations with its western neighbour and potential NATO-member, Poland. This country could serve as a "bridge" between Ukraine and NATO, and later as Ukraine's "agent" inside NATO.

The relationship between the three actors had therefore changed rather fundamentally during this period. Initially, the relations were interpreted mostly within a centre-periphery dimension. NATO and Russia to some degree had common interests, and both regarded Ukraine as a potential "chaos-power" due to its policy concerning nuclear weapons. Later, however, relations more and more came to be interpreted according to an "east-west" dimension, first in Moscow later also in NATO. As a consequence, the security logic also changed. This was especially the case in Moscow, because of its weakness relative to NATO and the plans for an eastern enlargement of NATO. These plans generated worst case scenarios in Russia based on NATO's overwhelming military strength. NATO, on its side, still saw Russia mostly in a wider security context dominated by non-military aspects. On the political side, however, a "realist" influenced zero-sum thinking ("geopolitical pluralism") began to appear, seemingly influenced by Zbigniew Brzezinski. This development markedly strengthened Ukraine's position in the triangle and gave the leaders in Kyiv a much bigger room for political manoeuvring vis a vis Moscow. They could now play the "NATO card" in their relations with Moscow.

2.3 Period III 1996-1999

The period from 1996 to 1999 is characterised by what can be called a "Cold Peace" between NATO/USA and Russia. Western policy towards Russia was ambiguous. On one side it was characterised by seemingly close Western contacts with president Yeltsin caused by the Western conviction that his potential challengers inside Russia would be much more anti-western. Because of this, Western money still poured into Russia in spite of the massive corruption in the higher circles. Russia's best card in its negotiations with the West was the western fear of new and unknown leaders. Thus, Russia had a sort of "chaos power" in its relations with NATO. On the other side, NATO more and more adopted a policy characterised by "containment light" (Feffer, 1999). This meant that the foreign policy was seen in a zero-sum context, and that NATO/USA only to a small degree saw it as necessary to take Russian foreign policy interest into consideration. The limit here was of course that the West would not weaken the Russian president too much, as this could undermine his position inside Russia.

In Russia Yevgeniy Primakov was appointed new foreign minister. Primakov's thinking on foreign policy in many ways mirrored Brzezinski's thinking. Primakov gave the CIS area a

much higher priority than did his more Western-oriented predecessor, Kozyrev. Primakov wanted to strengthen the links to the CIS-countries in order to secure Russia's hegemony. The strengthening of military relations between the CIS countries was also one of several possible countermeasures to NATO enlargement. The more offensive part of Primakov's thinking was particularly reminiscent of Brzezinski. Primakov sought to build an international system based on ”multipolarity”. This aim could be sought either by building close relations between Russia and the main non-Western powers, like China and India, or by trying to split up the Western alliance so that the European system of states could function according to a multipolar logic. In other words, creating a ”geopolitical pluralism” in the Western world.

Three important issues were particularly in focus in NATO-Russia relations during this period:

- the enlargement of NATO
- the war in the former Yugoslavia
- the growing Western involvement in CIS countries

The enlargement of NATO was on track by 1996, even if Russia tried to halt it as long as possible. The enlargement soured NATO-Russian relations considerably, spilling over into other policy areas than security politics as well. On the other hand, it was very little Russia could do to stop it. The various threats from Russia, such as playing the ”chaos card” by threatening to deliver weapons of mass destruction to ”rogue states” like Irak and Libya, had very low credibility. The policy of strengthening the military aspect of the CIS-cooperation was partly counterproductive, because it came to be seen as representing a Russian threat by some of the CIS countries. In turn it made their policy even more anti-Russian. Russia was also heavily dependent on Western economic aid and therefore had very little room for manoeuvre. In the end, compromise was sought and NATO agreed to some self-imposed limits on the military side of the enlargement. Most important here the declaration that NATO had ”no plan, no need and no intention to station nuclear weapons on the territory of any new member” (Feffer, 1999). This was, however, no treaty but a one-sided declaration that could be withdrawn. Also, NATO membership for the Baltic states was not taken into consideration in Brussels. This had been the most threatening scenario as seen from Moscow, and not taking Baltic membership into account showed that Russian reactions were important to NATO. Given the correlation of power, this was as much as Russia could hope for. More important was it that Russia received new loans from the World Bank to sweeten the pill. Yeltsin got the necessary fig leaf to cover his defeat at home, and he could explain the Russian position in the following statesman-like manner: ”I could have banged my shoes on the table”, like Khrushchov did during the Cold War, but ”our choice is partnership” (Feffer, 1999).

As a sort of compensation for having accepted the enlargement of NATO, Brussels promised Moscow a ”special relationship”. This resulted in an accord in May 1997 on the establishment of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) between Russia and NATO. Various mechanisms for consultation were established. Nineteen areas of cooperation were defined, and the parties were to meet regularly. It was made very clear, however, that this accord did not give either party the right to veto the actions of the other. ”Voice, but not a veto” was the slogan from the Western side.

The expectations for the future role of the PJC probably varied among the participants, and in reality it has largely become window dressing. Neither the Russians nor NATO have taken it very seriously, nor has it been used as a mechanism to involve Russia in key foreign policy discussions in NATO. The list of Russian non-participation in important decisions on European and worldwide security is long. The US did not consult the Russians regarding the air strikes against Iraq in 1998 and against suspected terrorist facilities in Sudan and Afghanistan, also in 1998. More recently, Russian attempts to prevent the conflict from escalating in Kosovo proved futile. This development underscores that Primakov's ambitions of creating a multipolar system in Europe have failed. Russia has tried to be an important "external resource" that the West in its own interest should choose to consult, but this has become the case only a few times. Most recently that happened in the case of Kosovo, but that was dependent on a very particular political situation where Russia could play the role of an "honest broker". Such situations are not likely to occur often. Russia has therefore mostly, much against its will, been forced to play the observer's and not the participant's part.

The third important issue was the challenge to Russia by NATO and USA in Russia's own backyard - the CIS countries. This challenge was most visible in two areas: the growing western interests in the oil in the Caspian region, and the PfP related cooperation between NATO and various states in the CIS.

We do not intend to go into detail on the problems related to the so-called "The Great Game" concerning the oil and gas in the Caspian region. The main thing here is that oil and gas are important for Russia both economically and politically. Control over pipelines is an important aspect of foreign and security policy, giving possibilities for influence or even dominance over other states. Western involvement in the resource rich areas in the Caspian region and Central Asia could therefore both reduce the personal profits for central actors in the political system and limit the Russian possibility to influence and dominate states in the CIS. This new Western involvement was a serious challenge to Russia, and was seen by Russia as an illegitimate Western infringement in an area seen as belonging to the Russian sphere of influence. This was important, because geopolitics and spheres of influence has become a popular topic in Russia, and led to political ambitions without basis in reality.

2.3 Period IV 1999-

It can be argued that the post-Cold War European security system moved into a new phase in 1999, due to five developments:

- The widening of NATO
- The proclamation of a new strategic concept for NATO
- The NATO air-campaign against Yugoslavia
- The establishment of a common defence and security policy in EU
- The beginning of the Putin era in Russia

NATO is seemingly going into a new phase, consolidating its enlargement process and defining for itself a new role in the international arena. Both these factors represent the culmination of a development starting in the beginning of the 1990s. The development of a

common EU defence policy is a difficult challenge that could weaken NATO unless some sort of a viable modus vivendi is found. New rifts between EU and NATO/USA could also give Russia new room for political manoeuvre. This could make a policy of ”multipolarity” more plausible, although it is still difficult to foresee anything like a close cooperation between Russia and the EU.

Ukraine’s position in this new situation is also less secure than before, because Russian influence could increase and NATO/US influence could decrease. As we have underlined earlier, Ukraine is seen as important first of all by NATO and USA, not by the EU. A stronger Russia could also lead to a new ”Russia first” policy in the West, downgrading the importance of Ukraine.

NATO’s enlargement towards the east is now a reality and new states want to become members. Compared with the situation before the last enlargement, there is very little pressure from inside NATO to take in new members, because none of them have any important ”agent” inside NATO. Denmark wants the Baltic states as members, but does not have that much impact on decisions.

The new strategic concept and the war in Kosovo is part of a development of NATO from an alliance based on ”collective defence” to one based on ”collective security”. One possible implication of this development is that NATO and USA take on the role of a ”world policeman”, and even take over responsibilities of the OSCE and UN Security Council. This could mean a downgrading of the ”institutional” or ”structural” power of Russia, and therefore a diminished possibility for Russia to influence the outside world. Use of NATO forces in Russia’s backyard, the CIS, however, seems very unlikely. NATO policy in the future will therefore hardly lead to confrontation between Russia and NATO, but situations with conflicting interests could occur if NATO also in the future continue to act in a "collective security” mode.

Putin now seems to give priority to strengthening the economic foundations of Russia. In doing that he will need outside credits and know-how. This can only come from the Western World. Consequently, Russia’s economic and monetary policies are very close to the norms of IMF. This situation gives Moscow little room for an aggressive policy towards the outer world.

2.4 Summary

Starting from the assumption that NATO is the main institution for providing security and stability in post Cold War Europe, we have focused in this chapter on the chronology of the development of the *liaisons dangereuses.*

The expansion of NATO to the east can be interpreted as an attempt by the ordered “cosmos” (the West) to prevent by integration the development of a dangerous chaos in its eastern periphery. However, NATO will continue this policy if the anticipated gains of the inclusion of more countries outweigh the costs. Russian membership is at present not on the agenda, and in the case that Ukraine should apply the costs so far outweigh the gains. Still, NATO has taken a keen interest in the development of both these countries.

In the period 1991 to 1993 the most important *liaisons* were between NATO and Russia. NATO pursued a Russia first-policy, and Russia concentrated most of her foreign policy resources on developing friendly relations with the West. Ukraine was left in the shadow by both NATO and Russia, and the Ukrainians themselves were mainly occupied with consolidating their newly won independence.

After 1993 the *liaisons* gradually changed from bi-lateral to triangular. Russia became disappointed with, and more sceptical towards NATO, and both Russia and NATO discovered the geopolitical importance of Ukraine. The increased interest in Ukraine coincided with the Ukrainians' own readiness to become an independent foreign policy player. We therefore saw the initiation of NATO-Ukrainian relations combined with a souring of NATO-Russian and Ukrainian-Russian relations.

From 1996 NATO-Ukrainian relations went from a "get to know each other" face into an established relationship. However, this relationship was based on a mutual understanding that a Ukrainian application for membership was not on the agenda. This and other developments led to severe strains in the NATO-Russia relationship.

Although the new Russian President, Vladimir Putin, reopened channels of dialogue with NATO closed by Yeltsin, there are few indications that NATO-Russian relations are going to become less strained any time soon. There is, however, because of the character of the new president reason to expect more stability and continuity in Russia's policy towards NATO.

3 UKRAINE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST

> "The West has made it its goal to exploit all our reforms and efforts at restructuring, to ruin everything for us, and to turn the mighty Soviet Union, including the present independent Ukrainian state, into an economic appendage providing raw materials and cheap labour. Nobody, neither in the USA, England, France or Germany, has any interest in a strong Russia and a strong Ukraine. We must find our own way out of the crisis, expecting help from nobody" (Lukanov, 1996, p110).
>
> Leonid Kuchma, Prime minister of Ukraine, 1993

> "Ukraine's strategy is decided by the country's geopolitical location, historical and cultural traditions. And all these factors clearly identify Ukraine with Europe. Integration into European structures – that is the strategic direction of our foreign policy " (Sokolovskaya, 1999).
>
> Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, 1999

3.1 Introductory remarks

Ukraine after it became an independent country in 1991, has chosen a relatively pro-Western foreign policy. Most clearly this can be seen in the Ukrainian cooperation with NATO. Ukraine signed a Charter on Distinctive Partnership with NATO in July 1997, and an extensive National Programme of Cooperation Between NATO and Ukraine in November 1998. Ukraine

has set up its own Interdepartmental State Commission on Cooperation with NATO under the leadership of the leader of the Ukrainian Security Council, and according to Ukraine expert, Taras Kuzio: “Ukraine’s relations with NATO are the closest of any of the international organisations with which it cooperates” (Kuzio, 2000b, p 23).

Officially the foreign policy is a “multivector” policy, but it is quite clear that Ukraine’s symphaties are with the West. This was especially true when Leonid Kravchuk was president from 1991-1994. The 1994 elected president, Leonid Kuchma, was elected on a platform of changing the foreign policy in a more pro-Russian direction, and initially he also tried to do this. He, however, fairly quickly changed his mind, and from the summer and autumn of 1995 he began to implement a foreign policy very similar to his predecessor.

Two perspectives have so far dominated schorlarly work trying to explain Ukraine’s pro-Western foreign policy. Some have explained this policy in realist terms, and claimed that the pro-Western policy is a result of balance of power behaviour from the Ukrainian side. Ukraine is seeking integration with the West and NATO in order to balance the power of its much stronger northern neighbour. Others have employed more identitve/constructivist models of explanation, and argued that the pro-Western foreign policy should be seen as a reflection of Ukrainian nation building efforts. To build a strong Ukrainian identity for the new state to rest on, there has been a constant need to demonstrate distance to Russia.

We think both these perspectives are vital to explain Ukrainian foreign policy, but we also think they are insufficient. They do not adequately take into account Ukrainian domestic politics as a variable in explaining Ukrainian foreign policy. That is what we intend to do in this chapter.

In the summer of 1994, Leonid Kuchma was elected president of Ukraine on a programme of redirecting the country’s strongly pro-Western foreign policy in favour of closer relations with Russia. In this enterprise Kuchma was strongly backed by those sectors of the Ukrainian business elite that saw their future in the restoration of broken ties with Russia. Of particular importance here was the Ukrainian military-industrial complex, in which Kuchma himself had spent most of his professional career. Five years on, a major shift of orientation had taken place. It was now a dominating view in the Ukrainian president’s administration that the country’s foreign policy identity should be European rather than Eurasian.

In this paper we will investigate the shift in foreign policy identification, and try to explain both why it came about and why it came to be seen by substantial parts of the Ukrainian elite as an ultimate choice. In particular, we will highlight the relationship between Ukrainian national interests as interpreted by the ruling elite, and the personal, political and economic interests of this same elite. In the first section of this chapter we give a brief overview of the foreign policy debate in Ukraine from 1994 to 1999. In the second, we argue why it seems fair to call Ukraine a privatised state. In the third section, we examine more closely the foreign policy perspectives of the major sectorial interests in the Ukrainian economy. Finally, we discuss the change to a European foreign policy identity under Kuchma, and this identity’s persistence.

3.2 The discussion on foreign policy within the Kuchma administration

Three alternatives have been repeatedly proposed in the debate on Ukraine's foreign policy identity: European, Eurasian and transitional. They all include clear proposals for the course of Ukrainian foreign policy: integration with European structures (EU, NATO); integration with Russia; and maintaining a neutral position.

The national democrats, large parts of the intellectual elite, and substantial sections of the Ukrainian economic elite support the European identity view. The basic historical claim here is that Ukraine is a European country that was forcefully taken away from Europe, and that now has its historic chance to return. Former chairman of the Ukrainian parliament's foreign policy committee, the nationalist-communist Dmytro Pavlychko, carried this thinking to extremes. In outlining the direction of Ukrainian foreign policy, he stated: "Our foreign policy has to lead us to Europe, where we were born and where we grew up as a nation, and from where we were torn away and put in Asian imprisonment, redressed in Muscovite clothes, and educated in the Slavic-Russian language of Genghis-Khan's great-grandchildren" (Pavlychko, 1992, p 141).

The Eurasian identity view is supported by most of the Communist Party; the Progressive Socialist party; a number of small non-communist pro-Russian parties; substantial portions of the general population of Eastern, Southern, partly also Central Ukraine; and in the Crimea. The view is also supported by leading agents of Ukrainian agriculture. They emphasise the common historical and cultural roots of the Eastern Slavs, and call attention to the common Orthodox faith.

The transitional identity is supported by the Socialist party, influential members of the early Kuchma administration, and many intellectuals from Eastern Ukraine. They emphasise how much Ukraine was marked by having been a Russian province since the middle of the 18th century, and also by the 70 years of communism. They are in principle positive to Ukraine slowly becoming a European country, but only after it has overcome the legacy of Communism, and most probably in tandem with Russia. Dmytro Tabchnyk, former close presidential adviser, and the intellectuals Vasyl Kremen and Vasyl Tkachenko, wrote in 1996: "the engulfment of Ukraine by the Russian empire, and the centuries as a part of that empire, led not only to the formation of a tight web of economic relations, but also to the formation of certain cultural, spiritual, and traditional commonalties, which made Ukrainians, Russians, and the other peoples of the former Soviet Union very close in many respects" (Kremen, Tabachnyk and Tkachenko, 1996, p 711). However, they also concluded that "the presence of a Eurasian influence over centuries, after all did not make Ukraine Eurasian"(Kremen, Tabachnyk and Tkachenko, 1996, p 119).

During Kuchma's first five years in power, the supporters of the transitional and the European foreign policy identities lived in an uneasy coexistence. While Kuchma chose the side of the Europeanists in shaping the long-term strategy for Ukrainian foreign policy, he needed the transitionalists for shorter term purposes. The transitionalists were especially needed for solving the remaining controversies with Russia. These included: the conclusion of the major Co-operation and Friendship treaty; the division of the Black Sea Fleet; and the restructuring of the oil and gas debt to Russia. Because of this need, the policy towards Russia was largely

removed from the responsibility of the Ukrainian foreign ministry. This was especially the case after Boris Tarasyuk was appointed foreign minister in April 1998.

The man put in charge of relations with Russia was the transitionalist Oleksandr Razumkov. This was largely due to his diplomatic skills and his extensive personal contacts in the Kremlin. According to a former staff member of the powerful National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) and Razumkov ally, Anatoliy Hrytsenko: 'There were times when our civil servants who went to Moscow for negotiations did not get further than to Sheremetevo airport. They were met at the airport by a leader of Gazprom or some other company, and asked a single question: did you bring money? If the answer was no, they would not get no further. Razumkov was able to overcome all of this'.[1]

Razumkov had Prime Minister Pustovoitenko as his channel for consultation with the president, whereas the Europeanist Tarasyuk had the leader of the powerful NSDC, Volodymyr Horbulin as his channel for consultation. The two groupings at times clashed strongly, also in public. In February 1999 Razumkov told a Kyiv symposium arranged by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation that Ukrainian membership in NATO would not be on the agenda for at least another 10 years. Horbulin later rebuked his subordinate by publicly stating that Razumkov had 'erred both in form and in substance'.[2]

Still, the coexistence of the two opposing views in the administration was not necessarily the result of ambiguity in Kuchma's own foreign policy outlook. He knew very well that good relations with Moscow would ease rather than worsen the prospects of Ukrainian integration with the West. Putting a relatively pro-Russian person in charge of the Russia policy and making a very strong pro-Western person responsible of the rest of the foreign policy, were therefore not contradictory but mutually reinforcing measures.

3.3 Ukraine as a privatised state

According to a Ukrainian parliamentarian, the Swedish economist Anders Åslund gave a rather sarcastic characterisation of the state of Ukrainian politics to a visiting group of Ukrainian parliamentarians in Washington in early 1999. He described Ukraine today as a 'closed joint-stock company, led by four clans: the Rabinovich-Volkov clan; the Bakay-Holubchenko clan; the Surkis-Medvedchuk clan; and the successors of Alik the Greek'.[3]

Although Åslund's characterisation might be to go too far, it seems fair to claim that private economic interests have a particularly strong influence on Ukrainian politics.

The Ukrainian business elites have two principal strategies for influencing the political leadership. The most efficient one is to get one's own people accepted into leading governmental and administrative positions. Alternatively, one can create an interest organisation that engages in public campaigns, and in the lobbying of state institutions. The

[1] Personal interview with Anatoliy Hrytsenko, Kyiv 2 March 2000.
[2] *Jamestown Monitor*, 17 February, 1999.
[3] Interview with the Ukrainian parliamentarian Mykhailo Pozhivanov in *Den*, 3 March 1999.

latter strategy, however, is according to Yaroslav Zhalilo[4], Volodymyr Lupatsiy and Andriy Smenkovskiy more a sign of weakness than a sign of strength. In their analysis of the interplay between business and politics in Ukraine they write:

> "The need for formal organisations and for appointing official representatives, only occurs when a certain branch or business group has been excluded from the informal channels of influence. In other words, the need for public politics arises when a certain group feels a need for replay of what happened in the informal channels. They will engage in public politics only after they have tried and failed in exploiting all the options for replay within the informal framework (an example here is the formation of the political party Hromada)" (Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smenkovskiy, 1999).

The Ukrainian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (UIEU) is a prime example of the relationship between business and politics that Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smenkovskiy describe. The UIEU was established to promote the political interests of the Ukrainian business community. However, the UEIU did not look upon itself as an organisation established to lobby government for the adoption of preferable decisions. They instead saw themselves as part of that government. After all, their candidate, Leonid Kuchma, won the elections. Although occasionally the UEIU could openly criticise the government, public politics was never high on the UEIU's agenda. Their main strategy for influence is to get their own people represented in decision-making bodies at all levels, and to establish the UEIU as a special body for consultance within government. In addition to Kuchma himself, who was president of the UEIU from December 1993 to July 1994, numerous other UEIUites have occupied high positions in the government and in the presidential administration.

A further illustration of the UEIU as a part of government rather than as an actor trying to influence it, is the Co-ordinating Council for Social-Economic Policy. This council consists of the ministers in the government that are responsible for social and economic issues, and the UEIU. According to the journalist Aleksandr Gurevich, there is good reason to believe that the UEIU has the upper hand in this council (Gurevich, 1999). Anatoly Kinakh, President of UEIU and simultaneously First Vice-Prime Minister in the government, said at the UEIU congress in June 1999, that the regional divisions of the UEIU should be included in the bodies of regional administration. UEIU leaders at regional levels were instructed to make sure that their members were included into local organs of power at all levels. Prime Minister Varly Pustovoitenko told the leadership of the UEIU in 1997 that in the process of selecting people to fill ministerial posts, the UEIU proposals for candidates would of course be taken into account (Romantsov, 1997).

The UEIU's "part of government" identity can also be illustrated by its organisational design. Under the UEIU president there are a number of vice-presidents. Their number and thematical specialisations correspond more or less exactly to the number and thematical responsibilities of the socio-economic ministries of the government.

[4] Zhalilo worked from 1994-1996 as an assistant to the president of UEIU, and therefore knows the thinking of these groups from the inside.

The examples given above illustrate a trend. It therefore seems fair, also in the case of Ukraine, to claim that 'the state functions to defend the interests of a small capitalist class'. The question in this paper, however, is whether that also applies to Ukrainian foreign policy, or whether foreign policy is kept as an area of fairly autonomous state action also in a privatised state.

Before answering that question, however, I want to look at Ukrainian big business in some more detail. I find it necessary, both to describe which main branches it consists of; what foreign policy strategies the different branches think would best suit their own interests; and how much influence the different branches have on the executive.

3.4 Ukrainian big business: foreign policy perspectives

There are many ways of classifying Ukrainian big business according to sectors. I find the following classification helpful:

- the energy sector
- the metallurgical and chemical sectors
- the civilian machine building and the military industrial sectors
- the agricultural sector

The agricultural sector is the one most clearly in favour of closer relations with Russia. Ukrainian agricultural products have few chances on the protected Western markets, but have traditionally been crucial to satisfy the Russian need for farm produce. Since Ukraine became independent in 1991, however, they have met with ever-higher Russian customs barriers. The agricultural sector hopes that political integration with Russia will remove these barriers. One of the main spokesmen for this sector was the former Speaker of Parliament and 1999 presidential candidate Oleksandr Tkachenko.

Within the metallurgical sector, we may distinguish roughly between those enterprises that are profitable and able to export to the West, and those enterprises that run at a loss and sell their produce to Russia for less than production costs.[5] According to the scholar Aleksandr Potekhin, the loss makers account for about 70% of the enterprises within this sector. They are still in business, however, for two reasons. First, some of leaders of these enterprises are able to pocket some personal profit despite the sorry state of affairs of their enterprises. Second, the Ukrainian government is afraid of the social and political consequences that a substantial increase in unemployment could have in Eastern Ukraine. The profitable parts of the metallurgical sector and the chemical sector are mostly oriented towards export to the West, and are therefore in favour of a pro-Western foreign policy. For this reason, they were some of the strongest supporters of Leonid Kravchuk in the 1994 presidential elections.

> "The energy sector as a whole is mildly pro-Russian in its foreign policy outlook. Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smankovskiy write that "these groups [the energy sector] are, all things taken into account, an impediment to a pro-Western foreign policy.

[5] Personal interview with Oleksandr Potekhin in Kyiv, 29 February 2000. Potekhin was at the time of the interview leader of Centre for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine.

> For them, a 'soft' Ukrainian dependence on Russia and intimate relations with the representatives of the Russian oil and gas sector is most convenient" (Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smenkovskiy, 1999).

The point about personal contacts is especially important here. In Russia the privatisation of big industrial enterprises is more or less finished. In Ukraine it is just about to start. Russian big capital is eager to take part in this process. Therefore, in the last year of Kuchma's first period, Russian business interests started to build ever-closer connections with Ukrainian oligarchs. They did this to establish channels of influence to the Ukrainian decision makers, hoping to be able to use them when the privatisation of major companies gets started. According to *Kyiv Post* staff writer, Katya Gorchinskaya, "All of Russia's movers and shakers regularly pay low-key visits to Ukraine, and all of them are working to build close business – if not personal – relations with the Ukrainian elite" (Gorchinskaya, 2000). One of the most prominent examples of such close connections is the association between Ukrainian presidential confidant Oleksandr Volkov and Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky. According to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* "the media magnate himself made all possible and impossible efforts to support Kuchma, displaying a level of activity that was out of all proportions even for him" (Galperin, 1999).

The civilian machine building and the military industrial sectors were in 1994 pro-Russian, but changed during the period 1994-1999 to a largely pro-Western orientation. It seems that the rocket-cosmic branch was leading in facilitating this shift in foreign policy outlook for the civilian machine building and the military industrial sectors. The decision of the Ukrainian rocket and cosmic industry to try to enter western markets was largely initiated in 1994 by Volodymyr Horbulin, and it was an important factor contributing to Horbulin's rise in Ukrainian politics. According to the above mentioned Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smenkovski: "It is no coincidence that the rocket builders and in general the military-industrial complex have become the leading lobbyists for co-operation between Ukraine and NATO and the countries of Central Europe, and for admission of Ukraine to the WTO" (Zhalilo, Lupatsiy and Smenkovskiy, 1999). There are at least three important reasons why this sector turned from a pro-Russian to a pro-Western foreign policy outlook.

First, the directors of this sector vehemently disliked what they considered to be the superior (imperialist) attitudes of its Russian counterparts. Said Oleksandr Potekhin, leader of the Foreign ministry's USA and Europe department in the early Kuchma period: 'The business interests of the major Ukrainian companies were of course in Russia at that time. However, nobody wanted to be removed from his or her top position. Nobody wanted to become simple servants for Russian masters. Vyakhirev and Gazprom and in general the leaders of most Russian major enterprises therefore made a great mistake by behaving in this way. They always made clear that they were not ready to consider these Ukrainian industry barons as equals, and they were never ready to conduct negotiations on equal terms'.[6]

[6] Personal interview with Oleksandr Potekhin in Kyiv, 29 February 2000. Potekhin is now the leader of Centre for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine.

Second, representatives of the Russian arms industry have on numerous occasions maintained that the patent rights are Russian for a large number of items that the Ukrainian arms industry is now marketing. Ukraine should therefore not sell them without acceptance from Russian patent holders, and Ukraine has no right to make any changes to them.

Third, Russia and Ukraine to a large extent manufacture similar products for export, and are therefore commercial competitors. This is especially the case with tank production. It was a major blow to any possible remains of co-operative spirit on the Ukrainian side when Russia refused to deliver the turrets to 320 T-80 tanks for which Ukraine had signed a delivery contract with Pakistan. The Ukrainians then developed their own turrets in co-operation with a Swiss company. This Russian decision was seen as a very clear token of the attitudes of the Russian arms industry towards the Ukrainian arms industry. The fact that Russia is a major exporter of arms to India, and that concern for Russia's relations with India probably was a major reason for the refusal to supply Ukraine with turrets, did not particularly soften Ukrainian reactions.

This does not at all mean that Ukrainian industrialists do not want to do business with Russia, but it means that the hopes and expectations connected to an economic and political reintegration of the two countries are no longer dominant.

One of the leading experts on the Ukrainian arms industry, Valentin Badrak, says that even if one can point to single episodes of successful co-operation between Russian and Ukrainian arms exporters, the very clear trend is toward ever deteriorating relations.[7]

3.5 The Kuchma administration: foreign policy identity

3.5.1 The choice of a European foreign policy identity

Kuzio, in his book *Ukraine under Kuchma*, argues that the election of Kuchma in 1994 can be seen as the successful conclusion of the efforts of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex to place their own man at the top in Kyiv. Furthermore, Kuzio argues, he came from this industry with an explicit mandate to redirect the foreign policy to a pro-Russian path (Kuzio, 1997, pp 60-64). This industry largely paid for his campaign, and Kuchma spent more money on his campaign than any of the other candidates.

The industrialists got their reward when a large number of their representatives were placed in influential positions in the presidential administration after the election. The military-industrial complex was so well represented, that some Ukrainian observers jokingly talked about a special Ukrainian form of "conversion". Instead of converting military industry to civilian industry, Ukraine converted military industrialists to civilian powerholders (Pikhovshek, Chekmyshev, Lehn, Koltsova and Pidluska, 1996, p. 55). The most prominent of these were Volodymyr Horbulin and Valeriy Shmarov. Horbulin, who had been a colleague of Kuchma's at the missile plant *Pivdenmash*, became secretary of the NSDC. Horbulin was one of the main architects behind Ukrainian foreign and security policy during the period 1994-1999. Shmarov,

[7] Personal interview with Valentin Badrak, Kyiv 29 Fenruary 2000.

from the defence industry in Kyiv, became Defence Minister, with a special responsibility for developing close relations between the Ukrainian and Russian defence industries.

These parts of Ukrainian big business, however, soon felt let down by the reception of their integration initiatives in Russia. At the same time, in particular the military-industrial complex discovered new opportunities in the West. These included both a limited potential for export to the West, and more important, possibilities for technical and scientific co-operation. The changes in business outlook made these parts of Ukrainian big business change from a pro-Russian to a pro-Western foreign policy perspective. The civilian machine building and the military industrial sectors therefore, together with the profitable parts of the metallurgical sector and the chemical sector, became a powerful lobby for a pro-Western foreign policy. That shift is a major part of the explanation why also Ukrainian official foreign policy became increasingly pro-Western.

The change in foreign policy outlook during Kuchma's first five years in office can to a large extent be explained with the changed interests of Ukrainian big business as the point of departure.

However, the change can also be explained from a different perspective. Once in place as president of Ukraine, Kuchma's object of reference for his self-identity changed from enterprise director to state leader. That meant he was suddenly entangled in a web of norms for how a state leader is supposed to act, how other state leaders were supposed to act towards him, and how his state was supposed to act and be acted towards. That is, the logic of appropriate behaviour for a state leader became important. To achieve the integration he was elected to carry out, however, he would have to play by the rules presented to him by the Russian establishment. These rules were not in agreement with what he and his staff saw as the standard international norms for state to state relations. And, most importantly, they constituted a denial of Kuchma's identity as a state leader. According to Alexander Wendt, "two kinds of ideas can enter into identity. Those held by the Self and those held by the Other" (Wendt, 1999, p 224). It was not just a question of personal insult – without a functioning identity as a state leader Kuchma would lack the basis for knowing what would be appropriate action or what would not.

This can be explained by using the distinction between regulative and constitutive rules. The scholar John Gerard Ruggie describes this distinction in the following manner: "Regulative rules are intended to have causal effects – getting people to approximate the speed limit, for example. Constitutive rules define the set of practices that make up any particular consciously organised social activity – that is to say, they specify what counts as that activity" (Ruggie, 1998, p 22). In the eyes of the Ukrainian elite, Russia did not treat Kuchma as the president of an independent country. A February 2000 survey of 100 representatives of the Russian foreign policy elite had as one of its main conclusions that Russians do not see Ukrainians as a separate nation (Chaliy and Pashkov, 2000, p 65). The situation was similar to the one in which a chess player moves the pieces around on the board in unauthorised ways. By doing this, he not only offends the other player, but he makes the whole game impossible to play.

3.5.2 The persistence of the European foreign policy identity

What then happened in the latter part of Kuchma's first period was that the energy sector gradually outmanoeuvred much of the civilian machine building and military industrial sectors from the higher power circles in Kyiv. The Ukrainian daily *Kievskie Vedomosti* wrote in July 1997: "The main battle within the shadow economy and power circles today is taking place between the energy clan and the military-industrial and machine building clan" (Lartsev, 1997). The energy sector could win this battle, first of all because it commanded considerably larger financial resources than the civilian machine building and the military industrial sectors. The companies within the energy sector make up close to 80% of the major companies in Ukraine. The largest, *Ukrhazprom*, would, if it was a Russian company, have occupied the third place after PAO "EES Rossii" and Gazprom (Vlasov, 1999). The rise of "oligarchs" in Ukraine started within the energy sector. It was quite clear to Kuchma, who was aiming for reelection in 1999, that either he had to get the energy sector to support his candidacy, or this sector would put their money in another basket.

If we look at the situation in 1998-1999, some of the most influential actors in Ukrainian politics were the following: Oleksandr Volkov, Ihor Bakay, Hryhory Surkis, Viktor Medvedchuk, and Viktor Pinchuk. Ihor Bakay was former head of the *Respublika* and *Interhaz* private gas trading companies, and later became director of the major state gas company *Naftohaz.* Viktor Pinchuk controls the gas a metallurgical investment group *Interpipe*. Hryhory Surkis and Viktor Medvedchuk are through several companies heavily involved in the oil and gas sector. Oleksandr Volkov is not himself big in the energy sector, but has taken on the role as a co-ordinator of the political interests of this sector. In February 1999 Volkov gathered the majority of gas trading MPs into the parliamentary faction For Regional Revival.

	Oleksandr Volkov	Hryhory Surkis	Ihor Bakay	Volodymyr Pinchuk	Vadym Rabinovych
Business-interests		*Slavutich, Ometa 20th Century, Ukrainian Credit Bank,* Oil, gas, electricity, ports and others	*Naftohaz* (resigned, but still considered influential) Oil and gas	Interpipe, Turbotrast Pipeline building, gas, iron and steel smelting	*Nordex* (until 1997) Oil and gas
Political parties	Democratic Union of Ukraine	Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (United)	Democratic Union of Ukraine		
Parliamentary factions	The Revival of the Regions	The faction of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (United)	The Revival of the Regions	Working Ukraine	Parts of the factions of the Green Party of Ukraine
Other public organisations	The charity fund *Sotsialny zakhyst* (Social Protection)	The footbal club *Dynamo Kyiv*			The All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress
Media	The TV channel UT-1, (state TV),"1+1", *Hravis*	The journal *Biznes* (Business), and the TV channel *Inter*	The daily Segodnya (Today), and the TV channel *ICTV*	The daily Fakty (Facts), and the regional TV channel *11th Channel* in Dnipro-petrovsk	The weeklies *Stolichnye Novosty* (The Capital News), and *Delovaya Nedelya* (Business Weekly) and the TV channels *ERA, NTU, UNIAR,* and the radio channels *Super-Nova and ERA*

Table 3.1 The major Ukrainian oligarchs and institutions under their control

At the end of Kuchma's first period Ukraine was therefore in a position where Russia both as a political and economic actor was increasing its influence on Ukrainian domestic politics. The political scientist, Volodymyr Polokhalo, very approximately estimated that Russia stood for 60% of the foreign influence on Ukrainian domestic politics, and the West for 40% (Ivzhenko, 2000).

In spite of the shift in balance of power among the sectors of Ukrainian big business in influencing the Ukrainian executive, there was no return to a pro-Russian foreign policy. In fact, a July 2000 survey of the foreign policy attitudes of 100 representatives of the Ukrainian political elite, including high representatives from the presidential administration, the Sceurity and Defence Council apparatus, the government, the Foreign Ministry and other organs, confirmed how entrenched the pro-European foreign policy discourse had become. In this survey the respondents were asked to state which countries they thought should be the main priority for Ukraine in foreign policy. Russia and the CIS countries was the choice of only 26% (17% and 11% respectively) of the respondents, whereas the EU and USA was the choice of 59% of the respondents (48% and 11% respectively) (Pashkov and Chaliy, 2000). This does not necessarily mean that all these elite representatives had adopted some kind of a deep personal conviction of Ukraine as a genuinely European country. However, the survey results do suggest that the pro-European discourse had achieved something of a hegemony position in the elite foreign policy debate.

Given the strong connection between dominating business interests and foreign policy in 1994-95, we would have anticipated a return to a more pro-Russian foreign policy after the change in the balance of power among these groups. Why were there few indications of this happening?

Once adopted, an identity also becomes a constraint on behaviour. Each time the Ukrainian leadership asserted the country's Europeanness, retreat to a non-European identity became a little bit harder. This happens, according to International Relations scholar Ted Hopf, because "actors reproduce daily their own constraints through ordinary practice" (Hopf, 1998, p 180). If the Kuchma administration had jumped back and forth between a Eurasian and a European identity, it would have become unable to act as We; to know where the borders of the Ukrainian Self were; and to provide predictability. This is an important part of the explanation of why the changing balance of power among economic interest groups in the presidential administration did not change Ukraine's pro-Western foreign policy. The focus on the explanatory power of identities in state behaviour is largely a contribution from *constructivist* theory.

It can be questioned, however, if that is what has taken place in Ukraine. It could be argued that the pro-European statements of many Ukrainian politicians do not reflect any deep convictions, but are mainly motivated by the wish to attract Western aid and support. That is very possible, but even if this is the case it does not necessarily weaken the standing of the European foreign policy identity – at least not in the short or medium term. If we conceive of the Ukrainian European foreign policy identity in the same way that the scholar Joseph Schull conceives of the term *ideology*, individual beliefs become less important as a source of explanation. Schull defines ideology as: "a form of discourse or a political language – a body of linguistic propositions expressed as speech-acts and united by the conventions governing them. Its adherents will have varied beliefs about its conventions, yet all will be constrained by them in order to be recognised as competent speakers of the discourse" (Schull, 1992, p 729). In this interpretation the European foreign policy orientation takes the form of a framework for acceptable linguistic utterances, where serious deviation from the framework can have serious

negative consequences for the perpetrator personally. But, whereas the European orientation initially was chosen because of the fear that integration with Russia would loose the representatives of the economic elite their positions and power to Russians, now these same representatives have to stick to that orientation because they might otherwise loose their power and positions to other Ukrainians who stick to that orientation. Most likely, different representatives of the Ukrainian political elite under Kuchma profess the European foreign policy orientations for different reasons. Some do it because they think it is expected of them if they want to remain influential whereas others are personally convinced that Ukraine is naturally a European country.

There is, however, also another way of explaining why the shift in balance of power among the economic interest groups did not result in a change of foreign policy. It could be argued that the oil and gas oligarchs accepted the continuance of the pro-wetsern policy because they were admitted exceptions to this policy in cases where it collided with their immediate business interests.

One example of this is the case of the construction of the pipeline from Odesa on the Black Sea coast to Brody on the Ukrainian-Polish border. The almost total dependency on Russian oil and gas deliveries has been recognised as probably the main security concern of the Ukrainian state since 1991. One way to lessen this dependency is the construction of an oil pipeline from Odesa to Brody, and there connect it to the Polish oil pipeline network. The main role of Ukraine in this project is as a transit area for Caspian oil to Europe. This will bring money to Ukraine in the form of transit fees, but the main advantage is that Ukraine becomes less dependent on Russian oil deliveries.

The realisation of this project came more or less to a halt in 1998. In a joint appeal from the People's Democratic Party and Rukh, First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Holubchenko was accused of acting independently to halt the construction of the pipeline. Holubchenko was at that time high in the power hierarchy in Kyiv. The suspicion was that Holubchenko had halted the construction because he was making substantial personal gains from the resale of Russian oil in Ukraine. He feared that the Odesa-Brody pipeline would diminish the scale of that trade. Government officials never admitted any truth in the accusations, but Kuchma removed Holubchenko from his position the day before he went to Warsaw for further consultations on the pipeline issue. Kuchma's foreign policy adviser, Yuriy Scherbak, later confirmed that the pipeline project had been almost terminated because certain "civil servants had had *private* interests in this situation" (Scherbak, 2000).

The removal of Holubchenko, however, did not seem to speed up the realisation of the pipeline project. As of March 2000, 30% of the project was still not completed. This was the case despite several explicit presidential orders to complete the project, and funds made available for the completion by the Ukrainian parliament. This time Ihor Bakay became suspected for acting in a manner similar to Holubchenko. One Ukrainian journalist, Aleksandr Yurchuk, referred to the Odesa-Brody pipeline as Bakay's personal "sour point" (Yurchuk, 2000). Bakay was considered to have substantial influence on the president both in his own right, and through his political and business ally, Kuchma confidant Aleksandr Volkov. The problem is of course that if the number of smaller deviations from the fundamental decision for the

purpose of promoting individual interests reaches a critical level, the fundamental decision will not be damaged. It can then end up not being taken seriously neither by domestic actors nor by the outside world.

The political game behind the import of Russian gas is a very murky business, and something on which it is difficult to find reliable information. What does seem clear, though, is that for this business to continue, the oligarchs were interested in stopping plans for a diversification of Ukrainian energy supplies. However, because diversification of the sources of energy supply had been elevated to security question number one in Ukraine, to be seen as fighting against it would be tantamount to high treason. Thus, the great secrecy around these efforts. In addition, it became imperative for the oligarchs to give the impression of being Ukrainian patriots. For example did Ihor Bakay manage to become relatively popular in Ukrainian nationalist circles.

The first serious challenge to the business interests of these oligarchs came after the reelection of Kuchma in 1999. Under influence from the West, he chose the unscrupulously non-corrupt chairman of the National Bank, Victor Yushenko, as new Prime Minister. The choice of Yushenko was a slap in the face of the oligarchs, but worse was to come. To tidy up in the energy business, Yushenko chose as his Deputy Prime Minister in charge of energy issues the former oligarch Yulia Timoshenko. Mrs. Timoshenko had been in the same business as Surkis, Bakay and the rest, but the activities of her United Energy Systems of Ukraine had been stopped by a court decision in 1997, on the basis of accusations of massive irregularities. Many Ukrainian observers saw this appointment as a blatant example of setting the fox to mind the geese. Timoshenko herself, however, claimed that she would "use her own experience from 'the shadowy sphere'" to bring order to the branch.[8] Though Timoshenko's ability to act only in the best interests of the Ukrainian state and not in the interest of particular business groups were still questioned in Ukraine, independent experts characterised Timoshenko's legislative efforts as initiatives that could truly bring order and transparency to the energy sector (Mostovaya, 2000b). In addition to the legislative efforts, Timoshenko also tried to secure alternative sources of energy supply, thus further challenging the business interests of the oligarchs. In particular, she tried to enlist Turkmenistan as an alternative source to Russia for gas supplies.

Because of Timoshenko's initiatives in the energy sector, she was at constant war with the oligarchs since becoming Deputy Prime Minister. Ihor Bakay, for example, resigned from his position as head of the main state gas and oil company *Naftohaz Ukrayiny*, in protest against Timoshenko's policy. In January 2001 she was removed from her position as Deputy Prime Minister, and shortly afterwards she was arrested on charges of corruption. Though President Kuchma tried to be on good terms with both sides in this struggle, he was probably well aware of the need for an orderly and transparent energy sector, and for alternative sources of energy supply. That is probably one of the reasons why Timoshenko was not removed from her position before.

Alternative sources of energy supply probably only increased in importance after the change of president in Russia. There were clear indications that the new leadership in the Kremlin was

[8] Interview with Yulia Timoshenko in *Zerkalo Nedely*, No. 34, 2-8 September, 2000.

much more difficult to come to terms with than the previous one. According to one of the most respected observers of Ukrainian politics, the journalist Yulia Mostovaya, the new Russian leadership started to make a very strong connection between energy supplies and political concessions. She gave the following illustration of the conduct of Russian-Ukrainian negotiations on energy issues under the new Russian leadership: “Schematically it looks like this ‘We give you 5 billion cubic meters of gas, and you enter the Customs Union, and we give you an additional 5 billion cubic meters of gas, and you support our position on the missile defence issue” (Mostovaya, 2000a).

A final interpretation of why the pro-Western policy persisted could be that the Ukrainian elite seems able to separate economics and politics. A good example of this is the Ukrainian rocket industry. This branch of the military-industrial complex has been one of the major advocates for the European foreign policy identity (Horbulin), and at the same time it is this branch that has some of the best personal contacts and well functioning commercial co-operation with Russian counterparts.

3.6 Summary

Ukrainian industrial barons from East and Central Ukraine paid for Kuchma’s campaign in 1994, and were rewarded with numerous influential positions in the government and presidential administration after the election victory. They set out to achieve reintegration with Russia, but on terms that gave themselves a considerably stronger and more equal position than had been the case during Soviet times. When they learned that this was not how the Russian elite envisioned the reintegration, they became proponents of a pro-Western foreign policy course instead.Therefore, in order to explain the shift from a Eurasian to a European foreign policy identity in Ukraine during Kuchma’s first five years as President, one must take into account the changes of attitude toward Russia among leading economic elites.

The Ukrainian choice of a European foreign policy identity seems to persist. However, one cannot exclude that Ukraine in the future might be confronted with the need for a major rethinking of its foreign policy identity. This could for example happen if Russia together with Ukraine reached a clear understanding that the expansion of European political and economic institutions will stop at these countries’ western borders. Such a message might be perceived by the Ukrainians as signifying a return to square one, and that the country is put in a situation where it again has to make a major “initial” choice. If Ukraine is left with little hope for significant integration with the major European political and economic institutions, the dominant economic elites of the Ukrainian privatised state would be forced to take stock of where the country is going. They would have to decide what would best suit their interest, the identity of a rejected son of Europe or the identity of a smaller brother in Eurasia. If the Russian political and economic elites in this situation would be ready to treat the Ukrainian political and economic elites with more respect and sense of equality than in 1994, and promise the Ukrainian elites that they will not loose their positions of power in politics and economics, then the “smaller brother in Eurasian identity” could well become the most tempting.

4 EXPLAINING RUSSIA'S NON-POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE

> "There is, in fact, no coordination of Russia's policy with regard to Ukraine. There is no overall state policy. This has been, I believe, the crudest mistake of our power structures, the Foreign Ministry in particular"
>
> Andranik Migranyan, *Krimskaya Pravda*, 29 Nov 1994

There is a blatant paradox in Russia's policy towards Ukraine. On the one hand, there are few discussions that bring out more consensus across the Russian political spectrum than discussions of Russian-Ukrainian relations. On the other hand, Russia has not at any time since Ukrainian independence in 1991 been able to produce a co-ordinated political strategy for the conduct of her relations with her southern neighbour.

How can this lack of policy be explained? In this chapter I will try to explain why Russia has not been able to bring into being any coherent strategy in the policy towards Ukraine. This is especially surprising, since the policy towards Ukraine more than most other foreign policy issue was centralised and taken care of by the president and his administration. I will seek my explanations for this lack of strategy on three levels: the cognitive level; the level of resources for influence; and the bureaucratic level. I will structure the chapter around three working hypotheses of why Russia has not been able to generate a consistent Ukraine policy. First, the Russian political establishment has not truly come to terms with the existence of an independent Ukraine. Second, except for oil and gas, Russia has realised that her resources for influencing Ukraine are limited. Third, peculiarities of the Russian system of foreign policy making – particularly in the Ukrainian case – made a coherent foreign policy difficult to achieve. The focus for this study is not what Russia has and has not achieved in her relations with Ukraine, but why the policy towards the southern neighbour has been so haphazard. That is, I focus on output rather than outcome.[9]

4.1 The problem of coming to terms with Ukrainian independence

> The awakening of Ukraine, and especially the separatist character of Ukrainianness, surprised the Russian intelligentsia, and we were never able to understand it. This was first of all, because we loved Ukraine, we loved her land, her people, her songs, and we thought that all this was also part of our national heritage. Also, the separatism was incomprehensible to us because we had never really been interested in the three to four centuries of history that had formed the Ukrainian people and their culture different from the Great Russians.
>
> Georgiy Fedotov (1886 - 1951).

[9] By output we mean the actual policy chosen, but outcome we mean the results of that policy.

Although this was written in 1947 by the Russian philosopher and social scientist Georgiy Fedotov, it is a good description of how many Russians felt in 1991 when Ukraine became independent. As Fedotov said: “Ukrainian nationality is for Russia more important than any other national question. This is not only a question of Russia’s structure or borders, we are here talking about her soul” (Gudzik, 1994, p 15).

The Kievan Rus state (app 900 - 1240) is the common heritage for both Russians and Ukrainians. Russians frequently call Kyiv the mother of all Russian cities. The Kiev state was crushed by the Mongols in 1240, but from about 1340 the Mongols had to give up their possessions in Ukraine to the expanding Grand Princes of Lithuania. At about the same time the poles moved into the western Ukrainian provinces of Galicia and Volhynia. This is where Russian and Ukrainian history separate. Russia was a vassal state of the Mongols for an additional 150 years, whereas Ukraine as a part of Lithuania gradually was integrated into the Polish-Lithuanian medieval state.

In the middle of the 16th century the introduction of serfdom gave the push for a significant increase in the number of so called Cossacks in the Ukrainian parts of the Polish state. A Cossack was a peasant who preferred the dangerous but free life in the eastern provinces to that of enserfment in the west. The Polish authorities accepted the existence of the Cossacks, because they formed a buffer against tartar raids into the western parts of Ukraine. The Cossack was a combination of farmer and soldier.

Gradually the Cossacks began to organise politically, and in the latter part of the 16th century the Zaporozhian Sich, a Cossack stronghold in the lower parts of the Dniepr, emerged as the centre of Ukrainian cossackdom. The Zaporozhian Sich soon started to act as a sovereign power, and established foreign policy relations, among others, with the Habsburgs and with the Pope to unite against the Ottomans. In the long run the Cossack`s independent policy could not be tolerated by Poland, and attempts were made to subdue the Cossacks by force. This led to the famous rebellion of 1648, under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky. After this rebellion Khmelnytsky gained control over parts of present day Ukraine. The victory was fragile however, and Khmelnytsky needed a partner to secure his victory.

The choice fell upon the Muscovite tsar, and in 1654 the treaty of Pereiaslav was signed. From this time on, Ukrainian autonomy gradually diminished, and when Russian troops destroyed the Zaporozhian Sich in 1775, not much of the autonomy was left. Today Ukrainians and Russians argue whether the treaty should be interpreted as only a temporary military agreement, or the natural reunification of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples.

There was also an attempt to create an independent Ukrainian state in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian revolution. This, however, was a very shortlived attempt, and by 1920 Ukraine was reincorporated into the new Russian state.

For both historical and cultural reasons, therefore, Ukrainian independence was harder to accept for many Russians than the independence of most other former Soviet republics. President Yeltsin himself said in November 1997: “It is impossible to tear from our hearts that

Ukrainians are our own people. That is our destiny – our common destiny"(Solchanyk, 1998, p 21).

How then, has this difficulty of acceptance impeded the making of a coherent Russian Ukraine policy?

First of all, the difficulty of acceptance has been accompanied by a fairly strong conviction that Ukrainian independence is a temporary phenomenon. There was just no need to put a lot of effort into developing a policy towards a country that would come back to the fold by itself anyway. This perception was of course most pronounced among the Russian communists and radical nationalists. Communist Duma deputy and deputy chairman of the Duma committee for geopolitics, Yuriy Nikiforenko, gave a passionate explanation for the inevitability of the reunion of Russia and Ukraine during the March 1998 debate about whether or not to ratify the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship treaty. Nikiforenko said: "We do not need just a part of Ukraine. We need all of Ukraine…so that we may even in the lifetime of our generation reunite into one state. This might be difficult to achieve, but the yearning of the peoples is for this to happen".[10] However, even among moderate Russian politicians the conviction of the inevitability of a reunion seems to have been widespread. According to the Kyiv correspondent of the respected Russian weekly *Moskovskie Novosti,* Russian moderates saw little reason in developing any Ukraine strategy, because "everything is based on the assumption that the younger sister might return at any moment"(Tikhiy, 1995).

It could also be that Russian politicians felt that to develop an explicit Ukraine policy would be to provide Ukrainian independence with more recognition then they wanted. Many Russian politicians have seen, and continue to see, Russian-Ukrainian relations as being in a very formative phace. They have by no means given up on the idea that Ukraine might also eventually join for example the Slavic Union. A February 2000 poll of representatives of the Russian political and economic elite found that 31% of the respondents did not even recognise Ukrainians as a separate ethnic group, but considered them to be "Russians living in Ukraine" (Chaly and Pashkov, 2000, p 65). The hope for and belief in reintegration was also confirmed at the popular level by a cross-country poll in October 1999. In this poll, 51% of respondents thought Russia and Ukraine should reunite into one state, and 31% thought they should remain separate countries but with open borders. Only 8% thought the two countries should develop the same kind of relations that they have with other countries (border control, visa-regulations, customs and so on).[11] In this respect, developing an official Ukraine policy could be interpreted both in the Russian and the Ukrainian political establishments as an indication that Russia had given up on her reintegrative ambitions regarding Ukraine. If the Russian political establishment were to conceive of Ukraine as a foreign country similar to for example Germany, that would entail that the whole set of written and unwritten rules for behaviour among states also would apply to Russian-Ukrainian relations. Yeltsin's long time foreign policy adviser, Dmitriy Riurikov, disclosed how unwanted such a "normalisation" of Russian-Ukrainian relations would be in the Russian political establishment during an interview with

[10] Stenogrammic minutes of the Russian State Duma hearings on the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship treaty, available on the Internet at: http://slavmir.msk.ru, in Russian.
[11] Information from the web-site of the Russian polling institute Fond obschestvennoe mnenie (The public opinion foundation), http://www.fom.ru/

the Ukrainian daily *Kievskie Vedomosti* in April 1995. Riurikov insisted that Ukraine should make a “fraternal grand Slavic gesture”, and “refrain from constant appeals to its own national laws and international norms as the basis for its policies regarding Russia” (Solchanyk, 1998, p 23).

If international norms had guided the Russian policy towards Ukraine, it would for example have been difficult to intervene in the Ukrainian election campaigns to the extent that Russian politicians have done. There have been numerous reports that Russia gave Kuchma financial support in his 1994 election campaign, and Boris Yeltsin himself addressed the Ukrainian people on TV, asking them to vote for Kuchma. In 1999, however, according to a Russian governmental source the Russian leadership had: “chosen a different tactic than in the previous elections” (Kasayev and Timoshenko, 1999). Putting all the eggs in one basket had not proven a fruitful tactic. In these elections, according to the same source, the tactic was to wait and see who the winner would be, and then support him. These and similar practices demonstrate a Russian perception of Ukraine as not an independent country in the same sense as for example Germany.

In the literature on Russian foreign policy it has become common to identify two distinct periods in the development of Russian foreign policy. From 1991 to 1993 was the period of romantic pro-Westernism, and from 1993 until today the period of growing Russian assertiveness. That is, a shift towards a foreign policy sceptical of the West and influenced by geopolitical thinking and also by various degrees of Russian nationalism. Whereas this shift had major implications for Russia’s policy towards the West, this was not to the same extent the case for Ukraine. The shift arguably led to an increased focus on Ukraine, but this was more in words that in deeds. It seems clear, however, that the introduction of nationalist elements into the foreign policy discourse made the Ukraine policy more important as an arena in which to demonstrate patriotism. This will be discussed in detail later in the article.

4.2 The limited resources for influence

It could also be the case that the lack of a Russian Ukraine policy is partly the result of a recognition that Russia has very few instruments with which to conduct such a policy. If the Russian leadership feels there is no way they can effect changes in Ukraine’s policy, then the incentive for developing a Ukraine policy also diminishes.

Russia has three potential channels for influencing Ukrainian foreign policy: the oil and gas dependence; informal political and business networks; and the Russian minority in Ukraine. Of these, the first has occasionally been used but with meagre results, the second has slowly emerged over the last 3-4 years and has not yet been employed in any systematic way, and the third has largely not been used.

Russia has used the Ukrainian oil and gas dependence in attempts to get political concessions on several occasions. One example is the 1993 Massandra summit between the Presidents Yeltsin and Kravchuk. A week prior to the summit, the Russian state gas company *Gazprom* reduced its supply of gas to Ukraine by 25%, stating debt arrears as the official reason. However, at the summit the Ukrainian delegation was presented with a proposal that the gas

debt would be cancelled if Ukraine returned to Russia full control over the Black Sea Fleet and surrendered the remaining Ukrainian nuclear warheads (D'Anieri, 1999, p 79). The Ukrainian delegation was also told that if they rejected the proposal, gas deliveries would come to a complete halt. The Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk, was caught off guard, he more or less panicked and therefore initially agreed to the Russian proposals. That, however, led to political storm in Ukraine, and Kravchuk backed out of the agreement, claiming that nothing had been signed at Massandra. Another example is Russia's 1995 imposition of excise duties on the Ukrainian oil and gas import. This led to Ukraine having to pay higher than world prices for these products, and at this occasion Moscow explicitly stated that the duties would remain in place until Ukraine entered the Russia-Belarussian-Kazakhstan customs union (Balmaceda, 1998, p 260).

The Massandra incident was not the only time that gas and/or oil supplies were reduced or even halted on the grounds of debt arrears, but where also political demands had been attached to their resumption. There seems to be an increasing tendency to do this under Putin. However, also under Putin it does not seem that the use of the gas weapon to extort political concessions has developed into any consistent policy. An instructive example is the Russian "oil blockade" of Ukraine from December 1999 until February 2000. Again debt arrears was stated as the official reason. There is little reason to doubt that the Ukrainian debt arrears are a genuine worry for Russian politicians and for Gazprom, but other considerations also often seem to play a role in this matter.

When Russian media discussed the reasons for the blockade, these were all related to domestic Russian affairs. The daily *Vedomosti* claimed that the main aim of the blockade was motivated by a need to improve the position of big Russian companies in the coming privatisation of the Ukrainian pipeline system. *Kommersant* saw the whole thing as a result of a power struggle between the chairman of Gazprom, Rem Vyahirev, and the Russian government. *Segodnya*, on the other hand, citing anonymous governmental sources, claimed that the blockade was caused by the need to force Ukraine to agree to a back payment scheme on paper. It was not important how realistic that scheme became. Russia just needed such a scheme in order to boost its own international credit ranking.[12] If one or more of these interpretations are true, this would be an indication of how the oil and gas question's entanglement in domestic Russian politics makes it less suitable as a lever in the relationship with Ukraine.

There is not doubt, however, that the oil and gas dependence is a valuable tool in Russian policy towards Ukraine. Still, it has not so far become strong enough by itself to effect substantial changes in Ukrainian behaviour, such as for example to reduce cooperation with NATO. First, Russia cannot make full use of the oil and gas weapon as long as the major part of Russian oil and gas export to the West goes through Ukraine. Second, as the example of the December 1999 to February 2000 oil blockade illustrates, use of the oil and gas weapon tends also to become a weapon in internal squabbles in the Russian political elite. This makes the oil and gas weapon harder to incorporate in any strategy with the purpose of altering Ukrainian behaviour.

[12] *Rossiysko-Ukrainskiy Byulletin* no. 5, February 2000, p. 3, Digest of the Russian press, on the Internet at http://ceia.cib.ru/rub/rub-arx1.htm

Close connections have developed over the last 3-4 years between parts of the Russian and Ukrainian business elites. This is especially the case in the energy and partly also the metallurgical sectors. This is politically significant because many of these businessmen are at the same time close to their respective political establishments. The most ostentatious example of this tendency is the close connections between the Russian business tycoon Boris Berezovskiy and President Kuchma's close political adviser Oleksandr Volkov. So far, however, Russia does not seem to have tried to exploit these connections in an attempt to influence Ukrainian foreign policy. The main motive behind the establishment of these connections is economic rather than political, and it is possible that the Russian businessmen are reluctant to raise Russian foreign policy concerns in their dealings with their Ukrainian counterparts, fearing that this could damage business prospects.

Russia has used support for local separatist groups in an attempt to alter the foreign policy of other former Soviet republics. The most conspicuous example is probably the Russian support of the Abkhazians in their struggle to secede from Georgia. Russia here in effect made Georgian entry into the CIS and basing rights for Russian troops in Georgia a condition for ending the support for the Abkhazians' separatist claim. In principle Russia could have done something similar towards Ukraine by exploiting the separatist moods in Crimea. Crimea in 1994-1995 had a popularly elected separatist leadership. However, Russia chose not to support Crimean separatism as a means of getting a lever in the relationship with Ukraine, and Russia has likewise not tried to promote separatist sentiments in the predominantly Russian speaking population in Southern and Eastern Ukraine.

I think there are three main reasons why Russia chose not to support and promote ethnic separatism in Ukraine as a means of influencing Ukrainian policy. First, the political chaos that a strong Russian separatist movement in Ukraine could cause would in all probability also spill over into Russian territory. If separatism led to civil war in Ukraine, that would have very negative consequences for Russia. Second, the period of the separatist Yuriy Meshkov as president of Crimea probably taught the Russian leadership the lesson that a strong separatist movement in Ukraine would be difficult to control from Moscow. Because of the high emotional content in Meshkov's political messages, he was able to make quite a political stir up in Moscow, especially in the Russian Duma. This created an uneasy feeling in the presidential administration in Moscow that things were about to get out of control. The tail was wagging the dog. Third, to support Russian separatism in Ukraine would entail an official recognition of the separation of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples – a recognition few in the Russian political leadership were ready to make.

Based on the above discussion it seems fair to claim that Russia has had few power resources at its disposal to influence Ukrainian foreign policy. The apparently very powerful oil and gas weapon has been and is still used, but for the various reasons mentioned above it has in reality had only limited effect. The connections between politically influential business circles on both sides are potential channels of influence, but it might be that high politics is avoided here out of fear of damaging business. And, for Russia to support ethnic separatism as a means of gaining a leverage on Ukraine similar to what happened in the case of Georgia was never really an option, and is also not likely to become one. It could therefore be that the inability of

Russia to develop a coherent policy for influencing Ukrainian foreign policy is partly the reflection of a realisation of own incapacity.

4.3 Peculiarities of Russian foreign policy making

In order to produce good policy, according to Max Weber, the bureaucratic apparatus should: work according to written rules in a hierarchy of specialised offices; be based on recruitment by qualifications; and consist of offices that are impersonal and segregated from personal life and property.[13] That is not a good description of the contemporary Russian system of foreign policy making, or of any policy making for that matter.

There are many written rules in Russia, but they do not necessarily represent a very strong constraint on behaviour. Instead, there is a tendency to silently accept behaviour in defiance of the written rules by people who are on good terms with each other. Almost everybody, however, will at the same time store the violations in the memory for potential later use at times of disagreement. That is, the written rules and the violations of them become important primarily as weapons in the powerstruggle between personalities. This explains the widespread practice in the Russian political and bureaucratic elite of gathering *kompromat* (Russian for compromising information) on each other.

The specialisation of offices has not come very far either. Similar types of decisions emerge in a wide variety of ways, and the functional division of labour among policy areas is very unstable. It is not really recognised as a central value. According to Eugene Huskey "The Weberian ideal of clearly defined offices, jurisdictions, and careers had no place in the Russian presidency – everyone was interested in everything, whatever their current post or past training" (Huskey, p 73). One of the more extreme examples of the disregard for spheres of responsibility and authority is the behaviour of Yeltsin's personal bodyguard Aleksandr Korzhakov. Because of his close personal relations with the president, he achieved a position of political significance that few bodyguards around the world have. Therefore, even if only a bodygurad, he still saw it fit in December 1994 to write a letter of instruction to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, telling him how to conduct the upcoming negotiations with the World Bank for a multi-million-dollar loan (Freeland, 2000, p 159).

One cannot say that the Russian system of recruitment is not based on qualifications, but in addition there is also a very strong element of patronage. On many occasions the latter is stronger than the former. Furthermore, contrary to the Weberian ideal, offices are often personal and not segregated from personal life and property. As an example, the Russian Duma on several occasions tried to make Yeltsin accept that membership in the influential Security Council should be connected to office rather than personality. That is, they wanted to say that for example the speaker of the Duma is a member of the Security Council no matter who he is. Yeltsin never accepted this. When Ivan Rybkin was Speaker of the Duma, he was also a member of the Security Council, but his successor as Speaker, Gennadiy Seleznyov, was not admitted.

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[13] *Collins dictionary of sociology*, Glasgow, HarperCollins Publishers, p. 55.

We do not mean to suggest that Russia is unique in deviating from the Weberian ideal of bureaucratic organisation. No state is ever fully in compliance with that ideal. I do, however, hope to demonstrate that Russia's deviation from this ideal is quite substantial, and that this deviation is an important part in the explanation of why Russia has not been able to develop and implement a coherent Ukraine policy.

4.3.1 The Russian Foreign Ministry and Ukraine

Russia inherited the Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union. This inheritance had important implications for Russian foreign policy in general, and for the policy towards Ukraine in particular.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry was an institution designed to implement the foreign policy of a superpower in a bi-polar struggle for world dominance. Ideologically, this task resulted in a strong tendency towards interpreting most foreign policy issues in terms of geopolitics and zero-sum games. Because of the relatively isolated nature of the socialist economies, the Soviet Foreign Ministry also did to any large degree take account of the interests of domestic economic actors in the foreign policy equation. The ministry therefore was free to see the world almost exclusively in terms of security politics. Organisationally, the task of implementing the policy of a superpower led to the Foreign Ministry becoming very much an institution for dealing with the relations with the West, Asia and the Third World.

Both ideologically and organisationally much has remained the same in this institution after 1991. One Russian observer remarked as late as September 1997, that "the Foreign Ministry is not ready to change its mentality to work under the new conditions. The Ministry lacks both the cadres, the wish, and the ideological basis for change" (Eggert, 1997).

For the Russian policy towards Ukraine this has had two major consequences. First, the MID (*Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del* – the Russian Foreign Ministry) has been one of the main promoters of a policy of scaring Ukraine from going West. But second, it has at the same time had little to do with the actual development and implementation of this policy. This is of course the case not just for Ukraine, but for most of the former Soviet republics.

At its start as a foreign ministry of Russia and not the Soviet Union, the MID had only 10 civil servants responsible for the relations with the former Soviet Republics (Brandt-Hansen, 2000, p 67). This number has naturally increased substantially, but surprisingly little if we take into account the importance of these countries for Russia. Instead of increasing the role of the MID in the development of policy towards the former republics, the Russian president established a new Ministry for cooperation with the CIS countries in 1994. This ministry survived until May 2000 – disbanded and re-established once in 1998. In May 2000 it was finally disbanded, and its functions were partly transferred to the MID and to the Ministry for Foreign Trade. However, the major purpose of the establishment of this ministry in 1994 seems to have been, to respond to the massive criticism of not taking the relations with the former republics seriously. It was important to at least make the impression that the period of neglect of the CIS countries was over. The new ministry received little authority to develop policy, and also very

few resources. To be sent to work in the *Minsodruzhestvo* was by the majority of Russian civil servants seen as a kind of "forced exile" (Ayrapetova, 2000).

The MID was from 1992 given the explicit task of coordinating Russian foreign policy. This, however, happened only to a very limited extent in the policy towards most of the former Soviet republics. The MID was not at the same time given any tools by which it could enforce its coordinating role. It was therefore left dependent on the readiness of the other state organs with foreign policy interests to let their actions be coordinated. Most of them were ready to do so only to a very limited extent, especially in areas where they had high stakes. If the president had decided to take advice on foreign policy almost exclusively from the MID, its coordinating role could have become a reality, but Yeltsin's style was to take advice from the persons he trusted most at the time – independent of their formal position.

For Ukraine this meant that no state organ in Moscow was concerned about the bi-lateral relations on a day to day or even month to month basis. The Moscow correspondent of a major Ukrainian daily, *Kievskie Vedomosti,* complained in July 1997 that about a month after presidents Yeltsin and Kuchma signed the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty in May 1997, interest in Ukraine had again totally vanished in the Russian political establishment. When the reporter tried to get Russian comments on the corruption scandal of the Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko – a scandal that got substantial attention in the West – nobody could comment because they knew almost nothing about the scandal. Both well informed Duma deputies and civil servants responsible for Russian foreign policy confused the new Ukrainian Prime Minister Yevhen Marchuk with Vitold Fokin who was Ukrainian Prime Minister six years earlier, from April 1991 until August 1991. They explained their confusion by saying they could not be expected to constantly monitor the frequent changes in the upper echelons of power in Kyiv (Timoshenko, 1997a).

4.3.2 The Russian Parliament and Ukraine

The Russian parliament has taken a keen interest in Ukrainian issues. This has of course largely been the case when major agreements between the two countries have been presented to the Duma for ratification. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Russian parlamentatirans' interest in the Ukrainian issue, but there is at the same time also little reason to doubt that the Duma deputies have at times used the Ukrainian issue to demonstrate their patriotism.

When Kyiv in the spring of 1995 peacefully abolished the local Crimean constitution, as part of an effort to thwart the efforts of the political forces attempting to separate Crimea from Ukraine at the time, the Russian Duma issued a sharp statement of concern. Ironically, adopted in the midst of Russia's own war against the separatists in Chechnya, on of the clauses of the statement reads: "The State Duma, taking the Russian Federation itself as an example, notes the lack of an alternative to political dialogue as the universal method making it possible to avoid the tragic consequences of an escalation of an internal conflict".[14]

[14] Duma Decree, Statement on Ukrainian Decisions on Crimea, translated from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 25 March 1995, in FBIS-SOV-95-058, p. 11.

One example of how the Duma's interest in Ukraine had a direct impact on Russia's Ukraine policy is from the summer of 1996. At that time there was progress in the Russian-Ukrainian negotiations on the division of the Black Sea Fleet—an issue that had soured the relations between the two countries since the break up of the Soviet Union. Both sides expressed hope that an agreement would be ready for signing in the near future. However, on 23 October the Duma again in a fit of patriotism issued an "Appeal to Ukrainian deputies". Here, by citing the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kianarji from 1774 and Soviet Law from 1948, they questioned Crimea's, and especially Sevastopol's, status as Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian parliament, the Supreme Rada, came up with a quick response where they among other things threatened to fix a date for the total withdrawal of the Russian part of the Black Sea fleet from Crimea. Naturally, negotiations broke down. The Duma vote was virtually unanimous. However, according to scholar James Sherr, it is unclear whether it was Prime Minister Chernomyrdin who lacked the authority to prevent the moderate deputies from joining in, or whether Chernomyrdin orchestrated the whole thing in an attempt to scare the Ukrainians to concessions (Sherr, 1997, p. 37). The main point, however, was that the Duma resolution effectively blocked any further progress in the negotiations.

One episode that might question the sincerity of the Duma in these matters is its handling of the issue of the status of the Russian language in Crimea. On 23 October 1998, in a hurry to show off patriotism, the Duma condemned the new Crimean constitution 4 days before it was made public. They did this on the assumption that the new constitution would be discriminatory towards the Russian language. Therefore, they missed the point that the status of the Russian language actually was strengthened in the new constitution. The text of the new constitution reads: "In the autonomous republic of Crimea the Russian language, as the language of the majority of the population, and also as a language suitable for international communication, can be used in all spheres of public life" (Nikiforov, 1998).

The deputies have also not limited themselves only to issuing statements. During peak of separatism in Crimea in the autumn 1994 and spring 1995, one of the main problems for the separatist *Rossiya* majority block in the Crimean parliament was its strong internal divisions. The Committee on CIS matters in the Russian Duma then took upon itself the task of mending these divisions. The leader of this committee, Konstantin Zatulin, in the beginning of March 1995 stated publicly in the Duma that the committee considered it as one of its greates successes the reestablishment of unity in the *Rossiya* block (Skachko, 1995). Thus, a parliamentary committee saw it as one of its major achievements to have helped put back on its feet the main separatist force in a neighbouring country.

Based on these observations it does not seem unfair to claim that at least at certain occasions interest in developments in Ukraine by the State Duma have made it harder for the executive to develop a coherent Ukraine policy.

4.3.3 The Russian Presidency and Ukraine

President Yeltsin took a special interest in Ukraine. In 1997 he proclaimed, that "the relationship with Ukraine is the priority of priorities" (Gankin, 1997). He saw the Russian-Ukrainian relations together with the Russian-American relations as his personal

responsibility. The president and his foreign policy advisers in the presidential administration therefore largely decided the Ukraine policy.

This made Russian Ukraine policy especially vulnerable to the ups and downs of Yeltsin's ability to rule, and also to Yeltsin's government style. According to journalist Aleksandr Makarov, Yeltsin had a particular weakness for being seen as one who could do "great deeds" (Makarov, 1997). Makarov claims that the Ukrainian leadership consciously played on this weakness, by constantly repeating that Yeltsin and Yeltsin alone was able to make progress in the Russian-Ukrainian relations.

However, Yeltsin, especially in his second period as President, for months at a time had his ability to work substantially reduced by health problems. Moreover, in his more active periods he was not able to keep a constant focus on the Russian-Ukrainian relations. The leader of the semi-official Council for Foreign and Security Policy, Sergeiy Karaganov, in November 1995 complained that "the presidents [Yeltsin and Kuchma], despite the abundance of channels for contact that remain from the Soviet period, do not consult with each other for months at length" (Karaganov, 1995).

A pattern in Russian Ukraine policy therefore started to develop, where there would be long periods of little contact between Russian and Ukrainian authorities, combined with occasional waves of uncoordinated criticism from different Russian and/or Ukrainian actors. Relations would then deteriorate until some occasion forced Russia into action. Action in these cases usually meant that disagreements were solved in direct telephone conversations between the two presidents. Progress on contentious issues therefore became extremely dependent on the "chemistry" between the presidents. This "chemistry" was never good between Kravchuk and Yeltsin, and also bad in the first two years of Kuchma's presidency. Then, however, the two presidents "found each other", and the battle over the Black Sea Fleet was solved and the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was signed.

From 1996/1997 there were several attempts to broaden the spectrum of contacts between the two countries political establishments beyond the two presidents. In March 1996 an Intergovernmental Commission was set up between the two countries' prime ministers, and in September 1997 a Russian-Ukrainian Consultative Council was set up to meet annually to supply recommendations for the solving of contentious issues. Most important, however, was the December 1997 decision to establish the Strategic Group on Russian-Ukrainian Cooperation. This latter group consisted of a small number of highly placed foreign policy officials in both countries that agreed to stay in frequent contact via telephone hotlines. With the partial exception of the Strategic Group, however, the establishment of these organs did little to change the "presidents only" character of the relationship. Both presidents recognised this during an informal "no-necktie" meeting in Moscow in September 1998, and promised to make an effort to make the coordinating and consultative bodies work. However, when Russian Prime Minister Sergeiy Stepashin visited Kyiv in July 1999, the two sides again had to recognise that little progress had been made. Stepashin, of behalf of Russia, again had to acknowledge the need to go over to a more "flexible and elastic system of communication between the executives of the two countries" (Karaganov, 1995).

4.3.4 Russian bureaucratic politics and Ukraine

In all countries civil servants will sometimes have personal agendas that influence how they act to solve state problems. It does, however, seem as if the influence of personal agendas has become particularly strong in Russia. For example in the Russian Government, this seems to be the result of a prevailing perception in the Russian political elite of the Government as a collection of independent ministers rather than as a team with collective responsibility for policy development. According to the scholar, Eugene Huskey, "the members of the Government limit the authority of the prime minister not by political interventions during cabinet meetings but by carving out for themselves a broad measure of autonomy in their own administrative portfolios. In Russia, a minister is more likely to influence policy through bureaucratic intrigue – by sabotaging the drafting or implementation of an initiative – than through cabinet debates" (Huskey, 1999, p 103).

A revealing example is the case of Valeriy Serov, Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for the CIS from August 1996 until March 1998. Serov was the main architect behind the 1997 Russian-Belarussian Union treaty. There were three portfolios within the Russian executive with a special responsibility for the CIS: the deputy Prime Minister for the CIS, the CIS minister (head of the Ministry for Cooperation with the CIS) and the executive secretary of the CIS organisation. The last position was not actually within the Russian executive, but it was commonly understood that a Russian should fill this position, and that he normally was in very close contact with the Russian executive. One would expect that these three were to be in close contact concerning the text of the Russian-Belarussian treaty. However, CIS minister Aman Tuleev admitted to the Russian weekly *Moskovskie Novosti* that until the treaty was signed he had never even seen the text (Balburov, 1997). The Deputy Prime Minister for the CIS, Valeriy Serov, had kept the process to himself, and he was after the signing given most of the credit for the treaty.

The tendency of politicians in high positions to keep issues to themselves sometimes had favourable consequences for the countries Russia was dealing with. To get Lukashenko's signature on a version of the union treaty acceptable for Russia, it was necessary to throw in $1 billion in energy debt relief. It was rumoured in Russia that Serov was the one who convinced Yeltsin to accept the debt relief. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, previously head and later member of the board of the Russian gas monopolist *Gazprom*, the company that had to count their losses after Yeltsin's generous present to Lukashenko, later grumbled that in the future CIS integration had to be built "not on constant donation but on the principles of mutually advantageous work" (Gubanov, Kolysko and Shinkarenko, 1998).

A similar situation occurred in February 1995, when First Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets together with Ukrainian Prime Minister, Yevhen Marchuk, initialled the text of the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. Soskovets was part of the then influential "party of war" in the Kremlin, together with Aleksadr Korzhakov and Mikhail Barzukov. Since early 1994 Yeltsin had increasingly come to rely on the "party of war". However, in his traditional style of keeping his inferiors in a constant fight for his attention and favour, he also maintained the contact with the liberal team led by Anatoly Chubais. The party of war and the Chubais team were therefore in a constant struggle over access to and influence over the president.

In this struggle one could best improve one's position by bringing the president political victories. That was what Soskovets did in Kyiv in February 1995. Also here, however, concessions in the form of a substantial rescheduling of the Ukrainian energy debt and an official statement that Crimea was exclusively Ukraine's internal affair, were thrown in to secure the Ukrainian signature. In Russia many felt that a better deal for Russia could have been negotiated if Soskovets had not been in such a hurry. They felt he could have made much more use of the energy debt as a leverage. In March disappointment with the results of Soskovets' Kyiv trip prompted the leaders of nine Duma factions across the Russian political spectrum to appeal to the president to hold a special session for consultation with the Duma on Russian-Ukrainian relations. In addition, Duma Deputy Konstantin Zatulin gathered 90 deputy signatures for initiating a motion of non-confidence in the government. According to Zatulin this initiative was the result of Soskovets surrendering the Russian national interest in the negotiations in Kyiv (Kuznetsov, 1995).

Because Soskovets' tour to Kyiv came to be seen as a sell-out to the Ukrainians, Yeltsin also had to appear critical of the deal. In a later interview he said, "I was close to killing Soskovets after he initialled the agreement. He thereby signed the agreement on the restructuring of the Ukrainian debt without solving the problem of the Black Sea Fleet. I told him: this is political suicide for you" (Timoshenko, 1997b). However, Yeltsin had got what he needed. When he finally signed the deal he could be seen as the one able to cut through and settle things with Ukraine, and the concessions made to secure the Ukrainian signature would not reduce his glory because he could blame them on Soskovets. The text that Yeltsin in the end signed in Kyiv in May 1997 was very similar to the one Soskovets had initialled two years before, and despite Yeltsin's harsh personal criticism, Soskovets was not degraded but entrusted by Yeltsin to lead his campaign for reelection.

There is also an additional interpretation of the Soskovets concessions in Kyiv. There was at the time a permanent conflict between Chernomyrdin and Soskovets, the first as a representative of the oil and gas lobby, and the second as a representative of the metallurgical lobby. It could also be that Soskovets as a representative of the metallurgical lobby agreed to the reschduling of the debt payments because he, as Peter Rutland argues: "believed that it was important to preserve Russia's market share in the CIS, even if it meant selling energy to CIS members at less than world prices (and selling to customers who could not pay), both for political reasons and because many Russian manufacturing plants were dependent on supplies from Ukraine and Kazakhstan (and vice versa)" (Rutland, 1999, p 183).

Again, however, this just illustrates the former mentioned perception of the government as a place for promoting one's own interests and perceptions rather than as a collective problem solving and strategy developing agency. The relatively lenient Russian policy in this particular instance, was therefore more the result of the balance of power between the metallurgical and the oil and gas lobbies in the Russian leadership at the time, than part of any carrot-rather-than-stick strategy for advancing Russian interests.

4.4 The use of the Ukraine question for other purposes

Because issues related to Ukrainian independence – and in particular those related to Crimea – were full of historic and symbolic content, Ukrainian and Crimean issues became natural arenas in which to show off Russian patriotism. The more these issues were used for domestic propaganda purposes, the less room was left for flexibility in Russia's positions in the negotiations with Ukraine.

The most blatant example of how the use of Ukrainian issues for domestic consumption inflicted upon the relations between the two countries, is the repeated cancellations of Yeltsins's state visit to Kyiv.

In 1992 the Russians and the Ukrainians had started to work on the text of the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty that was to solve most of the remaining controversies, and lay a good foundation for future relations. The agreement was clearly wanted on both sides. The text of the treaty was ready by 1994, and it would enter into force when Boris Yeltsin had made his first official visit to Kyiv as Russian president to sign the treaty. This was planned to take place in early autumn 1994. Yeltsin did not come to Kyiv to sign the agreement until May 1997, after having postponed the trip eight times. It took the Russian president six years from the time he became President until he made his first official state visit to the neighbouring country which he repeatedly had referred to as one of Russia's most important foreign partners. There were of course many reasons for these postponements. One was Yeltsin's unstable health condition, but another more important reason was Yeltsin's fear of the rising popularity of Yuri Luzhkov.

The year 1994 was when Yeltsin and his political confidants in the Kremlin really started to fear that Luzhkov could become a dangerous competitor in the 1996 presidential elections. According to then *Financial Times* journalist, Chrystia Freeland, Yuri Luzhkov and his partner, the media magnate Vladimir Guzinsky, had become public enemies number one and two in the inner Kremlin circles (Freeland, 2000, p 152). Luzhkov had acquired an image as a very successful administrator as the mayor of Moscow, and he had access to sympathetic media outlets thanks to his cooperation with Guzinsky. However, he also needed a patriotic image in addition to the good administrator image. He therefore wanted to promote himself on an issue where he could appeal to a Russian self-image of pride and glory. He chose Crimea.

Luzhkov started his crusade to save Crimea, and especially the city of Sevastopol, from the Ukrainians in early 1995. At the signing of an agreement on cooperation between Moscow and Sevastopol 12 January 1995, Luzhkov said that by this agreement Sevastopol was now given the status as the 11th prefect district of Moscow. He later used every opportunity to rise the issue of Sevastopol, and even managed to persuade the Russian Federation Council to pass a declaration stating that the city was Russian and not Ukrainian territory in December 1996. This activity could of course be an expression of a genuine concern for Sevastopol and Crimea, and not just a political card Luzhkov was playing in the Russian domestic powerstruggle. However, an October 1998 pressrelease from the Sevastopol city administration is indicative of Luzhkov not exactly lying sleepless at night for worry over Sevastopol. The Sevastopol City administration that signed the agreement with Luzhkov in

1995 stated that "the declarations of the Mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, on friendship and cooperation are a reality only on paper". They were disappointed that the promised financial support largely had failed to appear, and that while new houses for Russian sailors had been built with Luzhkov's money, Moscow had not provided any funds for social infrastructure like new roads, sewage systems etc. All this was left to the impoverished local budget (Pirozhuk, 1998).

Yeltsin never accepted Luzhkov's positions on the Crimean issue, but because Luzhkov missed no opportunity to rise it, Yeltsin felt he could not afford to appear soft on this issue. At least not until after the 1996 presidential elections. His conviction was only strengthened by the results of Russian opinion polls. According to Igor Klyamkin, who had surveyed public opinion on Russian-Ukrainian relations in Russia and Ukraine every three months from 1992, two thirds of Russian respondents thought Crimea should secede from Ukraine (Kliamkin, 1994, p 112). Yeltsin's motivation for his postponement of the visit to Kyiv in March 1995 is indicative of his concern that Luzhkov should not profit politically by Yeltsin beeing seen as yielding on the Crimean issue. Yeltsin said that the visit will take place when "we are convinced that the relations between Kyiv and Simferopol (the Crimean capital) do not develop in a way detrimental to the Crimeans. Because, the majority of the population on the peninsula are Russians, and Moscow cannot but worry for the fate of Crimea" (Kiselev, 1997).

Thus, because of the fear of loosing popular support to Luzhkov by being soft on Ukraine, Yeltsin did not make his symbolic visit until May 1997. The aforementioned leader of the semi-official Council for Foreign and Security Policy, Sergeiy Karaganov, was in November 1995 frustrated that "progress on the Treaty, as well as contact between leading political figures, has been blocked by the decision of the Russian side to make everything hostage to the issue of Sevastopol" (Karaganov, 1995).

4.5 Changes after Putin became president

To what extent has the above painted picture changed after Vladimir Putin became President of Russia? It is of course still early to draw conclusions on this question, but some preliminary observations are nonetheless warranted.

Putin's policy towards Ukraine so far suggests that there might be some changes both in content and in style. By changes in content I basically mean a much clearer choice of the stick rather than the carrot in Russian efforts to influence Ukrainian foreign behaviour. Putin has announced a tougher line in the policy torwards the CIS countries in general.

When it comes to style there seems to be less change. By style I here mean what form the communication and negotiations among the parties take. The Ukraine policy still seems to be more or less reserved for the president alone. According to the respected Ukrainian analyst, Mykhailo Pohrebynskyi, 9 months into Putin's presidency, it seems quite clear, that the tradition of solving all problems in the bi-lateral relationship exclusively at the presidential level is going to continue.[15] And, the feeling that Russia is entitled to interfere in Ukrainian domestic affairs also seems to continue. During his first visit to Ukraine, President Putin let it

[15] The Ukrainian internet newspaper *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 2 October 2000, at http://www.pravda.com.ua/

be known that Russia would prefer that Kuchma got rid of his Foreign Minister, Boris Tarasyuk.[16] Russia found Tarasyuk far too pro-Western and Putin saw no reason why he should not tell the president of another country to get rid of his foreign minister.

However, one change in style can be noticed. The Yeltsin-Kuchma style of negotiations became increasingly informal. The "no-necktie" meetings became a trade mark of the two presidents. "Sauna-politics" was another term used to describe the same style of negotiations. There is little doubt that break-throughs on contentious issues were easier to reach for Yeltsin and Kuchma under these more informal conditions. Putin, on the other hand, prefers regular discussions around the negotiating table. It is probably also of significane here that Yeltsin and Kuchma were of the same generation, whereas Putin is of a younger generation. Yeltsin and Kuchma after some initial squabbles found each other in the Soviet style of informal policy making familiar to both of them. Putin is less ready for this style of policy making. In the autumn of 2000 the two presidents met quite often. For Kuchma the main purpose of these meetings was to establish a closer personal relationship with Putin, but there were few indications of that happening (Portnikov, 2000).

4.6 Summary

We would like to end this chapter with a summary of the dynamics – past, present and future - of the three sets of factors we have used to explain Russia's lack of a Ukraine strategy. To repeat, these were: the problems of coming to terms with Ukrainian independence; the limited resources for influence; and what we have called peculiarities of Russian foreign policy making.

The problems of coming to terms with Ukrainian independence, although not at all gone, have probably been gradually weakening as an explanatory variable during the period under discussion. That does not necessarily signify a Russian recognition of a permanent separation between the two states. But, it does indicate a growing conviction that at this moment in time it would be in Russia's own best interest to base her policy on an understanding of Ukraine as an entirely separate state. This seems to be a major difference between Yeltsin's and Putin's Ukraine policies.

Russia's resources for influence have not varied much during the period I have discussed, but they could become more powerful in the future. As an example, Russia is at present preparing to build a new pipeline for gas export to Europe that bypasses Ukraine. If this project is completed, it will greatly diminish Ukrainian bargaining power in oil and gas negotiations with Russia. In addition, Russian big capital seems to be rapidly expanding its proportion of ownership in Ukrainian industry. This could also have political consequences. It is still too early to say, but it can be that Russia's resources for influence will increase in the years to come, giving an incentive to the development of a more coherent Ukraine policy.

As for the peculiarities of Russian foreign policy making, these were also relatively constant during the period under discussion. The peculiarities of Russian bureaucratic politics are

[16] The Ukrainian internet newspaper *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 2 October 2000, at http://www.pravda.com.ua/

probably reflections of a political culture inherited from the Soviet Union and, may be, even Tsarist times, and they are therefore not likely to change soon. Political culture is not something that changes easily. One difference between the Yeltsin and Putin periods, however, could be that the use of the Ukraine question for other purposes becomes less frequent. Putin seems to have acquired a position of strength in Russian politics that gives him much more room for manoeuvre than Yeltsin had. He controls the Duma and he is on his way also to control the oligarchs and the regional governors. With Putin seen as firmly in control, fewer will find it worth wile to challenge his power, and consequently fewer will also have the need to use symbolic issues as ammunition in such a challenge. Episodes, such as Luzhkov's use of the Crimean issue in his powerstruggle with Yeltsin, might therefore become less likely under Putin.

There are signs of a more coordinated foreign policy under the new Russian president, also in the case of Ukraine. However, a coordinated foreign policy requires a well functioning state body with authority and capacity to coordinate policy on a continuous basis. In the case of Ukraine, the Russian Foreign Ministry has this authority today mostly on paper. It therefore seems to me that the clue to a more coordinated foreign policy is to be found both in a real change of status of the Foreign Ministry, and also in a more profound recognition by the Foreign Ministry itself of the importance of Ukraine.

5 CONCLUSION

The chances of having a more stable relationship between Russia and the Western world and between Russia and Ukraine now seem better than under Yeltsin. Yeltsin's policy was heavily dominated by short-term considerations, whereas there are indications that Putin is more a man of long term strategies.

This does not mean that the future is without problems between NATO and Russia.

At the strategic level, Russia sees the development of NATO's policy of creating a new security order as marginalizing Russia both in Europe and in the World at large. The fear of such a development has grown since the initiation of NATO's new strategic concept. According to Moscow, NATO has moved from being a defensive alliance to becoming an expansionist one. The effectiveness of NATO's armed forces as seen in Kosovo had a clear impact on the Russian threat perception. The scepticism towards NATO is now shared by a much larger part of the Russian political spectre than before, and talk about American "hegemonism" is not limited to nationalist and communist politicians.

This kind of thinking is behind the efforts to create countering power centres together with China and India, and maybe even EU-countries like France and even Germany, to balance American hegemony. It is within such a context that Russia sees a possibility to be more able to influence the international political agenda, but Moscow lacks the means to achieve her objectives. Russia is not an attractive partner, and has in herself little power to influence the outer world.

Russia also sees NATO and USA behind the developments inside the CIS of forces countering Russian influence. This is most clearly exemplified by the emergence of GUUAM, an organisation influenced by the thinking of ”geopolitical pluralism”.

Strictly speaking, NATO and the Western world need not take Russian interests into consideration when making decisions concerning European security at large. They could probably also challenge Russia’s position in CIS much more than has been done until now. Russia is weak and NATO has a ”window of opportunity”. It might seem logical to use this ”window” to augment Western influence even more than has been done. There is little chance that Russia really could do anything to prevent Baltic NATO memberships or the establishment of close NATO links with the Caucasus and Ukraine. Russia is weak military, politically and economically, and the credibility of Russia going to war over such developments is very low.

The political costs, however, of such a NATO strategy could be very great and long lasting. This could destroy for a very long time the possibilities of building stable security relations in Europe. Russia’s relations with the West would be dominated by resentment and suspicion, and the building of confidence could take a long time. The fear of the West and the possibility of conflict would also dominate Russia’s thinking of security. Sooner or later Russia could also build up new strength and/or possibly align herself with eastern countries if the West is seen as a threat. The result of both of these scenarios could then be damaging to Europe at large. It could also be more difficult to build a liberal democracy in Russia if the West is seen as an enemy. Taking Russian interests into consideration when building a new Europe is therefore an investment for the future, even if not everybody see that as necessary today.

One potential cost for NATO of giving in to Russian interests could be the gradual loss of independent Ukraine as a provider of geopolitical pluralism in the post-Soviet space. At present the country is aiming for integration in the West. However, as indicated in the chapter on Ukrainian foreign policy, if these integrative efforts are not met with a minimum of receptiveness from Western institutions one cannot exclude a turn around in foreign policy. As indicated earlier, the balance between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces in the society and the elite is a delicate one, and the pro-Western forces presently in power in Kyiv have to be able to show some results of their policy to be able to continue. Full Ukrainian integration with the West, including NATO membership, is likely to meet with fierce resistance in Russia, while a return to the pro-Russian integrationist efforts of the early Kuchma period is not likely to meet similar resistance in the West. The West is happy to have a Ukraine that acts independently of Russia, but there are clear limits to how much the West is prepared to pay, economically and politically, to maintain this situation.

The future relations between NATO and Ukraine are also a result of the NATO-Russia relations. According to centre-periphery logic, Ukraine is not on the front line concerning integration with the West. It is big and poor, and has a population feeling closer to Russia than to the West. Besides, it has an uneasy relationship with Russia. This means that the cost of integration, both economic and political, as seen from the West is very high. In a centre-periphery logic Russian dominance over Ukraine might even be seen as a means of stabilising the periphery.

The position of Ukraine as an attractive partner for the West is therefore dependent on another kind of logic, the ”realpolitik”-based logic coming from the east-west thinking where Russia is seen as an adversary. This is the thinking of Zbigniew Brzesinsky, and it was present but never dominant in American foreign policy under Clinton. It might be that the new Bush administration is more inclined towards this kind of thinking than was the Clinton administration.

Based on our discussions in this paper we want to draw three relatively broad conclusions:

1. *Geopolitical predicaments establish the frames within which states can act, but they are insufficient to predict foreign policy. This is especially the case in Russia.* Based on geopolitical predicaments we would expect a concerted and persistent Russian policy to prevent a pro-Western Ukrainian foreign policy. However, as we have demonstrated in chapter three, Russia was unable to produce such a coherent policy despite widespread domestic agreement.
2. *Economics is at least as decisive as security politics for forming the relations between the corners of the triangle, but both Russia and Ukraine seem to be able to handle contradictions between their economic and political orientations by operating according to contradictory logics simultaneously.* Thus, Russia has become increasingly anti-Western despite the dependence on Western finance, and Ukraine has become increasingly pro-Western despite the economic dependence on Russia.
3. *The NATO and the Western governments' logic of integrating to stabilise is often not understood, neither in Russia nor in Ukraine.* Whereas the West is torn between the logic of centre-periphery and the logic realism and zero sum games, both Russian and Ukrainian thinking has a tendency to be dominated by the latter. Thus, NATO's cooperation with Ukraine is not seen in Russia as an effort by the West to politically stabilise Ukraine, but as an expansion of NATO at the cost of Russian influence. Similarly, the Ukrainians have a tendency to see NATO's interest in cooperation first of all as an effort to help Ukraine balance Russia rather than as an effort to help them stabilise their own country.

The triangular relationship between NATO, Russia and Ukraine is decisive for the future of European security. It is our hope that attention to the points we have brought out in the chapters of this report will help the reader to better comprehend the *liasons dangereus* of this triangle.

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