

UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AS A
REFLECTION OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

By

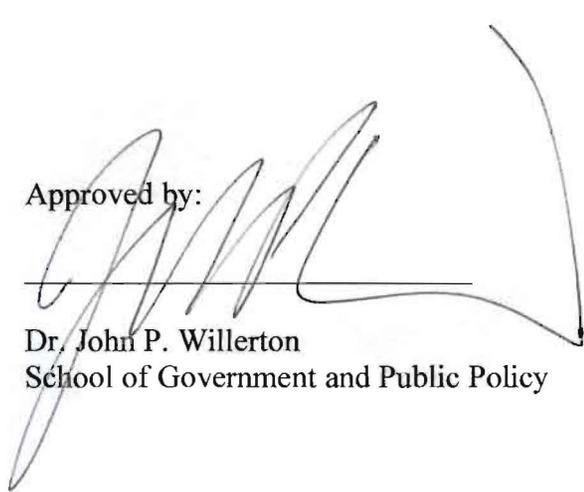
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Approved by:



A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Willerton', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that curves upwards and to the right.

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Abstract

Ukraine is positioned between two great powers in the world, the European Union and Russia. As Ukraine heads into its third decade of independence, it must continue to balance its relationship between these two entities. Russia and Ukraine's historical linkages will forever tie them together, yet Ukraine is unsure of which direction its future lies. While the identity issues of Ukraine threaten to hinder its progress, it is important for Ukraine to develop its own national identity separate from Russia. I argue that the relationship between Russia and Ukraine is vital to the success of either state. Both countries need to maintain a stable working relationship to function effectively in the international arena, and Ukraine will not gain integration into the European Union without first addressing its difficulties Russia.

Introduction

The histories of Ukraine and Russia are linked through the past 1000 years, yet today they function as individuals, each with their own domestic and international policy goals. As these two countries move into the third decade of the post-Soviet era, their relationship is once again at a civilized level. Ukrainian-Russian relations have gone through a difficult and interesting transformation since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as they attempt to find equilibrium. Throughout the past two decades, the main actors in the political relationship between Ukraine and Russia have been the presidents of each state, and these men have therefore dictated the terms of the relationship itself. However, each president, in both Russia and Ukraine, has used the relationship with the other country to further their own political agenda and at times ignored policies that would have been beneficial to their nation. This inability to focus on the progress of their country has hindered the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, sometimes simply because a president does not like his peer in the opposite country. Ukraine and Russia are no longer a part of the same state, and this change from previous centuries is still a difficult transition.

Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 not only created a new state but was also an announcement of separation from the Soviet Union and Russia. The first steps of the new Ukrainian government, under Leonid Kravchuk, were to build relations with Western countries. This decision set the stage for problems between the two states, as Russia was not yet ready to part ways with Ukraine. The ties between the two countries trace back over a millennia, and Russia could not understand cutting this connection. . Ukraine is historically the borderland of Russia, and Ukraine in the Russian language means borderland.¹ This name signifies the

¹ Roman Solchanyk, *Ukraine and Russia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 23.

association to Russia that Ukraine has always possessed and helps to explain the difficulties Russia faced in separating from Ukraine at the end of the twentieth century. Nowadays Ukraine and Russia are both recognized independent states in the world, and as neighbors must work with one another. The relationship between the two countries has improved since the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the two states recognize the importance of the relationship. Ukrainian presidents following Kravchuk created a greater balance between Russia in the East and the rest of Europe in the West. While Russia has made attempts to maintain its influence in Ukraine, the Ukrainian presidents have consistently attempted to integrate into the European Union. As both countries look into the future, their relationship can be a stepping-stone to the rest of its foreign policy as its stability grows. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Russia have had difficulty separating from one another and each nation's political decisions reflect against the others. As Ukraine strives for greater independence and Western integration, Russia works to keep control over its sphere of influence and hinder Western movement East. Currently, the stability of this relationship depends on the political leadership of both countries, as Ukraine and Russia continue to flux in their willingness to work with one another as their presidents' change. However, it is to the benefit of both countries to continue their normalized relations, as this will only be an advantage to both states domestically and on the international stage.

Historical Ties

The modern states of Ukraine and Russia began as one entity over a century ago in Kievan Rus' and the conversion to Russian Orthodoxy under Vladimir the Great in 988 brought cohesiveness to the region. This connection remained throughout the next century under Mongol

and Imperial Russian rule. During this period, Russia is the main historical reference for both countries, as Central European powers ruled parts of modern day Ukraine. Imperial Russia gained international recognition for its military strength under Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great took part in the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century increasing the size of Imperial Russia.² The endeavors of Imperial Russia led to the perceived strength of the country and these ventures contribute to the power that Russia still holds in the world today.

Although many any political changes took place over this period and borders shifted, Ukraine and Russia were not considered separate entities. A resemblance of an independent Ukrainian state did not emerge until the 20th century with the creation of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (Ukrainian SSR), which was a founding member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December of 1922.³ The borders of Ukraine continued to change through the period of the USSR as territory in Western Ukraine was added after World War II and the Crimean peninsula was given to the Ukrainian republic in 1954.⁴ The Ukrainian SSR was not a homogeneous state, however the USSR united the people of Ukraine with those of other Soviet Republics, and Russian was the common language for all of the citizens of the USSR. However, when the Soviet Union reached its downfall, Ukraine faced difficult problems in the diversity of its population and regions. World War II displayed these identity problems as Ukrainians fought one another. Modern Western Ukraine has been a part of Poland, Austro-Hungary, and Czechoslovakia; the region only recently became a part of Ukraine, following

² “History of Ukraine,” *History of Nations*, last modified 2004, <http://www.historyofnations.net/asia/ukraine.html>.

³ “History of Ukraine.”

⁴ Solchanyk, 159.

WWII. This region of Ukraine also fought for the Axis during the war and against its future countrymen in Eastern Ukraine who fought alongside Russia for the Allies.⁵

While Mikhail Gorbachev left revolutions across various Soviet Republics alone, Ukraine was a special case, and the idea of separation did not sit well with many Russians.⁶ Ukraine is historically a part of Russia and therefore Russia believed that it should not become a separate modern country. The link between Russia and Ukraine is best described using this quote, “St. Petersburg is the brain, Moscow the heart, and Kyiv the mother of Russia.”⁷ Kyiv is where the modern Russian state began, and therefore should not be separated from Russia today, as this process would take a major part of Russian history away from Russia. The difficulties with a separate Ukrainian state only increase because of Russia’s feelings of attachment to Ukraine. Much of Eastern and Southern Ukraine have been historically a part of Russia, including the Crimean peninsula until 1954, and millions of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers live in these regions; and do not share the same hostilities toward Russia as those living in Western Ukraine.⁸ Because of these close ties, Russia did not seek an immediate foreign policy plan in regards to Ukraine, as Russia had difficulty accepting that Ukraine would remain a separate entity into the future. A foreign policy plan in regards to Ukraine would also have given the new country recognized independence and propelled the new Ukrainian state further away from its motherland of Russia, making the future of relations between the two countries even less

⁵ Filippou Proedrou, “Ukraine’s foreign policy: accounting for Ukraine’s indeterminate stance between Russia and the West,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10, no. 4 (2010): 452.

⁶ Solchanyk, 13.

⁷ James Sherr, “Russian and American Strategic Rivalry in Ukraine and Georgia,” in *Prospects For U.S.-Russian Security Cooperation 2009*, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 287.

⁸ Solchanyk, 81.

predictable.⁹ Instead, during the transition years, as the Soviet Union fell, Russia and Ukraine attempted to work together, yet encountered many difficulties.

In August of 1990, although Ukraine had not yet declared independence, together with and Russia it signed the “Declaration of Principles of Inter-State Relations between Ukraine and the RSFSR Based on the Declarations of State Sovereignty.” This document, among other things, gave Ukraine and Russia sovereign equality concerning one another and both nations were to not interfere in the domestic affairs of the other country. As well, both countries should promote the economic, ethnic, and cultural rights of representatives of the RSFSR in Ukraine, and these same rights would be applied to Ukrainians in the RSFSR. The document also discussed the procedures that the two countries should take during this “transitional period” in their history. Agreements about the economy, politics, military, and security needed to happen immediately to ensure a smooth transition of Ukraine out of the USSR.¹⁰ Permanent representation of delegates in Moscow and Kyiv would further guarantee a peaceful separation of the two nations. Ukrainian and Russian leaders understood that the democratic opposition was growing in both of their nations and the domestic politics of Russia and Ukraine would soon change drastically; this document would be a stepping-stone for the future of relations between the two countries. However, this peaceful period of relations did not last long, as Ukraine declared independence on August 24, 1991 and two days later clashed for the first time as an independent country with Russia. The Russian government stated that it could review its borders, a statement which Ukraine balked at and demanded to be recalled.¹¹ Nevertheless, Russia had given Ukraine regions of its own country over time, including the Crimean peninsula, and did

⁹ Tov Bukkvoll, “Off the Cuff Politics – Explaining Russia’s Lack of a Ukraine Strategy,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 8 (2001): 1142.

¹⁰ Solchanyk, 35-36.

¹¹ Solchanyk, 56.

not like the fact that it was now losing these lands to another country, moreover the problems created from this were now international. Nonetheless, the two nations did not remain hostile to one another for long, as they met in December of 1991 in Belovezh, Belarus.

On December 8, 1991, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine officially dissolved the USSR and created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹² These three states, along with the Transcaucasian Federation created the Soviet Union, and therefore could void its status. Because the Transcaucasian Federation did not exist in 1991, the power to disband the USSR was left with these three original countries.¹³ Initially, the CIS was viewed as a possible successor to the USSR, however Ukraine did not have the same ambitions for the institution as Russia, and kept its intentions regarding the CIS private. Ukraine did not want to involve itself fully with the CIS, but instead become its own entity in the international realm and leave the shadow and controlled territory of Russia behind.¹⁴ This action did not sit well with the Russians, as they were losing their sphere of influence and no longer held control over the regions of their past empire, specifically the region in which their motherland was born. The election of Leonid Kravchuk in 1991 as President of Ukraine provided the basis for this movement away from Russia and the beginnings of Ukraine as a democratic state.¹⁵

The Beginnings of a Post-Communist State

Kravchuk, however, took a stark turn from the previous relationship with Russia as the new President of Ukraine refused to work with Russia and focused his attention on the development of Ukrainian relations with the West. The West included those countries that were

¹² Solchanyk, 62.

¹³ Solchanyk, 63.

¹⁴ Taras Kuzio, "Russian Policy toward Ukraine during Elections," *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 4 (2005): 509-510.

¹⁵ Sarah Birch, *Elections and Democratization in Ukraine* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 77.

members of the European Union (EU), and the United States. The idea of becoming a member of the EU also began under Kravchuk, although candidacy was not a possibility at the time. At this point, the EU had developed into its current form, created officially in 1993 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, and the institution provided immense benefits to its members. These advantages include visa free travel, a free trade zone, and economic support from the Union. These new Western relations were meant to balance out the Russian influence in Ukraine and were an attempt to move Ukraine further from Russia and its past in the USSR.¹⁶ The dilemmas between Ukraine and Russia were also now international issues and therefore required a different approach than previously used. There were remnants of the Soviet Union still in Ukraine, including nuclear weapons, and these entities needed to be divided between Ukraine and Russia in an appropriate manner. While the United States did help Ukraine to rid itself of its nuclear arsenal, the economic problems of Ukraine proved more difficult.¹⁷ The Ukrainian economy experienced many struggles in its transition into market capitalism. This beginning period of the Ukrainian economy was full of oligarchs exploiting their country. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Ukraine fell 50% from 1989-1999, as the state struggled to adjust.¹⁸ These economic problems became a large part of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship, as Ukraine became dependent on Russia for its gas and oil supply, but was unable to pay for the resources it required. However, Ukraine leased the ports of Sevastopol to the Russian Navy for the Black Sea Fleet, and this paid part of the Ukrainian energy bill to Russia.

Kravchuk's decision to focus mainly on development with Western states, also led to a diminished relationship with Russia. Moscow's policy, beginning after the fall of the USSR,

¹⁶ Steven Pifer, "Ukraine's Geopolitical Choice, 2009," *Eurasian Geography and Economic* 50, no. 4 (2009): 388.

¹⁷ Igor S. Ivanov, *The New Russian Diplomacy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 84. Pifer, 388.

¹⁸ Stephen Shulman, "Ukrainian Nation-Building Under Kuchma," *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no.5 (2005): 36.

was to protect Russians living abroad; which now included Ukraine, a country with 11 million ethnic Russians. Russia was not going to let Ukraine become independent without fighting for its influence within the country and for the ethnic Russians who lived there.¹⁹ Boris Yeltsin, the first President of the Russian Federation, saw Ukraine as a priority but Yeltsin damaged the relationship between the countries by his own inability to be an effective leader. Russian-Ukrainian relations at this time were poor and unproductive, as they relied on the presidents of the two countries to work together and not the rest of the government.²⁰ The Foreign Ministry of Russia did not adapt itself to the changing international environment after 1991, and therefore did not transform its dealings with Ukraine and other CIS countries. The Foreign Ministry did not care about the CIS countries and thus strained the relationships Russia with them. One problem of the Ministry was promoting the policy of frightening Ukraine from becoming closer to the West, but it did not take part in the actual implementation of this policy.²¹ Because of this mistake, Kiev and Moscow did not have many interactions with one another and the relationship between the two closely intertwined countries drifted further apart.

Kravchuk wanted Ukraine to integrate into Europe and move away from Russia's shadow, however in his attempts to do this he only damaged the Ukrainian relationship with Russia, creating problems for future presidents. Ukraine was not ready to fully separate from Russia immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the two newly independent countries were too entangled due to their historical background. While Kravchuk had chosen integration into Europe as the path for Ukraine, the new state was unable to stray far from Russia

¹⁹ Solchanyk, 81.

²⁰ Bukkvoll, 1150.

²¹ Bukkvoll, 1147.

and its influence in the country. During the rest of the decade, it became imperative to find a better balance in Ukrainian foreign policy and to decide the future path of the nation.

A Greater Balance

The central focus of the 1994 Ukrainian presidential election was on Ukraine's relations with Russia and the collapsing Ukrainian economy. The Ukrainian economy had struggled to adjust in the post-Soviet era and independence from Russia was not the answer, as had been thought in 1991. Greater ties with Russia became necessary, as the Ukrainian populace wanted to end the slide of their economy and realized that Russia was an integral part of the solution. This plight led to the defeat of incumbent Kravchuk, and the election of Leonid Kuchma.²² The election in 1994 provided evidence for Russia that Ukraine was going to remain an independent country striving for democracy. Citizens of Ukraine voiced their support for Ukrainian independence and for the ideals of their country, regardless of their opinion about Russia.²³ Kuchma wanted to create a greater balance between the East and the West in Ukraine, in addition to not alienating Russia while attempting to integrate further into Europe and the EU. The beginning of the Kuchma presidency focused on building ties with Europe and working towards ascension into the European Union. In 1994, Ukraine and the European Union signed a partnership agreement and the following year Ukraine joined the Council of Europe.²⁴ In spite of this, Ukraine needed to make strides internally to prove its adoption of European standards before becoming a candidate for the EU. The appeal to become a member of the European Union continued throughout the decade, including a presidential decree in 1998 entitled "Strategy for

²² Birch, 93-94.

²³ Solchanyk, 86.

²⁴ Solchanyk, 92.

Ukraine's Integration into the EU." The goal of this decree was to meet all of the preconditions for EU membership by 2007 and instructed government officials that this was the new goal of Ukraine.²⁵ However, Ukraine was unable to deliver on its promises of change but instead damaged their opportunity with internal difficulties, such as media censorship and human rights violations. With this turn of events, the EU quickly moved its attention away from Ukraine. By the end of the decade the EU had grown tired of waiting for Ukraine to develop into a Westernized country, and was no longer willing to wait.²⁶ This damaged Ukraine's chances for EU membership, as the country did not have a path to candidacy into the institution.

Instead the European Union granted Ukraine 'neighbor' status as a part of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and in December of 1999 both sides took part in developing the "Common Strategy for Ukraine," focusing on strengthening stability within the country and monitoring arms distribution.²⁷ The ENP is a section of the EU that administers the relations of the EU with its neighboring countries, which do not have an opportunity to enter into the institution. The ENP gives its members integration into some of the EU programs, but with limited benefits to the participating countries.²⁸ Ukraine used its neighbor status to attempt to meet European regulations, but received no benefit from these changes as it hoped that it could become a candidate state for the EU. The issue of the European Union and whether membership in the EU would outweigh the costs of the process divided the Ukrainian populace.²⁹ A major

²⁵ Stephen Hofer, "Unwelcome Europeans: EU External Governance and Shallow Europeanisation in Ukraine," in *Dynamics and Obstacles of European Governance 2007*, ed. Dirk De Bievre and Christine Neuhold (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc., 2007), 125.

²⁶ Robert Legvold, "The United States, the European Union, NATO, and the Economics of Ukraine and Belarusian Security," in *Swords and Sustenance*, ed. Robert Legvold and Celeste A. Wallander (Cambridge: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2004), 212-216.

²⁷ Legvold, 209.

²⁸ Hofer, 121.

²⁹ David Lane, "In or Out of Europe? What Prospects for Ukraine?," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 8, no. 4 (2007): 497.

deterrent in Ukraine of membership in the EU is the possibility of creating a rift in its relationship with Russia, which had already been volatile at times since independence.

During the first two years of Kuchma's presidency, the poor relations of Ukraine and Russia carried over from the Kravchuk presidency. Yeltsin and Kuchma did not create a relationship with one another and their countries suffered as a result. Because Kuchma's original focus was on European integration, Russia was not a foreign policy priority of Ukraine. The CIS was also not a priority, as Kuchma wanted to cooperate with the institution, but not seek complete integration similar to the USSR. Although his immediate focus was on the EU, Kuchma worked to strengthen ties with Russia, and become more balanced in his approach to foreign policy on both borders. Kuchma understood that Russia was a strategic partner for Ukraine, based on historical ties and the geography of Ukraine. Russia held more power in the world than Ukraine, and Ukraine would continue to be attached geopolitically to the larger Slavic nation; these factors led Kuchma to work on the relationship of Ukraine with Russia and Yeltsin, who had begun to take a greater interest in Ukraine in the second half of his presidency and the decade.

Four years into Kuchma's presidency, he and Yeltsin began to finally make real progress in the relationship of the two nations. Development had been slow to occur because Yeltsin could not remain focused on Ukrainian-Russian relations and the two countries would not consult for months on end. A pattern developed in the relationship, in which little contact would occur and then Russia would act after an incident between the two countries finally happened. Problems were resolved when the two presidents communicated directly, however, this could prove difficult when the two men did not like one another. Yeltsin and Kuchma began getting

along two years into the Kuchma presidency, and the relationship blossomed from that point.³⁰ In May 1997, Ukraine and Russia signed the “Friendship and Cooperation Treaty” and in September, the two countries created the Russian-Ukrainian Consultative Council. The purpose of this council was to facilitate a meeting of the two countries annually so that controversial issues could be resolved.³¹ These meetings were to prevent the two countries from stopping communication or working against one another because of continually sidelining an issue. Now these problems would be addressed directly and immediately. The biggest impact on the Russian-Ukrainian relationship in 1997 occurred in December with the establishment of the Strategic Group on Russian-Ukrainian Cooperation. This group was a step further after the Consultative Council in increasing the relations of the two countries, and minimizing the reliance on presidential meetings and unreliable Yeltsin. The group consisted of high-ranking foreign policy officials from both countries who would stay in consistent contact with one another.³² However, these agreements and councils did little to change the relationship of Ukraine and Russia as it remained mostly presidential, although both Kuchma and Yeltsin recognized the need for this to change.

The relationship with Russia was also important to Kuchma because of Ukraine’s dependency on Russian energy imports. Ukraine benefited from subsidized gas and needed to ensure working relations with the Kremlin in order to maintain these benefits for the future. Nevertheless, Russia does not provide discounted energy resources to Ukraine without any benefit to themselves. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is still stationed in Sevastopol, Ukraine, on the Crimean peninsula. While Kuchma strived for more independence from Russia, allowing the

³⁰ Bukkvoll, 1150.

³¹ Bukkvoll, 1148-1150.

³² Bukkvoll, 1150.

Black Sea Fleet to remain in Sevastopol was necessary in order to continue to normalize relations with Russia and receive essential energy resources for Ukrainian citizens and businesses.³³

The turn of the century marked a shift in Russian-Ukrainian relations as the two countries had finally developed close relations with one another again after a tumultuous parting a decade prior. Kuchma's slogan at the new millennium was "To Europe together with Russia."³⁴ This reflected the changing rhetoric of Ukraine, as the country was no longer a constant topic at the EU, and had subsequently turned back to Russia. The European Union was no longer interested in Ukraine or Ukraine's quest to become a member of the institution, and therefore left Ukraine to deal with Russian issues by itself. When Russia began development on Tuzla Island, technically part of Ukraine, the EU was not behind Ukraine when it had to face Russia.³⁵ Conversely, this period represented an opportunity for Russia to regain control in Ukraine and reestablish normal relations. With the EU attempting to regulate the domestic and international policies of Ukraine, the state could decide which neighbor to develop further relations with, and which would provide Ukraine with the greatest benefit. Russia filled this role for Ukraine, and ties between Ukraine and Russia and the CIS grew stronger and military exercises between the two countries occurred.³⁶ The regular meetings between the two states brought them closer together, and the void left by the EU, Russia filled for Ukraine.

While Kuchma still had two years left on his presidential term, Russia welcomed a new acting president in 1999, Vladimir Putin. After winning the presidential election in 2000, Putin

³³ Proedrou, 449.
Pifer, 388.

³⁴ Shulman, 41.

³⁵ Pifer, 389.

³⁶ Shulman, 41.

began to establish his own Ukrainian policies and recognized Ukraine as an independent state. Putin had more control over the Russian government than Yeltsin did, and therefore could be more serious in his relationships with other heads of state, including Kuchma.³⁷ Tougher foreign policies went into effect and in December of 1999, Ukraine had its oil shut off for the fifth time in that decade. Russia was no longer going to allow Ukraine to go against Russian policies and not suffer consequences. It took until April of 2000 before real growth was made on the oil crisis. Putin forced Kuchma to meet his terms, which included restructuring the governing of energy resources and the payments of Ukraine to Russia for its resources.³⁸ This incident displayed Russia as a power once again, and Ukraine could no longer falter to its Eastern neighbor. However, Putin's image in Ukraine could have been hindered by the anti-Russian and pro-European sentiments in the country, making him unable to work effectively with the Ukrainian president.³⁹ Nevertheless, this did not hinder Putin's approach to his strong presidency in Russia, as his country now had the upper hand in its relationship with Ukraine.

Regardless of the energy problems between Russia and Ukraine, Kuchma and Putin both understood the need to work with one another and that the relations between the two countries must be settled and stabilized before they could move forward. The two leaders worked together to resolve economic and gas disputes, and Putin officially recognized Crimea as a part of Ukraine, not Russia.⁴⁰ By no longer skirting over the biggest disputes between the two countries, solutions to any problems could be created and a future relationship for the two nations could be addressed. Many bilateral agreements occurred over the following two years of Kuchma's

³⁷ Bukkvoll, 1155-1156.

³⁸ Sherr, 292.

³⁹ Julie Newton, "Shortcut to Great Power: Russia in Pursuit of Multipolarity," in *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, ed. Julie Newton and William Tompson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 96.

⁴⁰ J.L. Black, *Vladimir Putin and the New World Order* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 263.

presidency, as the two presidents continued to work together in an effort to normalize relations between the two countries. Putin also helped Kuchma celebrate Ukraine's Independence Day, marking the Russian admission of Ukraine as a separate and independent state in the world.⁴¹ Celebrating Ukraine's independence also signifies that Russia does not believe that Ukraine will fold back into its motherland, and therefore must accept that the two nations will continue to work together on an international level, not a domestic one.

Leonid Kuchma's ten years as president of Ukraine greatly changed the face of Ukrainian-Russian relations, and enhanced the bilateral affairs of the two countries tremendously. Kuchma worked to find a balance between Europe and Russia, and to not upset one side when choosing the other. This is a difficult equilibrium to achieve, and Kuchma benefited from Europe's tiredness of Ukraine, as he could then focus on Russia and the development of its relations. Kuchma continued the process of seeking European Union membership, but Ukraine made little progress in becoming a candidate country. Instead, Ukraine was granted neighbor status, and had to adhere to the EU rules and regulations before it could be considered as a candidate for the institution. The inability of Ukraine to gain real integration into Europe and the unwillingness of Europe to remain focused on Ukraine pushed Ukraine back into the arms of Russia, who was awaiting their return. Luckily, both Russia and Ukraine wanted to develop a working relationship with one another, and Kuchma, Yeltsin, and Putin were able to succeed in this goal. Kuchma was very productive in his relations with Russia during the last two years of his presidency; however, much of this hard work would be lost over the following five years under his successor Viktor Yushchenko.

⁴¹ Black, 263, 266.

Stepping Backwards

Russia enjoyed its new relationship with Ukraine, and did not want progress hindered by a new president who would not consider Russian policies, and was focused more on European integration than continuing to foster a relationship with Russia. The 2004 presidential election in Ukraine became very contentious and the Orange Revolution followed the contested first election results of the first election. A second election was held after the first was declared invalid due to rampant fraud. During the elections, Russia blatantly supported Viktor Yanukovich, and wanted to control the outcome of the election. To ensure a Yanukovich victory, Russian political technologists worked in Ukraine against Yushchenko, and to discredit him to the Ukrainian populace.⁴² However, even with these illegal actions in the internal affairs of Ukraine, Yanukovich did not win the presidency.⁴³ Ukrainian relations with the West were also injured in the wake of the 2004 election, because of the election's fraudulence.⁴⁴ It demonstrated that Ukraine had not yet fully developed a democracy and was not ready to be integrated into Europe. Although Ukrainians held peaceful demonstrations on Independence Square and a successful second election occurred, this did not change the minds of the political leadership of Europe.

After Yushchenko's election, Ukraine began to drift away from Russia and the relations between the two countries became strained once again. Yushchenko's first priority in his foreign policy was integration into the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and bid

⁴² Kuzio, 495.

⁴³ Both sides of the 2004 election took part in its fraudulence, and opinions about the outcome are based on which candidate a person supported. Pro-Russian voters would argue the first election was valid, while Pro-Western voters would argue for the validity of the second election. The actual results of the 2004 election will most likely never be known.

⁴⁴ Pifer, 390.

to join both organizations.⁴⁵ In improving relations with NATO, Yushchenko sought a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to the organization in 2006, an action that Russia did not publicly oppose.⁴⁶ Ukraine's engagement with NATO increased, and the country was going to allow NATO military exercises on Ukrainian territory beginning in 2006. However, Yanukovich's Party of Regions was able to veto this process in parliament, saying it went against the Friendship Treaty of 1997, and ensured that foreign military units could not come onto Ukrainian territory.⁴⁷ The EU also closed in on Ukraine during the reign of Yushchenko, as the European Union's borders reached Ukraine in 2004. The new borders with EU states allowed Ukraine to act more intimately with the organization and work its way into more programs. In this period, the ENP was instrumental in governing the relationship of Ukraine and the EU. Nevertheless, Yushchenko was unable to achieve his goal of EU membership, as the EU in 2006 declared it not ready to receive Ukraine as a new member.⁴⁸ The EU was not in a position to integrate a country the size, geographically and economically, of Ukraine into its organization. As well, Ukraine's economy has weaknesses which the EU does not want to support in addition to its other relatively weak Eastern European members. Ukraine would have to continue to work within the ENP, but without promises of future membership or candidacy.

Regionally Ukraine engaged with former USSR countries, but continued to lessen its relations with Russia. Yushchenko wanted the Black Sea Fleet out of Sevastopol so that Ukraine could have sovereignty over all of its territory. Nevertheless, in 2007 Yushchenko extended the 1997 Black Sea Fleet agreement another ten years, which allowed Russia to house the Black Sea

⁴⁵ Proedrou, 449.

⁴⁶ Pifer, 395.

⁴⁷ Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 119.

⁴⁸ Hofer, 126.

Fleet in Sevastopol until 2017.⁴⁹ In its engagements with other former Soviet states, Ukraine was a founding member in two new regional organizations. Ukraine helped to found the regional organization GUAM, which also included Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. GUAM, which was established in 1997, was meant to be a way for these countries to stand up to the dominating politics of Russia. Under Yushchenko Ukraine put more emphasis on this organization and its role for Ukraine's foreign policy in the former USSR region. As well, Ukraine created the Community for Democratic Choice, an institute meant to encourage democracy and its values in the Black, Baltic, and Caspian Sea Regions. In addition, Yushchenko wanted to solve the problem of Transnistria, a breakaway region between Moldova and Ukraine that is not a recognized state, but maintains internally that it is a state. Russia fully supports Transnistria, and any opposition to the state is looked upon harshly.⁵⁰ Yushchenko's foreign policy went against much of Russia's policies and the Russian perspective and these actions pointed the direction of Ukraine's foreign policy away from Russia, and toward a more independent and westernized Ukraine.

Russia reacted harshly to these foreign policy changes in Ukraine, and the dramatic shift in relations between the two countries. After the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the relationship between Russia and Ukraine took a downward turn, as Russia needed to protect its image after meddling in the 2004 election and had fears of a similar democratic uprising taking place within its own borders.⁵¹ Putin disliked Yushchenko, and the belief that his election was a Western plot did not help the relationship to foster. Russia also had worries about the expansion of NATO

⁴⁹ Neil Munro, "Which Way Does Ukraine Face?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 54, no. 6 (2007): 46.

⁵⁰ Proedrou, 449.

⁵¹ Munro, 46.

further into Eastern Europe and in 2008 publicly spoke against Ukraine's request for a MAP.⁵² For Russia, Ukrainian entrance into NATO would drastically change the geopolitical landscape and would bring the Atlantic alliance to its doorstep. As well, NATO would wreck the historical ties of Russia and Ukraine; however, it is also possible that Ukrainian integration into NATO or the EU could help the position of Russia with Western countries. Nevertheless, this sentiment is not a part of Russia's foreign policy, and opposition continues to Western influence in former Soviet states. In dealing directly with Ukraine, Russia now had to adjust to a Western orientated government. These adjustments came with hostility from Russia as Putin attacked the legitimacy of Ukraine's territory and complained against Ukraine's new stricter border controls, which were a result of the ENP and Ukraine's new borders with the EU.⁵³ In 2005, Russia raised the price of its natural gas imports to Ukraine to market value, regardless of Ukraine's ability to pay the new price. Because Ukraine could not pay market value for Russian gas, Russia shut off gas to Ukraine until a compromise was reached. The negotiations resulted in Ukraine paying a significantly higher price for its energy imports from Russia. After this low point in relations, Ukraine and Russia began to have regular presidential meetings in which bilateral issues could be resolved.⁵⁴ This helped relations between the two states to improve once again and an environment in which normal relations could develop appeared.

Russia knew that it had to work with its new EU neighbors, but also suspected that Ukraine was being used as a geopolitical pawn between the EU and Russia. The EU wants Ukraine to succeed democratically and pushes their agenda within the country, which in turn moves Ukraine further from the political grasp of Russia. Although regular meetings between

⁵² Pifer, 391.

⁵³ Pifer, 395.
Allison, 85, 89.

⁵⁴ Munro, 46.

the two countries began to take place and relations improved, helped by Yanukovich becoming Prime Minister in Ukraine, Russia again shut off Ukraine's gas supply in January of 2009. Russia shut off the natural gas because Ukraine was over \$1 billion in debt to the Russian gas company Gazprom, a continuance of the price disputes Ukraine had been having with the Russian company for several years. Ukraine and Gazprom failed to reach an agreement in terms of a new contract by December 31, 2008; this led to the Russian company shutting off the gas supply. Bigger problems arose when Russia then shut off pipelines that delivered gas into the EU, because they feared Ukraine would begin stealing gas from these pipelines as they passed through Ukrainian territory.⁵⁵ However, this shut off also served to discredit the Ukrainian government and display the failure of the Orange Revolution. Since Ukraine was unable to solve its problems with Russia effectively, it was not suited to become a member of the European Community.

The Yushchenko presidency did not work well with Russia and hurt the progress that Leonid Kuchma had made during his presidency. While Yushchenko had aspirations of Ukraine's integration into the Western world, his dreams were not realized, and he damaged relations with Russia in the process. Focus on EU and NATO membership did not pay off for Ukraine, as they did not come closer to candidacy in either institution, regardless of having made internal changes to meet EU regulations. For EU membership, Ukraine must resolve its relations with Russia first, yet this relationship took a backseat to Western countries under Yushchenko. The end of Yushchenko's presidency was marked with disappointment, as the Orange Revolution did not create a special government and Ukraine lost weight on both of its borders.

⁵⁵ Pifer, 395.

Given these problems Yanukovich was able to win the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine, and began working to reset the foreign policy of his country.

Regaining Ground

The victory of Viktor Yanukovich in the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election was considered a success for Russia, however Yanukovich has proved over his first year that he will not become a Moscow puppet in Kyiv.⁵⁶ While Yanukovich understood that better relations with Russia were necessary, he also wanted to create a better balance between East and West in Ukraine. While Ukraine's foreign policy is now friendlier towards Moscow, Yanukovich still see the EU and integration into the union as a major priority, and although he wants to work with NATO, he does not support joining the organization.⁵⁷ In June of 2010, a new law came into effect in Ukraine, keeping the country from joining a military alliance. Ukraine is now militarily a non-aligned country, but will continue to work with NATO. This will also prevent Ukraine from joining a military alliance with former USSR states.⁵⁸ Yanukovich has worked to strengthen ties with the EU, and Ukraine joined the European Energy Community in 2010, and in November of the same year discussed visa liberalization plans with the EU.⁵⁹ The improvement in Russian relations for Yanukovich began with the Black Sea Fleet and the extension of its lease of the Sevastopol port for another 25 years. For this extension, Russia will

⁵⁶ Samuel Charap, "Seeing Orange" *Foreign Policy*, last modified January 18 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/18/seeing_orange?page=0,1.

⁵⁷ "Viktor Yanukovich promises Ukraine will embrace Russia," [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), last modified March 5 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/05/ukraine-russia-relations-viktor-yanukovich>.

⁵⁸ "Ukraine's parliament votes to abandon Nato ambitions," BBC, last modified June 3 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10229626>.

⁵⁹ Amanda Paul, "EU-Ukraine: Time fore a New Tone," *New Europe*, last modified November 28 2010, <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/103776.php>.

drop Ukraine's gas prices by 30%; which allows Ukraine a better opportunity to provide gas to the EU without incident.⁶⁰

Russia sees the Black Sea Fleet as an integral part of their military, and it displays the power of the Russian Navy abroad, as well as benefiting all of Europe. When Medvedev became President of Russia in 2008 his top foreign policy item was the CIS, however he wants to enhance Russia power in Kyiv and keep Russia included in Ukrainian decision-making. This influence included the Russian attempt to merge Ukraine's Nafogaz with Russia's Gazprom. Ukraine rejected the proposal even though it would have significantly lowered the price of Russian gas for Ukraine. Russia offered the same gas deal to Ukraine, saving Kyiv \$8 billion annually, if Ukraine entered into a Russia led customs union. Ukraine again refused to comply to Russia's desires, as it preferred a free trade deal, which would allow Ukraine to create a trade deal with the EU in the future.⁶¹ Russia will continue to fight to maintain influence within Ukraine, as Russia sees it in their best interest to preserve a close relationship with Ukraine and a relationship in which the two countries produce similar policies and collaborate constantly.

Yanukovich knows that a balance between the East and West is needed in order for Ukraine to be successful on the international stage. Although Yanukovich must work to remain independent from the Kremlin, he also has to fix the damage done to the Ukrainian-Russian relationship by his predecessor Yushchenko. Yanukovich is only a year into his presidency and many things could change in the future, but a better relationship has already begun between these two countries. Yanukovich's focus is on what policies benefit Ukraine, and is not worried about siding with only the EU or Russia. Deals between Ukraine and both entities have been reached

⁶⁰ Ivan Watson and Maxim Tkachenko, "Russia, Ukraine agree on naval-base-for-gas deal," *CNN*, last modified April 21 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-04-21/world/russia.ukraine_1_ukraine-and-russia-viktor-yushchenko-russian-president-dmitry-medvedev?_s=PM:WORLD.

⁶¹ "No Customs Union for Yanukovich," *The Moscow Times*, last modified April 8 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/no-customs-union-for-yanukovich/434704.html>.

during his short time in office, and the rest of his presidency appears promising for Ukraine. Bilateral relations with Russia have increased, and the two countries have signed agreements about banks and nuclear cooperation, a huge step forward from the presidency of Yushchenko.⁶² Regardless of which side Yanukovich supports, East or West, his real priority is the future of Ukraine and its people. With these correct priorities, Yanukovich will be able to benefit his country in a way no president of Ukraine has yet to accomplish. If the president can continue the balance between Russia and the EU, without upsetting either side, a better future for Ukraine can become a reality.

Identity Questions

The past two decades of Ukrainian independence have shaped the future of the relationship between Ukraine and Russia; however, the two countries have historical linkages that will not change regardless of the political leadership of either nation. Ukraine is a multinational society that meshed over time, as demonstrated by the vastly different cities within its borders. Currently Ukraine is in an identity crisis as the country attempts to figure out its populace and how to support the desires of the population as a whole. The Ukrainian and Russian languages are both used widely throughout the country, with Russian dominating in the Eastern and Southern regions. However, Ukrainian is the only official language of Ukraine, a contentious issue with Russia, which believes that Russian should be elevated to the same status.⁶³ This is based on the historical use of Russian within the territory of Ukraine, and that during Soviet times Russian was the language of instruction in school. Throughout the 1990's, Russian was still taught in Ukrainian schools and the language choice for Ukrainian citizens

⁶² "Russia's Medvedev in Ukraine visit to boost ties," BBC, last modified May 17 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8685899.stm>.

⁶³ Solchanyk, 147.

varied on situational circumstances. Regardless, a third to a half of the Ukrainian population uses Russian as its primary language, yet the government of Ukraine does not recognize Russian as an official language.⁶⁴ Crimea's population majority is Russian, and the public signs in the region reflect this majority and their language choice. Crimea is a constant Ukrainian threat, as fears of the region succeeding from Ukraine have surfaced.⁶⁵ Crimea is the most Russian associated part of Ukraine, and the Black Sea Fleet is already located within the region.

As you walk through the streets in different cities within Ukraine, you can glimpse and understand better the identity problems the state faces. While signs are written in Ukraine, the citizens walking along the street are speaking Russian and Ukrainian. Throughout Ukraine Russian is an acceptable language in which to converse, and although a menu is written in Ukrainian, a customer may order in Russian. Ukrainians are able to speak both languages and use both in everyday life depending on their current situation. The level of knowledge of either language is then dependent on where the citizen grew up and the language spoken within their family. Russia is still also visible in Ukraine, as the remnants of Soviet buildings still exist and older historical monuments are still written in their original Russian, yet Ukrainian is sometimes added. In Kharkiv, a city in Eastern Ukraine, the metro stop names are still written in Russian, yet the Ukrainian names are used on the maps of the metro within the trains themselves. In Kyiv, Ukrainian has replaced the old metro stop names, as the capital embraces its national language. The identity crisis in Ukraine is critical to its foreign policy, as it drives the country both closer and further away from Russia. While Western nationalists would view this identity as confused because of Russian interference, those living in Eastern Ukraine see Russian as their

⁶⁴ Solchanyk, 148-152.

⁶⁵ Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Obstacles to U.S.-Russian Cooperation in the Caucasus and Ukraine," in *Prospects For U.S.-Russian Security Cooperation* 2009, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 287.

historical and sometimes ethnic language. Ukraine must figure out its own identity in order to fully function in the world of international politics and attempt to succeed. If Ukraine is unable to find its national identity, it will not be able to know what course of foreign policy to take in the future that will benefit itself, without regard to its neighbors.

Russia does not face the same identity issues that Ukraine does, as it has had its current boundaries for a much longer period. Although there are different nations and ethnicities in Russia, the differences in identity do not cause the same problems as they do in Ukraine. Russia has one official language, and there is not another highly dominant language within its borders. At the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia did not declare independence but simply arose from the ashes of the USSR. Because of this transition, a new cultural and national identity did not have to be created as it did in Ukraine.

Ukraine is stuck in the middle of Russia and the European Union, culturally and politically, and it does not know on which side it belongs. While Russia can be viewed as a security threat to Ukraine, it is not a top priority of the government, and Ukraine can be viewed as the same threat to Russia. An equal partnership between the two countries must be created in order for both of them to succeed domestically and abroad. As well, the EU cannot be an alternative to Russia for Ukraine, only an addition to its international partnerships. The EU must also respect Ukraine and its need to make its own decisions about its international future and the relationship it will have with both Russia and the EU. When Ukraine became independent in 1991, the EU saw an opportunity to spread democracy and Western values into Eastern Europe. However, the organization was unwilling to wait for Ukraine to figure itself out and be able to make the difficult political decisions of an independent country. The pressure of the EU ultimately damaged the relationship Ukraine held with Russia. After independence Ukraine

wanted to escape to the West and find freedom that the region has never experienced, yet, the country was not ready for this drastic transition and the EU was not ready or willing to continuously help the new state. This era of transition ultimately hindered the success of Ukraine and pushed the country backwards in its advancement. Although it may take decades, Ukraine must decide its own future on the international stage and which direction, if any, it will chose to go.

As the European Union cannot pressure Ukraine into a Western democracy and into its ideals, Russia must follow the same procedure. Although Russia wants to maintain the power and control it has held over Ukraine for the past thousand years, it has to accept Ukrainian independence and its own inability to influence the government of Ukraine. By attempting to bring Ukraine closer to itself, Russia risks pushing Ukraine further away in the process and confirming the fears of Ukrainian nationalists, that Russia will take drastic measures in order to keep control in Ukraine. Russia wants to continue its influence of former Soviet states, yet Ukraine is unwilling to be a part of this desire. While Russia works with other former Soviet states within the CIS, Ukraine has remained distant from the regional organization.⁶⁶ Ukraine's foreign policy now focuses more on allowing itself to make decisions that will continue to benefit them into the future, and not becoming stuck with either Russia or the EU. An excellent example of this policy is Ukraine's recent rejection of a customs union with other CIS countries, which would limit their ability to work on trade deals with the EU. This decision gives the Ukrainian government the opportunity to benefit from its relationship with both entities and not put its economic future in the hands of only one of them.

⁶⁶ Black, 247.

Into the Future

To create a better working relationship between Russia and Ukraine, the two countries need to create a more effective method of solving problems. Presidents of the two countries have been the facilitators of relations, and this can cause the relationship to fluctuate widely over time depending on how much the two men enjoy one another. This can also cause the relationship to change quickly when a new president is elected. Putin never liked Yushchenko, yet once Yanukovich was elected in 2010 relations between the two countries improved dramatically in a short time span. The presidents of both states need to ensure that their personal feelings about their peer, in Ukraine or Russia, do not affect their professional relationship with one another. As well, other actors in both governments need to become more involved in the relationship, so that relations never become stagnant. By communicating through multiple channels of the government, problems that arise can be resolved efficiently and without the need for heads of state to become involved. Since Russia and Ukraine are still very intertwined in the relations of one another, it is imperative for them to be in constant open communication about what is happening in each respective country. This will create a more stable relationship and help both states to focus on other foreign policy goals.

In facilitating a more efficient relationship, Ukraine and Russia also need to officially resolve their long-standing issues regarding energy prices and the Black Sea Fleet. Although the lease on the Sevastopol port has been extended and the issue is currently non-existent, further complications could arise in the future if Ukraine elects a president who does not support the Russian Navy in Crimea. In regards to Ukrainian imports of Russian oil and gas, a firm price needs to be established and both sides need to agree to how necessary price changes will occur. It only damages the relations of the two countries when Russia simply turns off the switch to

Ukraine's energy resources, and thereby affects the rest of the European continent. These issues also need to be resolved so that the EU does not have to run interference between the two states in order to receive its own gas imports. The energy resources that Russia supplies to Ukraine are necessary for the everyday workings of Ukraine and cannot be used as a political positioning tool. If Ukraine and Russia can create a more stable relationship that uses multiple sources of communication, the dividing issues between the two countries can be solved quicker. Long-term solutions are needed for the energy issues between these two states, and each president must take action that benefits his country and not his ideology. When the presidents of Ukraine and Russia do not react to the actions of their peer, but formulate their own solutions, the two countries will have reached a new plateau in their relationship with one another and both states will benefit domestically and internationally as a result.

Conclusion

The historical linkage between Ukraine and Russia has created an environment in which the two states must continue to work with one another. The relationship has gone through many changes since Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, yet the relationship is most successful during periods when the two countries are working together. Immediately following independence, Ukraine wanted to establish itself on the international stage and exert itself as an independent country, no longer attached to Russia. However, this drastic maneuver by Leonid Kravchuk put Russian relations on the back burner and hindered the development of Ukraine. At the time, Ukraine and Russia still shared many links from the Soviet Union, which could not be torn a part in a fast and painless manner. The Ukrainian

economy suffered as a result and Kravchuk left office having completed few of his foreign policy goals.

Luckily for Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma succeeded Kravchuk and worked to mend the broken Ukrainian-Russian relationship. This presidency is the basis for the demonstrating how relations between the two countries should work in the future. While the EU remained a top priority for Kuchma, he realized that a functional relationship with Russia was also necessary for the success of Ukraine. Europe can be a fickle friend to Eastern Europe, whereas Russia is a known entity that will not cease relations with its neighboring states. Kuchma experienced this reality at the turn of the century when the EU had grown tired of Ukraine attempting to join their organization because Ukraine had difficulty meeting the qualifications for membership. However, Russia still wanted to work with Ukraine during this time, and Kuchma worked to create a stable relationship with the new president of Russia, Vladimir Putin. Even though problems arose during the Kuchma presidency, the relationship was much more functional and secure than under predecessor Kravchuk or successor Yushchenko.

Kuchma also received the benefit of no interference when he began creating a consistent relationship with Russia. While Western countries want to control the amount of influence Russia exerts in the post-Soviet space, it is imperative that the relationship between Russia and Ukraine is forged without the influence of others. The goal of integrating fully in the EU still remains in Ukraine, however the country understands that it will not be able to achieve this without first solving its affairs with Russia. Because Russia is still a large entity on the international stage, Western countries do not want to create problems while attempting to westernize Ukraine. Nevertheless, if Ukraine creates a consistently stable relationship with

Russia the possibilities for its exclusion in Europe increase dramatically as the EU does not want to allow a country with continued turmoil internally or abroad into its organization.

The main foreign policy goal of Viktor Yushchenko was Ukrainian integration into the European Union, however his interactions or lack of, with Russia actually worked against him. Entering office following the Orange Revolution, Yushchenko faced an uphill battle in Western Europe for the inclusion of Ukraine. Ukraine could not be trusted as a true democracy and the difficulties with Russia only compounded throughout Yushchenko's term. This pushed the EU further from Ukraine, and kept Ukraine's relationship with the organization within the confines of the ENP. Instead of working on Ukrainian-Russian relations, Yushchenko continued to push for Western integration, or regional organizations that could fight the influence of Russia. These actions only served to further hinder the personal relationship of Yushchenko with Putin and Medvedev, and Ukraine's relations with Russia as a whole. Yushchenko left office in 2010 with Ukraine no closer to EU candidacy and extremely low approval ratings. In a possible reaction to his poor performance as president, the citizens of Ukraine elected Yanukovich to succeed him.

Similar to Kuchma, Yanukovich understands the balancing act that Ukraine needs to master in working with both the EU and Russia. In only one year as president, Yanukovich has reversed the difficulties that Yushchenko created with Russia, and relations are once again stable and functional. While the EU remains a priority for Ukraine, it is not the only foreign policy goal of the state and this helps to ensure that Ukraine can flourish, regardless of its EU status. Over the next 4 years, Yanukovich will be integral in shaping the relationship of Ukraine and Russia, along with Russian president Medvedev. This is a critical period for both countries to learn how to work together for an extended period and accomplish foreign policy goals. If

Ukraine ever hopes to achieve European integration, it must first create a stable and cohesive relationship with Russia.

The national identity difficulties in Ukraine play into their connection to Russia and affect the relationship of the two countries. Russia will continue to feel a burden of responsibility to protect ethnic Russians living in Ukraine, and to preserve the Russian language outside its own borders. For Ukraine, it must decide whether its identity issues will cast a shadow on its populace or bring the nation together. Ukraine is a multinational state and it should embrace the variety of nations that live within its borders. The Russian language will also continue to permeate Ukraine, which must decide if it is willing to grant Russian official status as a language of Ukraine. While this would please Russia, it may also further complicate the identity of a Ukraine and hurt its nationalism.

The near and distant future of Ukrainian-Russian relations will be filled with accomplishments and difficulties. These two states are still learning to function outside of one another and create bilateral relations on an international level. Over the past twenty years, the relationship of Russia and Ukraine has been tumultuous, however the two countries have realized that they must work together. Relations between the two countries have become stable again, and with any luck, they will stay that way into the future. Both Ukrainian and Russian foreign policy goals will rely on the stability of their relationship with each other. For Ukraine, as it moves into its twentieth year of independence and continues to seek integration in Europe, the key for success lies in its Eastern big brother. Russia and Ukraine react against the policies of one another because they are such intertwined countries, however, with normalized relations and open communication they can act for themselves and not as a reflection of the other.

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