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Russia, Ukraine, and the Imperial Legacy

Roman Solchanyk[1]

Relations between the governments of Russia and Ukraine have been marked by ebbs and flows of tension over many issues. Most recently, during the visit to Moscow of U.S. President Clinton in January 1994, a tripartite agreement was signed between Clinton, President Boris Yel'tsin of Russia, and President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine on the denuclearization of Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament ratified the agreement, but with qualifications (*The New York Times*, February 4, 1994, p. A3); hence, it remains to be seen whether Kiev will ultimately dismantle its entire nuclear arsenal. The implementation process, however, will surely be affected by the course of events surrounding many issues that have divided Russian and Ukrainian governments since before the collapse of the USSR in December 1991.

SOURCES OF CONTENTION

Reflecting a Russian viewpoint on these issues, which certainly diverges from the perspectives of most citizens of Ukraine, the newspaper, *Izvestiya*, once summarized the sources of contention over ten such "difficult barriers" (*Izvestiya*, Moscow evening edition, January 15, 1993, p. 1):

- **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).** Ukraine thinks that Moscow views the CIS as a way-station toward reconstitution of a Russian-dominated empire. Consequently, it rejects the creation of CIS interstate coordinating organs.
- **Territorial claims.** In spite of Yel'tsin's repeated statements on the inviolability of the borders between the two countries, Kiev still thinks that the Russian parliament and many influential Russian politicians view territorial claims as a trump card to be used against Ukraine. The main regions in question are Crimea, the Donbass, and southern Ukraine.
- **Citizenship, taxation, and pensions.** Good intentions notwithstanding, Kiev and Moscow have been unable to find an

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effective intergovernmental solution to these new problems, which affect millions of Ukrainians working in Russia, and millions of Russians in Ukraine.

- **Nuclear arms reduction.** Ukraine is seriously concerned about the likelihood of a turnaround in the Russian political situation that would leave it exposed to nuclear blackmail. By demanding special security guarantees from the West that are outside the framework of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and by stalling on the ratification of START-1, Ukraine is not only blocking the process of nuclear disarmament, but also setting the West against Russia.
- **Black Sea Fleet and Sevastopol'.** Ukraine rejects any and all Russian claims to a special presence in Sevastopol', and disagrees with Moscow's proposals for dividing up the Fleet's warships and property.
- **Foreign debt and assets of the former USSR.** Ukraine insists on its right to a greater share of the former Soviet Union's assets abroad, including banks, diplomatic buildings, and investments and loans to third countries. Russia considers it technically unfeasible to divide the assets in many instances and wants to fully assume both the debt and the assets.
- **Western aid.** Ukraine is demanding a larger portion of the Western credits earmarked for the former USSR, including humanitarian aid and financial assistance for the construction of military housing.
- **Monetary policy.** Russia was angered by Ukrainian intervention in the area of noncash circulation and took defensive measures that Ukraine feels are discriminatory. Kiev, for its part, is worried by the indebtedness of Russian enterprises to Ukrainian suppliers and is tightening up the licensing of exports to Russia.
- **Service charges.** Ukraine is demanding fees for every ton of oil and each cubic meter of gas that flows through the "*Druzhba*" pipeline. The sums that Ukraine is demanding for the use of its air space and waterways are, in Moscow's view, excessive.
- **Oil and gas prices.** Ukraine is an importer of food, which limits its possibilities for acquiring petroleum products on a barter basis. Russia's planned increase in fuel prices could therefore result in the collapse of the Ukrainian economy.

The Ukrainian interpretation of any or all of the above issues would certainly be different in content, emphasis, and tone. Moreover, from the perspective of February 1994, events have served to moderate some problems, while others have proved to be much more intractable. Thus,

although Ukraine remains wary of the CIS, economic realities have brought Kiev closer to those CIS states that have agreed to form an economic union. The fates of Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet, by contrast, continue to evade solutions that would be acceptable to all of the parties concerned. Nonetheless, on the whole, *Izvestiya* accurately catalogued the range of specific issues that have served to exacerbate relations between Moscow and Kiev since the collapse of the Soviet Union. What it did not do was to identify or mention what this author considers to be the fundamental source of tension between the two Slavic states: Moscow's inability or, as Kiev would have it, its unwillingness to come to terms with the *fait accompli* of an independent Ukrainian state.

This problem has its roots in the historically conditioned nature of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. For many, if not most, Russians that relationship is understood in terms that not only preclude the very notion of an independent Ukraine, but that also render the existence of Russia without Ukraine an historical absurdity. The degree to which this imperial legacy in the Russian-Ukrainian context has permeated Russian national consciousness can be judged from the decidedly negative reaction of prominent representatives of the Russian democratic camp, including members of Yel'tsin's immediate political *entourage*, to the emergence of an independent Ukrainian state.

RUSSIA'S "UKRAINIAN COMPLEX"

It is now commonplace to read that, in the absence of the Soviet Union, Russians have been confronted with a serious crisis of identity.[2] Estonians, Georgians, Ukrainians, and other former "Soviets" do not seem to suffer from this problem, or at least not to the extent that Russians do. This implies that the well-known Soviet refrain, "Not some house, not some street—my address is the Soviet Union," was taken more to heart by ethnic Russians. That the demise of the Soviet Union has had a relatively greater impact on Russians is borne out by public opinion surveys. In the fall of 1992, it was reported that about 60 percent of respondents in Russia consistently condemned the liquidation of the USSR; in Ukraine the corresponding figure was 46 percent in June, rising from 33 percent in March-April (Klyamkin, 1992, p. 15). Another poll, conducted in Ukraine in early 1993, showed that 29 percent of Russian respondents put the collapse of the USSR at the head of a list of recent events that disturbed them the most; the corresponding figure for Ukrainians was 11 percent. Similarly, 31 percent of Russians as compared to 12 percent of Ukrainians favored the restoration of the Soviet Union (*Visti z Ukrainy*, April 8–14, 1993, p.2).

Perhaps even more interesting was the finding reported by the 1992 survey that Russians, regardless of their social background, were united in

[2]The choices facing post-Soviet Russia as it redefines itself as a nation and as a state are discussed by Szporluk (1992, pp. 94–100).

treating the problem of statehood as a joint enterprise involving the former Soviet republics, which was reflected in the greater importance they assigned to consolidating the CIS rather than strengthening their own national statehood. This peculiarity of Russian national consciousness allowed for the free substitution of the notions of Russia and the Soviet Union; it has been explained by the unique nature of Russian empire-building and the characteristic features of the Muscovite, tsarist, and Soviet political systems and ideologies.[3]

But even though Russians were more inclined to consider the entire Soviet Union as their "living space," certainly not all Soviet addresses were "home" in equal measure. For Russians, Ukraine was and remains in a separate category from Estonia, Georgia, and the rest. Why this should be the case is not difficult to fathom if one considers that, historically, mainstream Russian political thought never considered Ukraine to be a legitimate political concept.[4]

That Russian mass consciousness does not consider the idea of Ukraine to be quite serious has a great deal to do with the question of statehood, which has always played a paramount role in the "Russian idea."[5] In the Russian context, the state and its ideology essentially "create" the nation.[6] Thus, for Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48), one of the leading proponents of Russian Westernism, it was obvious that "Little Russia [Ukraine] was never a state and consequently it did not have a history in the strict sense of the word. . . . The history of Little Russia is a stream discharging into the great river of Russian history. Little Russians were always a tribe and never a nation (*narod*)."[7] But the perceived absence of state traditions in Ukraine's

[3]For a detailed treatment of this question, see Szporluk (1986 and 1990).

[4]This fundamental aspect of the Russian-Ukrainian nexus is examined in a nontraditional but very insightful manner by Artemiy Levchenko (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, November 13, 1992, p. 5). The author frames his discussion of the problem around "the chronic unseriousness of the Russian view of Ukraine." Already in the 18th and 19th centuries, he writes, "there takes shape the notion of Ukraine as a ludicrous place and of Little Russian [Ukrainian] as burlesque, a parody of Great Russian." As a result, today "when talking to a Ukrainian you somehow exaggeratedly try to demonstrate that things Ukrainian (language, culture, statehood) do not strike you as amusing."

Levchenko also points out that "the Russian tradition of making fun of Ukraine and things Ukrainian" can be detected in the political arena as well. Thus, when President Kravchuk is the object of derision in the media, he argues, the categories are such as would be unthinkable if applied to Gorbachev, Snegur (of Moldova), Landsbergis (of Lithuania), or Gamsakhurdia (of Georgia). The composite image is that of "a Ukrainian flim flam man," "a clever swindler" who nonetheless is simple enough to sometimes get caught up in his own intrigues. The issue here, of course, is not Kravchuk's *persona* as such, but rather the idea that someone could seriously entertain the idea of being president of an independent Ukraine.

One might add that such stereotypes have found a comfortable home in the West. Several weeks before the failed coup in August 1991, former U.S. President George Bush warned Ukrainians against "suicidal nationalism." Rightly or wrongly, in Ukraine this was understood to mean that Russian nationalism is acceptable, that is, "normal," while Ukrainian nationalism is not. Similarly, Western commentators are fond of pointing out that Kravchuk was a communist ideologue turned nationalist overnight, but rarely refer to Yel'tsin's career in the CPSU, which included candidate membership in the Politburo, or Eduard Shevardnadze's pre-1985 responsibilities in Tbilisi, which included a stint as republican minister of internal affairs.

[5]On the role of the state in the formation of Russian national consciousness, see Semyenkov (1990).

[6]The Soviet state, it will be recalled, also created its "Soviet people" (*sovetskiy narod*), which was defined as "a new historical community."

[7]Cited by Ryabchuk (1988, p. 250).

historical development does not fully explain what might be termed Russia's "Ukrainian complex." The determining factor is the conviction that Ukraine is in fact an organic part of Russia and, indeed, as Len Karpinskiy, the chief editor of *Moskovskiye novosti*, points out, "without Ukraine not only can there be no great Russia, but there cannot be any kind of Russia at all" (*Moskovskiye novosti*, December 22, 1991, p. 8).

This perception, which specifically defines Russia in Ukrainian terms, continues the tradition of classical Russian political thought on the Ukrainian question as articulated in the publicistic works of such well-known figures as Pyotr Struve (1870–1944) and Georgiy Fyedotov (1886–1951). Briefly stated, it affirms the ethnographic, cultural, and linguistic unity of the Great Russians (Russians), Little Russians (Ukrainians), and Belorussians, and posits the concept of a single all-Russian (*obshcherusskiy*) national identity. Struve, a prominent liberal democrat at the turn of the century, warned that "Ukrainianism" posed "an enormous cultural problem" for Russians:

> If the "Ukrainian" idea of the intelligentsia takes root in the masses and ignites them with its "Ukrainianism," it threatens a gigantic and unprecedented schism of the Russian nation, which, such is my deepest conviction, will result in veritable disaster for the state and for the people. All of our problems with the "periphery" will become mere trifles compared to the prospect of the "bifurcation" and, if the "Belorussians" follow behind the "Little Russians," the "trifurcation" of Russian culture (Struve, 1912, p. 85).

Several decades later, Fyedotov wrote: "The Ukrainian problem has an infinitely more profound meaning for Russia than all other national problems. It is a question not only of the political structure of Russia and its boundaries, but of its spiritual life (Fyedotov, 1988b, p. 207). For Fyedotov, it was clear that Russia could survive only if Russian national consciousness developed "simultaneously as Great Russian (*velikorusskiy*), Russian (*russkiy*), and Russian (*rossiyskiy*)," that is, if it succeeded in simultaneously functioning on three levels: ethnically Russian, historically Russian (Russian + Ukrainian), and imperial. The most difficult part of this formula was the ethnic-historical link:

> From Great Russian to Russian (*russkiy*). This, above all, is the problem of Ukraine. The problem is too complex for it to be treated in detail here. But the very existence of Russia depends on its successful resolution. Our task can be formulated as follows: not only to keep Ukraine in the body of Russia, but also to implant Ukrainian culture into Russian culture. We are witnessing a very rapid and, for us, an extremely dangerous process: the conception of a new Ukrainian national consciousness, essentially a new nation. . . . It is impossible to kill it, but

> one can work so that its consciousness establishes itself as a special form of Russian (*russkiy*) consciousness (Fyedotov, 1988a, p. 290).

One could argue that the concept of the "Soviet people" represented a sovietized version of Fyedotov's trifunctional formula. Ultimately, it was rejected by the non-Russians, beginning with the Baltic nations, and implicitly by the Russians themselves when their elected representatives proclaimed Russia's sovereignty in June 1990. Indeed, Mikhail Gorbachev, among others, has recently argued that Russia's attempt to differentiate itself from the Soviet Union set into motion the process that ended with the failure of the Soviet experiment. A "stable" Russia, he explained (that is, a Russia which maintained its Soviet identity), would have precluded the collapse of the Soviet Union:

> They established Russia. Well, what does it mean to establish Russia? It means to destroy the [Soviet] Union. You see, the [Soviet] Union came into being around Russia. And there is no point here in trying to dodge the issue. All of the peoples of the [Soviet] Union recognize the USSR as the legitimate, constituted form of the leading role of Russia and of state-building around it (*Rossiyskaya gazeta*, August 19, 1993, p. 3).

Ironically, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a process abetted by Russia, made it possible for the non-Russians to transform their symbolic Soviet nations and republics into genuine ones, while depriving the Russians of the "real" Russia and leaving them to wonder what it means to be Russian. Increasingly, Western observers are concluding that Moscow is seeking to resolve this dilemma by reverting to its imperial legacy.[8] That conclusion can only have been strengthened by the results of Russia's December 12, 1993 elections, which brought many ultra-nationalists and imperial-restorationists into the lower house of the new parliament.

UKRAINE IN THE RUSSIAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM

The Russian Right Wing

The "irreconcilable opposition" to Yel'tsin that brought together Russian nationalists and communists went through several stages of organization before assuming concrete form with the creation of the National Salvation Front (FNS) in October 1992.[9] Its "Manifesto" described the agreements creating the CIS as a "conspiracy" and an act of "treachery,"

[8]See, for example, "Great Russia Revives," *The Economist*, September 18, 1993, pp. 29–30, and "Warnung vor einer 'Re-Imperialisierung' Russlands," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 25, 1993, p. 7, which summarizes the discussion at the "International Bertelsmann Forum 1993" by prominent European and American statesmen and scholars.

[9]For an excellent survey of Russian political parties' views on Ukraine, see Lester (1993).

and bluntly stated that "all our policies with regard to the former Soviet republics will be geared towards the gradual restoration of a single state." To further this goal, the FNS expressed its full support for the "efforts of this or that region to reunite with Russia" (*Vestnik FNS*, special edition of *Nasha Rossiya*, 21, 1992, p. 4). The FNS position on Ukraine (and Belarus') was articulated at its founding congress in the following terms:

> We will never accept the independence of the regimes in Ukraine and Belorussia! Our attitude toward the regimes in Ukraine and Belorussia is defined not by the norms of international law but by the norms of the [Russian?] Criminal Code (*Izvestiya*, Moscow evening edition, October 27, 1992, p. 3).

The "patriots-statists," as they prefer to call themselves, draw heavily on the "Russian idea" for their vision of the Russian nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that Fyedotov's notion of Russian national consciousness functioning simultaneously on three levels was mirrored in the ideology of groups such as the Russian All-People's Union (ROS), which was one of the founding members of the FNS. According to the ROS program, the uniqueness of "Russian national-state consciousness" lies precisely in its "historically developed multivariance":

> Unlike, let us say, the Lithuanians or the Estonians, the Russians are not only an ethnos, but also a superethnos, creating something like an "environment of interaction" for many peoples and ethnic groups that are partially merged with it. . . . That is why Russians seek to consolidate themselves simultaneously in two directions—both as a nation proper and as a superethnic formation (an "imperial people") (Andreyev, 1992, pp. 159–160).

ROS leader Sergey Baburin, an influential opposition leader in the former Russian parliament, a deputy in the new parliament, and originally one of several co-chairmen of the FNS, considers Russia proper to be an extension or outgrowth of Ukraine:

> Little Russia [Ukraine] is the central, primordial Russia. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. When they say Great Russia, that is already the periphery. In comparison to Kiev we are on the periphery, because all of this was the gradual expansion of a single Slavic state (*Ostankino Television*, 1920 Moscow Time, October 16, 1992).

His recipe for "normalizing" Russian-Ukrainian relations is alarmingly simple: "Either Ukraine once again reunites with Russia, or there will be war" (*Izvestiya*, Moscow evening edition, May 26, 1992, p. 2).

A similar position is held by the National Republican Party of Russia (NRPR), also a founding member of the FNS, whose political program

called for "Russia's return to its natural borders in the northwestern and southwestern part of the country," that is, the reincorporation of Ukraine and Belarus'.[10] The party's leader, Nikolay Lysenko, also rejects a purely ethnic definition of the Russian nation:

> It seems to me that today only the concept of "all-Russianness" (*obshcherusskost'*) can serve as the synonym for an ideological concept of "nationality" (*narodnost'*). Why is precisely this semantic infusion of the term important? In order to understand this, one must appreciate the main result of the now final epoch of perestroyka, which, I am convinced, consists of the schism of the East Slavic ethnopolitical space into Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia. All other "achievements" of perestroyka, inspite of their infamy and criminality, nevertheless will not result in catastrophe for Russia. . . . But the loss of Russian-Ukrainian-Belorussian unity, the final division of the Russian river into three "sovereign" streams, means the end of Russia as a great world and European power (*Golos Rossii*, 4, 1992, p. 3).

Accordingly, Lysenko maintains that "the first and foremost task of Russian national-state ideology is the preparation of public consciousness for the speediest reunification and, this time, the complete organic fusion of Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia into a single Russian Empire" (*Ibid.*)

One of the more colorful figures on the Russian radical right is Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, head of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), who finished third in the 1991 Russian presidential elections, and whose party garnered over 23 percent of the vote in the December 1993 parliamentary elections. Zhirinovskiy, who plans to challenge Yel'tsin for the presidency, is known, above all, for his straightforwardness: "Ukraine became part of Russia more than three hundred years ago. That was forever. Such concepts as Ukraine or the RSFSR do not exist—there is only Russia" (*Nezavisimost'*, November 12, 1993, p. 2). Asked what he would do if elected president, Zhirinovskiy responded that first of all Crimea and then the Donbass and Dnipropetrovs'k *Oblast'* would be taken by Russia. Political prisoners would be freed, he asserted, and their cells in Lefortovo would be occupied by those who destroyed the Soviet Union, with the Ukrainian president at the top of the list (*Ibid.*).

Although often referred to as "moderate nationalists," the leaders of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement (RKhDD) and the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets), Viktor Aksyuchits and Mikhail Astaf'yev, respectively, defined the problems of nation and state in terms that were hardly distinguishable from those of the radical right.[11] Initially,

[10]The political program of the NRPR, adopted at its Third Congress in November 1992, is published in *Golos Rossii* (5, 1993, pp. 5–8).

[11]Astaf'yev (but not Aksyuchits) was among the more than thirty members of the organizational committee that formed the FNS. For a full list of the membership, see *Den'* (October 11–17, 1992, p. 1).

both groups were members of the Democratic Russia Movement (DDR), but left the coalition after the failed August 1991 putsch. The fundamental issue was the alleged "anti-state" position of liberal democrats in the DDR leadership, such as Yuriy Afanas'yev and Yelena Bonner. Aksyuchits later explained

> We are patriots, we oppose the destruction of the [territorial] integrity of the USSR and Russia. That is precisely what was behind our break with the Democratic Russians. "Democratic Russia" was very successful in destroying the Fatherland, but has absolutely no intention of dismantling the totalitarian system of power (*Glasnost'*, July 16–22, 1992, p. 3).

Aksyuchits and Astaf'yev went on to form the Russian People's Assembly (RNS) at the Congress of Civic and Patriotic Forces of Russia in February 1992 as a right-of-center alternative to the DDR. The RNS program of "political principles and immediate tasks" included, *inter alia*, the following points: (1) the rebirth by political means of a "single and great Russia within its historical borders"; (2) recognition of the Russian Federation as the legal successor to the Russian Empire and the USSR; (3) rejection of the "anti-constitutional treaties and agreements that led to the dismemberment of the country," that is, the Soviet Union; and (4) non-recognition of the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine (*Obozrevatel'*, 2–3, February 1992 [special insert], p. 11). In an interview several months after Ukraine declared its independence, Aksyuchits expressed the conviction that "the course now taken by Ukraine's leadership will ultimately and logically end in war between Ukraine and Russia" (*Radio Rossii*, 1200 Moscow Time, November 26, 1991). According to the liberal Moscow weekly *New Times*, the RKhDD draws its main inspiration from opposition to Yel'tsin "under the banner of the struggle for a 'single and indivisible Russia' that encompasses Ukraine, Belarus', and Northern Kazakhstan, which, it is convinced, constitute Southern Russia" (*Novoye vremya*, 46, November 1993, p. 8).

The Russian Centrists

The center within the Russian political spectrum has primarily been identified with the pre-October 1993 Civic Union coalition led by Arkadiy Vol'skiy, president of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, and by former Russian Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoy.[12] Even if we ignore his role in the so-called "October events" of 1993 in Moscow, Rutskoy's "centrism" was always a misnomer when applied to his conception of what constitutes Russia. Already in January 1992, Rutskoy, like other Russian "patriots," made it clear that Russia, defined as the Russian

[12]Nikolay Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia (DPR) is also counted among Russia's centrist opposition. Travkin, like Aksyuchits and Astaf'yev, opposed the collapse of the Soviet Union and broke with the DDR at the end of 1991 (Brudny, 1993, p. 156).

Federation, was an illegitimate "banana republic" in which he had no desire to live (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, January 17, 1992, p. 1):

> The destruction of Russia as a single state will raise in the acutest form not only the question of its so-called "new" inner borders, but also its historical "outer" borders. . . . The historical consciousness of Russians will not permit anyone to mechanically bring the borders of Russia in line with [the borders of] the Russian Federation and, in the process, repudiate that which constituted the glorious pages of Russian history (*Pravda*, January 30, 1992, p. 3).

Within a relatively short time, Rutskoy's political evolution moved him from a position of disclaiming any particular sympathy for the Soviet Union, to supporting a confederation of former Soviet republics, to calling for "solidarity in defense of the state and the restoration of the USSR with a Soviet system of power" (*ITAR-TASS*, September 18, 1993).

The former Vice President's restorationist views are shared by Arkadiy Vol'skiy, who openly admits to nostalgia for the USSR. While conceding that a return to the Soviet Union is unrealistic "at the present stage of history," he is convinced that state formations like the Russian Empire and the USSR do not arise by accident and do not disappear without a trace. The fact that Russians, Ukrainians, and others lived for centuries within a single state, he argues, was historically predetermined by "objective laws" that continue to be in force. Consequently, for Vol'skiy the notion of the "Soviet people" is not an abstract ideological formula, but a reality that has ostensibly been proven by geneticists at the Russian Academy of Sciences. Further, he maintains that "humanity develops as a single organism" and that ethnic assimilation is a "natural and inevitable process," all of which will require a reconsideration of the unfounded notion of national self-determination. His political mission, he says, is to "replace those politicians who fool the people with fairy tales that freedom and independence will bring them prosperity" (*Pravda*, September 9, 1992, p. 2). Against this background, it is not surprising that Vol'skiy served on the organizational committee of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies of the USSR, which was convened in Moscow to promote the resurrection of the Soviet Union (*ITAR-TASS*, September 16, 1993). Clearly, from Kiev's standpoint, Russia's political center leaves a great deal to be desired.

The Russian "Democrats"

What of the Russian democrats? Many Ukrainians, including Kiev's ambassador to Moscow, are inclined to share the view expressed by Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a prominent Ukrainian writer and one of the central figures in the Ukrainian revolution of 1917–1920, to the effect that "Russian democracy ends where the Ukrainian question begins."[13] Ivan

[13]See the interview with Volodymyr Kryzhanivs'kyi, the Ukrainian ambassador to Russia, in *Stolitsa* (36, 1992, pp. 11–13).

Drach, the first head of the Ukrainian opposition coalition Rukh, would probably agree. Among Russia's democrats, he insists, those who support Ukrainian independence "can be counted on one's fingers," naming only Yuriy Afanas'yev and Yelena Bonner (*Moloda Halychyna*, March 16, 1993, p. 1). Drach's view may be overly categorical, not unlike Henry Kissinger's remark that he had not met a Russian who accepted that Ukraine "can be truly independent" (*Newsweek*, February 10, 1992, p. 35). Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Ukrainian perception is such as it is, reflecting not only the legacy of historical experience but also the last two years of relations with Yel'tsin's Russia.

Yel'tsin himself has been very circumspect in his public statements on Russian-Ukrainian relations and was critical of the former Russian parliament for unnecessarily exacerbating relations with Kiev over the Crimean issue. The one major exception came two days after Ukraine's declaration of independence, when the presidential press secretary issued a statement declaring that Russia reserved the right to review borders with those republics, apart from the three Baltic states, that secede from the Soviet Union.[14]

Members of Yel'tsin's administration and prominent Russian political figures with solid reputations as democrats have been much less diplomatic. Prominent figures like Anatoliy Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg, and Gavriil Popov, the former mayor of Moscow, were the earliest and most vocal opponents of Ukrainian independence. Former Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Poltoranin, a close associate of Yel'tsin's and erstwhile chief of the federal information service, caused a scandal in early 1992 when, asked by a journalist what he thought about separatist tendencies in Russia proper, responded by accusing Kravchuk of playing the nationalist card (*Trud*, January 14, 1992, p. 2). Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, rightfully considered one of the most liberal, Western-oriented officials in the Moscow political establishment, has not shirked from questioning the legitimacy of Ukraine's borders. While in Ukraine to prepare for the June 1993 summit between Yel'tsin and Kravchuk, he expressed his support for the "reunification" of Ukraine with Russia (*ITAR-TASS*, June 7, 1993). In the Ukrainian-Russian context, the term "reunification," which was a staple of the Soviet ideological lexicon, has a very specific connotation that implies nothing less than the return of lost territory to the motherland. Presidential advisers Sergey Stankevich and Andranik Migranyan are both strong advocates of a hardline position regarding the Russian and Russian-speaking minorities in the CIS states; neither of these men recognizes Russia's current borders as final. Stankevich has predicted that Russia will soon be at the center of a new union of former Soviet republics. Moscow's task, he says, is to consolidate itself in its present borders and then to conduct a gradual "economic and cultural expansion" into the so-called "near abroad" (*RFE/RL Daily Report*, 129, July 9, 1993, p. 1).

[14]For the text, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (August 27, 1991, p. 2).

Migranyan, during a visit to Kiev, made it clear that: (1) the territory of the former USSR lies within the vital interests of Russia and Russia alone; (2) Western support for any former Soviet republic that is seriously at odds with Russia will be seen by the latter as a threat to its security; (3) Crimea is only one of several territorial disputes between Russia and Ukraine that have yet to be resolved; (4) Moscow wants to see Ukraine sovereign, stable, and indivisible, but only if it is closely integrated militarily, politically, and economically with Russia; and (5) because the present Ukrainian leadership does not reflect the aspirations of its people, Russian policy will be oriented toward the people of Ukraine, rather than the government (*Respublika*, November 4–10, 1993, p. 1).

Statements such as these, although reflecting a particular mind-set, must be viewed in the context of the rapidly changing political environment in which Russia and Ukraine found themselves, particularly after mid-1990. Initially, Moscow and Kiev shared a common interest in weakening Gorbachev's center; but when the center began to show signs of disintegration their views diverged on the degree to which the process of collapse should be promoted. The failed August coup resolved that problem, but raised another, namely, how to emerge from the status of "fraternal Soviet republics" to independent states. The Commonwealth of Independent States, which was essentially the product of a joint Russian-Ukrainian venture, meant different things to Moscow and Kiev, and has proved ineffective in resolving such key bilateral issues as the Crimean question, the disposition of the Black Sea Fleet, and the fate of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal.

RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND THE CENTER

Although largely symbolic, the fact that Russia, unlike the remaining fourteen former Union republics, did not declare its independence from the Soviet Union is indicative of its unique identity problem, which came fully into view after the collapse of the USSR. Yel'tsin's Russia, unlike Kravchuk's Ukraine, did not want to dissociate itself entirely from the center. As in so many other respects, the event which brought this difference into bold relief was the August coup attempt of 1991, which prompted a fractious parliament in Kiev to proclaim independence on August 24, subject to a republic-wide referendum on December 1. Thereafter, Kiev simply withdrew from the Novo Ogaryevo negotiating process, thereby sealing the fate of the Soviet Union.

During the final years of the Gorbachev period, Russia and Ukraine initiated the process of normalizing and desovietizing their relations. This was intensified after Yel'tsin assumed the leadership of the Russian republic and came to personify democratic Russia's opposition to Gorbachev's center. In August 1990, representatives of the Ukrainian parliamentary opposition grouped in the Narodna Rada (People's Council) and their Russian counterparts from the Democratic Russia bloc signed a "Declaration of the Principles of Interstate Relations between Ukraine and

the RSFSR based on the Declarations of State Sovereignty."[15] Noting that the growth of democratic movements in the republics offered the Ukrainian and Russian peoples "a real chance to open a new page in the history of their relations," the Declaration affirmed: (1) the unconditional recognition of Ukraine and Russia as subjects of international law; (2) the "sovereign equality" of both republics; (3) noninterference in each other's internal affairs and the renunciation of force in their dealings; (4) the inviolability of existing state borders between Ukraine and Russia and the renunciation of any and all territorial claims; (5) the safeguarding of the political, economic, ethnic, and cultural rights of representatives of nations in the RSFSR living in Ukraine and vice versa; and (6) the desirability of mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields on the basis of state treaties and the regulation of disputes in the spirit of harmony.

These principles were subsequently incorporated into the formal treaty between Russia and Ukraine signed by Yel'tsin and Kravchuk in Kiev on November 19, 1990, which specifically recognized the territorial integrity of both republics and their existing borders within the USSR.[16] The choice of the Ukrainian capital as the venue for the official ceremonies was not fortuitous. Speaking at a press conference directly after the treaty was initialed, Yel'tsin emphasized that by coming to Kiev the Russian side wished to demonstrate that, unlike previous agreements that had been concluded in the Soviet capital on unequal terms, the new accord marked a fundamental change in relations betwen Moscow and Kiev. In Moscow, he told Russian lawmakers that "Russia is not aspiring to become the center of some kind of new empire and gain advantages with regard to other republics" (*TASS*, November 20, 1990). Both parliaments ratified the document within a matter of days, although in Moscow doubts were raised about the wisdom of adhering to the pact before resolving the question of Crimea's future.

In the months that followed, Russia and Ukraine provided the core of opposition to Gorbachev's plans for a renewed Soviet Union by jealously guarding their prerogatives as sovereign states. Nonetheless, it was clear from the start that Moscow and Kiev had divergent views and policies with regard to the center. Yel'tsin, in spite of his personal conflict with Gorbachev, proved to be considerably more amenable and flexible in his dealings with the center than was the Ukrainian leadership. This was clearly reflected in the events surrounding the so-called Nine-Plus-One Agreement in Novo Ogaryevo in April 1991 between Gorbachev and representatives of the nine Union republics that had participated in the March 17 referendum on preserving the Soviet Union (the RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan).

The agreement, which took the form of a joint statement calling for the speedy conclusion of a new Union treaty, finally recognized the republics

[15]For the text, see *Literaturna Ukraina* (September 6, 1990, p. 1).

[16]For the text, see *Radyans'ka Ukraina* (November 21, 1990, p. 1).

as "sovereign states" and conceded that stabilization of the situation in the Soviet Union required "a cardinal increase in the role of the Union republics."[17] Yel'tsin, who only shortly before had been calling for Gorbachev's resignation, described the concessions as a "tremendous victory" that demonstrated the Soviet leader's commitment to democratic reforms; he went on to assert that Gorbachev was now "our ally" (*The New York Times*, May 12, 1991, p. 13). Kravchuk, who was on an official visit to Germany and did not attend the meeting, claimed to have little knowledge of its preparation and was less than enthusiastic about what most commentators saw as a major breakthrough in the gridlock between the center and the republics. When asked by journalists if Prime Minister Vitol'd Fokin, who represented Ukraine at Novo Ogaryevo, had the authority to sign the statement, Kravchuk responded that it did not really matter because the document "has no juridical force." The positive aspect, he added, was that the center had finally recognized the need for a Union of Sovereign States in which the republics would play the major role (*Komsomol'skoye znamya*, May 6, 1991, p. 1).

A clear indication of Ukraine's determined effort to avoid being drawn into a new union was the decision taken by an overwhelming majority of the parliament at the end of June 1991 to postpone discussion of the draft Union treaty until after mid-September 1991. Kiev's official position was that it needed time to evaluate the latest draft in order to determine if it was in line with its own sovereignty declaration. At about the same time, on July 5, the Russian parliament, under pressure from Yel'tsin, joined seven other republics in approving the draft Union treaty in principle. The lawmakers demanded certain amendments, including Russia's jurisdiction over all enterprises on its territory, and reserved the right to review the final text of the draft. Several weeks later, after a marathon session with Gorbachev, the Russian President was reported as having said that "from the Russian side, there is no obstacle to concluding the Union treaty tomorrow, if you like" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1991, p. A12).

The failed coup and its consequences, specifically the declaration of Ukraine's independence and the relatively effortless dismantling of Soviet structures by both Russia and Ukraine, charted the course for Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. The initial decrees issued by Yel'tsin, and the appointment of RSFSR officials to key posts in the central Soviet administration, sparked a reaction in Ukraine and elsewhere. At a press conference on August 30, Kravchuk called attention to the post-putsch "euphoria" in Russia and the "exaggeration of the merits of some one individual or one people."

> This is already taking concrete forms. Let's say in that all state structures should be based on the Russian ones and that the

[17]For the text, see *Pravda* (April 24, 1991, p. 1). In December 1990, the Fourth Congress of USSR People's Deputies had voted by a large majority against juridically recognizing the sovereignty declarations adopted by the republics.

> cadres should only be Russian. You see that now a committee has been formed headed by [Ivan] Silayev and other representatives of Russia. Right now I do not want to pass judgment on the work of this committee, but as chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine I have my doubts whether this committee, which is composed of representatives of one republic, can defend the interests of other republics (*Sil's'ki visti*, September 4, 1991, p. 1).

But the first serious clash between Moscow and Kiev was prompted by the August 26 statement on border issues released by Yel'tsin's press secretary, Pavel Voshchanov, which seemed to have been prompted by Ukraine's declaration of independence. At a press conference the same day, Voshchanov explained that the statement referred primarily to Crimea, the Donbass, and northern Kazakhstan, all of which have substantial Russian populations. "If these republics enter the Union with Russia," he asserted, "it is not a problem. But if they go, we must take care of the population that lives there and not forget that these lands were settled by Russians. Russia will hardly agree to give away these territories just like that" (*Reuters*, August 27, 1991). The Ukrainian response was predictable. Serhiy Ryabchenko, addressing his colleagues in the USSR Supreme Soviet the next day, warned of "the dangers of recreating imperial structures, but under different names," and demanded that the Russian leadership retract its statement (*TASS*, August 27, 1991). A similar warning was issued by the democratic opposition movement Rukh:

> Once more, an attempt at a Ukrainian rebirth, just as it did seventy-two years ago, calls forth high-handed rejection from certain newly democratized leaders of Russia—victors over the Red putschists. Once more, illusions of messianism, once more the "Big Brother" syndrome, imperial aspirations regarding one's neighbors.[18]

The Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet was more diplomatic, instructing the parliament's press center to issue a statement saying that: (1) the Ukrainian declaration of independence affirmed the indivisibility and inviolability of Ukraine's territory; (2) the Ukrainian leadership is not calling into question its borders with the RSFSR, respects its territorial integrity, and has no territorial claims on the RSFSR or any other bordering states; (3) the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet is prepared to discuss any border questions on the basis of the 1990 Ukrainian-Russian treaty; (4) Article 6 of that treaty recognizes the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the RSFSR as defined by the currently existing borders within the USSR; (5) the existence or nonexistence of Union relationships cannot serve as the basis for calling into question existing borders between

[18]For the text, see *The Ukrainian Weekly* (September 8, 1991, p. 3).

Russia and Ukraine; and (6) there is therefore no legal basis to treat the August 26 statement as having any bearing on relations between Ukraine and Russia (*Sil's'ki visti*, September 29, 1991, p. 1). At the same time, Kravchuk told a press conference that "territorial claims are very dangerous," that he had already discussed the issue with Yel'tsin, and that an explanation from the Russian President would be forthcoming (*TASS*, August 27, 1991).

There is no record of any subsequent clarification from Moscow; rather, Yel'tsin reiterated his position on borders during meetings with Gorbachev and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on August 27 and again the following evening in an interview with a French radio station (*Radio Kiev*, 1900 GMT, August 27, 1991; *TASS*, August 27 and 29, 1991). The situation was aggravated by remarks made by Sobchak and Popov, two of the most prominent representatives of the Russian democratic camp at the time. Sobchak, addressing the opening session of the extraordinary session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on August 26, called into question the motives of those republics that had proclaimed their independence, suggesting that this was a ploy, that "under the cover of this talk about national independence they are trying to retain these [communist] structures, but with a new face" (*Radio Moscow*, August 26, 1991). Popov, appearing on central television the following day, went further. Referring to the independence declarations as "parades of secession," the Moscow mayor claimed that such moves were illegal; that he fully supported Yel'tsin on the border question; and that Russian treaties with the secessionist republics should be renegotiated with a view toward protecting the Russian minorities living there. Among others, he asserted that the status of Crimea and the Odessa *Oblast'* should be decided by local referendum (*Central Soviet Television*, August 27, 1991).

In the midst of these developments, Russia dispatched a delegation to Kiev headed by Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoy. Its purpose, as Yel'tsin subsequently explained, was "to tell the Ukrainian people: if you stay in the Union we will not make territorial claims" (*TASS*, August 29, 1991). Kiev was not informed beforehand and learned of the mission from the nationally televised broadcast of the USSR Supreme Soviet session on August 28. Ivan Laptev, who was presiding over the session, unexpectedly announced that an "emergency situation" had developed, and that a Russian delegation was on its way to the Ukrainian capital; he proposed that the Supreme Soviet send its own envoys headed by Sobchak. The initiative appears to have come from the Leningrad mayor, who earlier in the day had proposed that the Supreme Soviet form a special commission for negotiations with the Ukrainian parliament with a view towards precluding a "spontaneous collapse of Union structures of power" (*Central Soviet Television*, 2100 Moscow Time, August 28, 1991).

Both delegations arrived in Kiev later in the day and were met by a hostile crowd said to be the largest since the student strike in October 1990. After more than nine hours of negotiation, with the Supreme Soviet representatives acting as observers, the Russian and Ukrainian sides

produced an eight-point communique promising joint efforts to avert the "uncontrolled disintegration of the Union state" and recognizing the need for interim interstate structures for a transitional period with the participation of interested states that were "subjects of the former USSR." It proposed that these states immediately undertake preparations for signing an economic treaty, reform the Soviet armed forces, create a system of collective security, and refrain from unilateral decisions regarding strategic military matters. The agreement also confirmed the articles of the 1990 treaty concerning the territorial integrity of both states and the rights of their citizens.[19]

The "emergency situation" sparked by Ukraine's declaration of independence appeared to be under control. Sobchak, upon returning to Moscow, reported to the USSR Supreme Soviet that what he had seen in Kiev convinced him that Ukraine's path to independent statehood was irreversible.

FROM THE USSR TO THE CIS

After the abortive coup, it became clear that the Ukrainian and Russian positions with regard to Gorbachev and the new Union treaty were moving even further apart. At his August 27 press conference, Kravchuk maintained that work on the Union treaty was out of the question for Ukraine, which would define its position on the basis of the results of its planned referendum. In any case, he insisted, the new Union could only be a confederation. On the same day, Gorbachev met with Yel'tsin and Nazarbayev and, according to TASS, the three once again expressed their commitment to the Novo Ogaryevo process and the speedy signing of the Union treaty. Increasingly, the Ukrainian position became more obdurate. By November 1991, Kravchuk was saying that the Novo Ogaryevo process no longer existed and that it was pointless to try to resurrect it. Ukraine did not take part in either the November 14 meeting of the State Council, where Russia and six other republics approved in principle the revised draft treaty, or the November 25 session that was to have witnessed the signing of the document. In an *Izvestiya* interview published the following day, the Ukrainian leader derisively described Gorbachev's efforts as a "fraud" in which he would not participate. The Ukrainian referendum, which resulted in a surprising vote of more than 90 percent in favor of independence, effectively put an end to the Novo Ogaryevo process; and on December 6 the Kiev parliament officially nullified its June 1991 resolution on participating in the treaty negotiations (*TASS*, August 27, 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, November 12, 1991; *Izvestiya*, November 26, 1991).

Yel'tsin and the Russian leadership, on the other hand, continued to express their support for Gorbachev's plans, albeit with modifications, until the very eve of the tripartite talks on the CIS. In his address to the

[19]For the text, see *Molod' Ukrainy* (August 30, 1991, p. 1).

Congress of USSR People's Deputies on September 3, the Russian President argued for "a slight departure from the Novo Ogaryevo agreements," proposing that the new Union allow for various forms of association, but "in some kind of single system." At the end of October, Yel'tsin insisted that Russia should not be the one to initiate the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and on November 30, after a meeting with Gorbachev, he emphasized that he had always supported the Union. As late as December 5, after another meeting with Gorbachev, he maintained that there was no alternative to the Union treaty. It was only in his address to the Belarusian parliament two days later that Yel'tsin, while stressing that Russia had always wanted a Union, conceded that the attempt to reconstitute the USSR "has passed into history" (*Rossiya*, September 6–10, 1991; *TASS*, October 31, 1991; *Central Soviet Television*, November 30, 1991; *TASS*, December 5, 1991; *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, December 10, 1991).[20]

The differences between Moscow and Kiev were reflected at the December 7–8 talks in Belarus' that dissolved the Soviet Union. What exactly transpired during those thirty-six hours at a government retreat near Brest has yet to be fully documented. Thus far, Kravchuk has been the most forthcoming.[21] According to his account, the meeting was arranged on Ukraine's initiative already in mid-November 1991. At the talks, Yel'tsin, acting as Gorbachev's spokesman, informed Kravchuk that the Soviet President was prepared to let Ukraine make any amendments to the text of the Union treaty that it desired, but only under one candition: that it sign the document. Specifically, Yel'tsin conveyed three questions from Gorbachev. Would Ukraine sign the existing draft? The answer was "no." Would Ukraine sign with "some changes" if it were allowed to introduce them? Again the answer was "no." Lastly, would Ukraine sign its own version of the treaty? Kravchuk responded that if Ukraine were to propose its version the result would not be a confederative state but a commonwealth of states.

At that juncture, having said that Russia would only agree to the Union if Ukraine signed the treaty first, Yel'tsin abandoned Gorbachev. After returning to Kiev, Kravchuk told journalists that Russia (and Belarus) had wanted a closer association, but ultimately yielded to the Ukrainian position. Thus, from the very start, the CIS in the form that it was created in December 1991 was not the variant that Russia would have preferred. Indeed, at the Sixth Congress of Russian People's Deputies in April 1992, when Yel'tsin first found himself under strong attack from the national-patriotic opposition, he did not hesitate to remind the lawmakers that "it was not Russia that seceded from the [Soviet] Union" and that the drive for independence in most of the republics forced Russia to accede to the CIS.[22]

Against this background, it is not at all surprising that Russia, together with Kazakhstan, has been a vocal advocate of closer integration of the CIS

[20]For a discussion of the Ukrainian and Russian positions, see Solchanyk (1992c, pp. 3–5).
[21]See the interviews with Kravchuk in *Paris Match* (December 26, 1991, p. 58); *Russian Television*, 2135 Moscow Time (February 11, 1992); and *Sobesednik* (15, April 1992, p. 6).
[22]For the text of Yel'tsin's address to the Congress, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (April 23, 1992, p. 3).

member-states, favoring the establishment of coordinating bodies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and the CIS Charter. Initially, Yel'tsin was very diplomatic in his public statements about the Commonwealth, preferring to let Nazarbayev act as the chief spokesman for integration. Thus, in September 1992, on the eve of the CIS summit in Bishkek, the Russian President sent a personal message to the CIS heads of state proposing that each member determine its own pace of integration within the Commonwealth (*Izvestiya*, Moscow evening edition, September 25, 1992, p. 1). The Congress of People's Deputies, in contrast, was much more forthright. In April 1992 it passed a resolution expressing its dissatisfaction with the level of political, economic, and military integration within the Commonwealth and calling for its further development (*Rossiyskaya gazeta*, April 22, 1992, p. 1). By the end of the year, the Russian lawmakers were asking the parliaments of the former Soviet republics to consider forming "a confederation or some other form of drawing together (*sblizheniye*) of independent states of Europe and Asia, whose peoples are expressing their desire for unity" (*ITAR-TASS*, December 14, 1992).

These steps appeared to accord with the prevailing mood in Russia, where survey research reported that "the desire to live together manifests itself in that people identify the strengthening of the CIS as the main way of strengthening statehood; they consider these problems more important than the problem of their own national statehood" (Klyamkin, 1992, p. 15). Moreover, the integrationist principle was formally incorporated into Russia's "Foreign Policy Concept," which was in turn approved by Yel'tsin. The document gave top priority to relations with the "near abroad," stating that it is in Russia's interests "to steer a course aimed at attaining the maximum possible degree of integration of the former Soviet republics in all areas of their vital activities on a strictly voluntary and reciprocal basis" (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 29, 1993, p. 3). The same approach was reflected in Yel'tsin's appeal of March 17, 1993 to the heads of the CIS states calling for greater cooperation and coordination in security matters, foreign affairs, the economy, and human rights issues, which was the sole item on the agenda of the CIS summit in Minsk the following month.[23]

In Ukraine, by contrast, the democratic opposition was very wary of the CIS from the start, questioning Kravchuk's right to bring Ukraine into the Commonwealth and suggesting that the country's sovereignty was threatened by CIS membership. This found expression in the twelve "reservations" that the Ukrainian parliament appended to the CIS agreement, including affirmation of the inviolability of state borders and the right to national armed forces, as well as the downgrading of joint foreign policy activities from "coordination" to "consultation." Little more than a week later, on the eve of the Alma-Ata meeting at which an additional eight former republics joined the Commonwealth, the Ukrainian parliament went a step further and adopted a thirteen-point declaration clearly

[23]For the text, see *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (March 18, 1993, p. 1).

presenting its understanding of the CIS as a loose association of independent states. The move was prompted, according to the document, by what was described as attempts to form a "new union state" on the basis of the CIS.[24] Very early on, the Ukrainian leadership made it clear that it viewed the CIS as a necessary mechanism to facilitate an orderly divorce process, or in Kravchuk's words "a committee to liquidate the old structures." Dmytro Pavlychko, the influential chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, very likely reflected the dominant mood when he remarked just a day after the CIS was formed that Ukraine saw it as a transitional body. "We are not signing it to last for centuries," he asserted, referring to the agreement (*The Washington Post*, December 10, 1991, p. A32).

It is only very recently, with the euphoria of independence giving way to the harsh realities of near economic collapse that Kiev has taken the initial steps towards economic integration with Russia. An important factor was the appointment of Leonid Kuchma, an experienced director of one of Ukraine's largest industrial enterprises from Dnipropetrovs'k, as prime minister in October 1992. While not a proponent of the shock-therapy approach to market reforms, Kuchma favored closer economic ties with Russia, saying that Kiev's "anti-Russian policies have led to anti-Ukrainian economic consequences" (*Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 1992, p. A6). More importantly, the Kiev government's inability to put into place any kind of effective economic program, and Ukraine's virtually complete dependence on Russia for energy, in effect dictated a reappraisal of previous policies, at least in the economic realm. Accordingly, at the CIS summit in Moscow in May 1993, Kravchuk affixed his signature to a joint declaration proposing greater economic integration and a common market for goods and services, while objecting to the idea of an "economic union." Ukraine also agreed to the formation of the CIS Consultative Coordination Committee, all of which led Yel'tsin to affirm that the notion of the CIS as an instrument for orderly divorce proceedings, a concept that had originated in Kiev, had been rejected by the CIS member states (*Izvestiya*, Moscow edition, May 15, 1993, p. 1).

In July 1993, Kuchma and the heads of government of Russia and Belarus' signed another statement expressing their intention to proceed with "urgent measures for tighter economic measures."[25] These steps came under harsh criticism from the national democratic opposition, as a result of which Ukraine did not become a full member of the economic union agreed upon in Moscow in September, opting instead for the undefined status of "associate member" (*Uryadovyy kuryer*, September 28, 1993, p. 1). Kiev's wariness was fueled by statements such as those by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Shokhin, who told journalists that Moscow was making it clear that joining the economic union "would

[24]For the texts, see *Holos Ukrainy* (December 14, 1991 p. 3) and *Holos Ukrainy* (December 21, 1991, p. 3).
[25]For the text, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (July 13, 1993, p. 2).

result in a partial loss of not just economic sovereignty, but political sovereignty as well" (*ITAR-TASS*, May 18, 1993). Yel'tsin's press spokesman conveyed the same idea, but in a somewhat harsher tone:

> Only blind nationalists from among those who burn Russian flags in response to normal political combinations now do not see that the economic union will . . . inevitably and logically be followed by a political union. It is a question of time (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, September 10, 1993, p. 1).

Russian-Ukrainian differences over the purpose and role of the CIS have been further exacerbated by Kiev's perception that Moscow is intent on playing a dominant role in the Commonwealth. Quite interesting in this regard is a confidential document prepared by Yevgeniy Ambartsumov, chairman of the Russian parliamentary commission on foreign affairs, excerpts from which were leaked in August 1992. The report, summing up closed hearings on Russia's foreign policy, called for rejection of the staunchly Western-oriented course defined by Kozyrev and proposed instead what was described as a "Russian Monroe Doctrine" for the CIS:

> As the internationally recognized legal successor to the USSR, the Russian Federation's foreign policy must be based on the doctrine that proclaims the entire geopolitical space of the former [Soviet] Union the sphere of its vital interests (along the lines of the USA's "Monroe Doctrine" in Latin America) and to secure from the world community understanding and recognition of Russia's special interests in this space. Russia must also secure from the international community the role of political and military guarantor of stability throughout the former space of the USSR (*Izvestiya*, Moscow evening edition, August 7, 1992, p. 6).

Essentially the same thesis was put forth by Yel'tsin in his address to the Civic Union at the end of February 1993, where the Russian leader asked the international community, including the United Nations, for "special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability" on the territory of the former Soviet Union (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, March 3, 1993, p. 3). The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately protested what it described as Moscow's attempt to assume "police" functions that threatened its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Yel'tsin subsequently clarified his position, saying that Russia would only take on such a role if requested. It is precisely this scenario that has taken shape on the Afghan-Tajik border, where skirmishes with Islamic fundamentalist opponents of the regime in Dushanbe resulted in Russian border guard casualties. The incident prompted Yel'tsin's angry outburst to the effect that everyone must

understand that "this border is effectively Russia's, not Tajikistan's."[26] The effect of such statements, combined with Russia's claims to Crimea, the ongoing struggle over the Black Sea Fleet, and the apparent conviction in Moscow that Ukrainian independence is a temporary phenomenon, has been to make Kiev extremely wary of Moscow's ambitions with regard to the "near abroad" and to fuel suspicions that Russia is pursuing a hidden agenda focused on reanimating a recycled version of the former Soviet Union, but under new management.

CRIMEA AND THE BLACK SEA FLEET

The dispute over the status of Crimea and the related question of the disposition of the Black Sea Fleet is arguably the most serious obstacle to normalization of relations between Moscow and Kiev. Several factors serve to make the Crimean question particularly vexing. First, the peninsula was formerly part of the RSFSR. It was transferred to Ukraine by a decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet (February 19, 1954) on the initiative of a resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet (February 5, 1954) and "legalized" by the USSR Supreme Soviet's "Law on the Transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR" (April 26, 1954). The discrediting of the Communist Party after the failed August coup, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, enabled Russian spokesmen to argue that Crimea's transfer was "illegal" because the decision was actually made by the Party leadership, not by Russia. Even Kozyrev, who attempted to exercise a moderating influence on Russian-Ukrainian relations, availed himself of this argument, denouncing the transfer as "a political decision of the former Politburo."[27]

A second complication is that Crimea is the only region in Ukraine with an ethnic Russian majority. According to the 1989 census, Russians accounted for 67 percent of the population, while Ukrainians constituted only 25.8 percent. Moreover, 47.4 percent of Ukrainians considered Russian to be their native language. As the Ukrainian drive for sovereignty and independence gained momentum in 1990 and 1991, autonomist and separatist sentiment in Crimea grew correspondingly. This was reflected in the results of the January 1991 local referendum on autonomy, which yielded a 93.3 percent affirmative response to the question: "Are you for the restoration of the Crimean ASSR as a subject of the USSR and a party

[26] *ITAR-TASS*, July 26, 1993. In the same vein, the head of the Russian delegation that visited Tajikistan after the incident explained: "Frankly speaking, the Tajik-Afghan border is the frontier of our Commonwealth of Independent States, the frontier of Russia" (*The Independent*, July 20, 1993, p. 9).

[27] *TASS*, January 23, 1992. In 1954, the top policy-making body of the CPSU was officially called the Presidium, not the Politburo.

to the Union treaty?" The Ukrainian parliament subsequently acknowledged the vote in its law "On the Renewal of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic."[28] In a further step toward self-determination, in September 1991 the Crimean parliament declared the peninsula's state sovereignty as a constituent part of Ukraine.

Third, Crimea, specifically the port city of Sevastopol', is home to the Black Sea Fleet, which has been a bone of contention between Moscow and Kiev since the beginning of 1992. In the early stages of that dispute, both Moscow and Kiev claimed the entire fleet as their's, with Yelt'sin asserting that "no one, not even Kravchuk, will take the Black Sea Fleet from Russia. The Black Sea Fleet was, is, and will remain Russian."[29] Clearly, whoever controls Crimea and/or Sevastopol' has a considerable advantage in the fleet negotiations, which have been lengthy, arduous, and largely ineffectual.

It is noteworthy that the Crimean issue is not a monopoly of the conservative Russian opposition. At one time or another, Sobchak, Popov, Stankevich, Kozyrev, and other representatives of the democratic camp have called into question Ukraine's jurisdiction over the peninsula. The first attempt to raise the Crimean question at the state level was made in January 1992 by Vladimir Lukin, the current Russian ambassador in Washington, D.C., who at the time was head of the Russian parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations. The committee distributed to lawmakers its draft of a resolution proposing that parliament declare the 1954 decisions on Crimea invalid. Soon thereafter, parliament voted overwhelmingly to adopt a resolution instructing two of its committees to examine the constitutionality of Crimea's transfer; it further recommended that the Presidium approach its Ukrainian counterpart to do the same. At the same time, it appealed to the Ukrainian parliament to accelerate constructive negotiations on all issues related to the Black Sea Fleet, emphasizing the unity of the Fleet as part of the CIS strategic forces. This was done in spite of the fact that it had already been decided at the Moscow summit of the CIS in January that an undetermined part of the fleet would be handed over to the Ukrainian armed forces (Kravchuk, 1992, p. 41).

Both issues had been placed on the agenda by a group of right-wing deputies from the "Russia" and "Fatherland" parliamentary factions led by Sergey Baburin, who explained that "if Ukraine disavows its 300-year unity with Russia, there must be some negative consequences [for Ukraine]" (*Moskovskiye novosti*, February 9, 1992, p. 11). Yel'tsin, however, distanced himself from the parliament's initiative on Crimea, arguing that "the demand for the almost immediate return of Crimea to Russia" only complicates matters (*ITAR-TASS*, February 25, 1992).

The degree to which the Crimean and fleet issues were joined became apparent from published excerpts of a letter from Lukin to parliamentary

[28]Crimea was stripped of its autonomous status by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet in June 1945.

[29]*TASS*, January 9, 1992. For a detailed analysis of the Black Sea Fleet issue, see Lepingwell (1993).

speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov recommending, *inter alia*, that Crimea be used as a bargaining chip in the fleet negotiations. Specifically, he argued that after the 1954 decisions are declared invalid "the Ukrainian leadership will be confronted with a dilemma: either it agrees to the transfer of the fleet and [its] bases to Russia or [the status of] Crimea as part of Ukraine will be called into question." Lukin's letter also reflected the Russian perception of its "special relationship" with Ukraine which, he warned, Kiev was intent on severing. By formally declaring itself a neutral state, he argued, Ukraine wanted to move toward the West "without us," following the path taken by Eastern Europe (*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, January 22, 1992, p. 1).

In the spring of 1992, at a time when Kiev and the Crimean authorities were in the process of concluding delicate negotiations for a power-sharing agreement, Yel'tsin sent Rutskoy to Crimea (and the breakaway Dnyestr Republic in Moldova) at the head of a delegation that included Stankevich and General Boris Gromov, the first deputy commander of CIS ground forces. In Crimea, Rutskoy pointedly renewed Russia's claim to the peninsula, saying that "common sense" dictated that Crimea be part of Russia. Those who signed the 1954 decisions, he asserted, must have been suffering from "a hangover or sunstroke." Asked if he was aware of military equipment being transferred from Crimea to Russia, Rutskoy responded with a note of sarcasm: "Why should we transfer anything from Russia to Russia?" As for the fleet, he repeated Yel'tsin's remark that it was and would remain Russian. Stankevich, for his part, claimed that the 1954 decisions had no legal basis and that the Russian parliament would "put an end to it" (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 7, 1992, p. 1). Rutskoy's remarks caused a storm in Kiev and coincided with a blunt warning from Yel'tsin that any attempt to unilaterally change the status of the Black Sea Fleet would result in Russia's placing it under its own jurisdiction, followed by its transfer to the CIS strategic forces (*Rossiyskaya gazeta*, April 8, 1992, p. 1).

The subsequent "war of decrees" between Moscow and Kiev concerning the fleet was later suspended as part of an agreement reached in Odessa at the end of April 1992, which committed both sides to a moratorium on unilateral actions and charged a working group to prepare a Russian-Ukrainian treaty on the fleet. The negotiations proved fruitless and, in the midst of growing tension over the status of the nuclear arsenal in Ukraine, Yel'tsin and Kravchuk met in the Russian resort town of Dagomys in June 1992 in an attempt to resolve outstanding issues. The Crimean question was not on the agenda of the talks, which was considered to be a victory for the Ukrainian side to the extent that it confirmed Kiev's position that Crimea's status was strictly an internal matter. With regard to the fleet, the two sides stressed the importance of continuing talks on the formation of Russian and Ukrainian navies on the basis of the Black Sea Fleet. Although there was no clear resolution of the issue, the agreement recognized that maintaining a united fleet under the CIS command was unworkable.

Faced with opposition from the Russian military, increased tension among Black Sea Fleet personnel and officers, and largely unproductive

negotiations, Yel'tsin and Kravchuk met again in Yalta in August 1992 and decided that the Black Sea Fleet would be split after 1995; in the interim, it was removed from CIS subordination and placed under the direct joint command of the two presidents. The Yalta agreement, however, failed to subdue tensions within the fleet, which surfaced in the spring of 1993 in the form of strikes and the hoisting of the prerevolutionary St. Andrew flag atop more than two hundred Black Sea Fleet vessels. The result was still another presidential summit, this time in Moscow in June 1993, which produced an agreement on the "practical formation" of the Russian and Ukrainian navies beginning in September 1993 and the division of shore facilities in Sevastopol' and elsewhere. The fleet, including personnel and materiel, was to be divided evenly between Moscow and Kiev subject to further specific agreements.[30]

But within a week, the agreement, which was made subject to ratification by both parliaments, was denounced by an assembly of Black Sea Fleet officers openly supported by Rutskoy, and both the Russian Minister of Defense, Pavel Grachev, and the fleet's commander, Admiral Eduard Baltin, expressed their dissatisfaction with the deal. The fleet issue came up again at the Massandra summit between the two presidents in September 1993, where the Russian side proposed to buy out Ukraine's share of the fleet in exchange for the remission of part of Ukraine's huge debt. That proposal, which came under fire from the national democratic opposition, is said to be still under consideration in Kiev.

In the meantime, the Crimean question remained on the agenda of the Russian lawmakers. Baburin and his supporters made a determined effort to formally place the issue before the Sixth Congress of Russian People's Deputies in April 1992, which coincided with the beginning of the fleet talks in Odessa. Although this proved unsuccessful, both the Crimean and fleet issues were widely discussed at the Congress, which witnessed Kozyrev suggesting that Ukraine's borders were inviolable only if it remained in the CIS.[31] On May 21, however, a closed session of the Russian parliament adopted a resolution declaring the 1954 decisions transferring Crimea to Ukraine "without the force of law from the moment they were taken" and urging that the peninsula's fate be decided by Russian-Ukrainian negotiations, with Crimea's participation and "on the basis of the will of its population."[32] At the same time, the Russian lawmakers issued a statement to the Ukrainian parliament noting that the Russian public was beginning to question "the sincerity of the intentions of certain founders of the CIS" who "are seeking to break up the Commonwealth." The statement pointed to increased public pressure for "effective measures" to defend Russian state interests and for a "legal assessment" of the 1954 decisions. By raising the Crimean question, it argued, Russia had no intention of making any territorial claims on Ukraine but rather wanted to

[30]For the text, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (June 19, 1993, p. 6).

[31]For the text of his address, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (April 21, 1992, p. 3).

[32]For the text, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (May 25, 1992, p. 1).

call attention to the sad state of affairs in the CIS (*Ibid.*). This move, like the earlier decision to examine Crimea's status, was criticized by Kiev as a violation of the Helsinki accords, but was met with silence in the West.

The Russian deputies returned to the Crimean question at their Seventh Congress in December 1992, when they instructed parliament to examine the status of Sevastopol'. The decision was taken on the basis of a little-known decree adopted by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet in October 1948 defining Sevastopol' as a separate administrative and economic entity and granting it republican status. The logic of the deputies was that as of October 1948 Sevastopol' was not a constituent part of Crimea and therefore remained Russian after the peninsula was transferred in 1954.[33] Subsequently, in July 1993, the Russian parliament passed a resolution by a near-unanimous vote affirming Sevastopol's "Russian federal status," providing for its financing from the Russian budget, and calling for negotiations with Ukraine on the city's status "as the main base of the single Black Sea Fleet."[34] The move was immediately denounced by Yel'tsin, who expressed his "shame" for the parliamentarians, and by the Russian foreign ministry, which emphasized that the "emotive and declarative" decision of the parliament deviated from the position of the Russian President and government in the realization of Russian interests with regard to the Black Sea Fleet. For the first time in the almost two-year confrontation between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea, the international community, including the United Nations Security Council and the United States, took an official stand on the issue, criticizing the move as a violation of internationally accepted norms and agreements.

CONCLUSION: A QUESTION OF SECURITY

By all accounts, the Sevastopol' affair, which Pavlychko characterized as "tantamount to a declaration of war against Ukraine" (*The New York Times*, July 10, 1993, p. 3), seriously complicated the process of Ukraine's nuclear disarmament. We shall see whether the disarmament agreement of January 1994, signed in Moscow by Yel'tsin, Kravchuk, and U.S. President Clinton, and ratified by the parliament in Kiev, will be implemented in the time-period prescribed, if at all. But the other issues of tension between Russia and Ukraine remain on the agenda, and will have the potential to create flare-ups that undermine the prospects for nuclear disarmament by strengthening an already large pro-nuclear lobby.

There appears to be little doubt that the pro-nuclear lobby in Ukraine was gaining in strength during 1992–93. Even before the decision on Sevastopol', the parliament in Kiev had approved a document entitled "On 'The Basic Directions of Ukraine's Foreign Policy'" which, while not retreating from its earlier pledges that Ukraine would become a non-nuclear state, ruled that the nuclear arsenal on its territory was Ukraine's

[33]For details, see Horyn' (1993).

[34]For the text, see *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (July 13, 1993, p. 1).

property.[35] Not long after, Kravchuk insisted that the forty-six more modern SS-24 multiple-warhead missiles deployed there do not fall under the terms of START-1 and should be subject to a separate agreement with the United States and Russia (*Reuters*, July 31, 1993).

An opinion survey published in early 1993 affirmed that the same hardening of perspective was taking place at the mass level. It revealed that the proportion of respondents supporting retention of nuclear weapons and Ukraine's status as a nuclear power had doubled (from 18 percent to 36 percent) in the period between May 1992 and March 1993. Moreover, of the 50 percent who favored non-nuclear status, almost 90 percent qualified their support by stating that Ukraine should become non-nuclear and transfer its weapons to Russia only after receiving legally binding security guarantees from Washington and Moscow as well as financial compensation (*Visti z Ukrainy*, April 15–21, 1993, p. 2). In another country-wide poll conducted in October and November 1993, 45.3 percent of respondents agreed that, faced with territorial claims, Ukraine should retain the status of a nuclear state.[36] These concerns were reflected in the long-delayed parliamentary ratification of START-1 in November 1993, which turned out to be highly conditional, linking gradual nuclear disarmament to, among other provisos, a concrete set of juridically binding security guarantees.[37] Previous assurances to that effect from Moscow had been rejected as unsatisfactory inasmuch as they were made conditional on Ukraine's continued membership in the CIS.[38] Ambiguities in Kiev's parliamentary ratification of the US-Russia-Ukraine tripartite agreement of January 1994 (*RFE/RL Daily Report*, February 4, 1994) reflect unresolved fears that will not be easily dispelled.

In the meantime, Kiev took the intiative in promoting the idea of what might be termed a new "security space" in Central and Eastern Europe. The proposal was advanced by Kravchuk during a visit to Budapest in February 1993 and has been pursued at various forums since then. Disclaimers notwithstanding, there was little doubt that the proposed "zone of stability and security" in the region was a concept formulated with Russia in mind. Ukraine's decision to join NATO's "Partnership for Peace" is the most recent manifestation of this urge to find new international associates and protectors (*The New York Times*, February 7, 1994, p. 7).

Kiev's search for security flows from the deep-seated conviction that its northern neighbor is politically unstable and, more important, that, regardless of who holds the reins of power in Moscow, it will be a long and

[35]For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy* (July 24, 1993, p. 3).

[36]Unpublished report of the Democratic Initiatives Research and Educational Center, Kiev (November 11, 1993, p. 8).

[37]The ratification document renounced as "non-binding" Article 5 of the Lisbon Protocol, which had committed Ukraine to acceding to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear state. The document further stated that Ukraine considered itself liable for the reduction of only 36 percent of the launchers and 42 percent of the warheads on its territory. For the text of parliament's resolution, see *Holos Ukrainy* (November 20, 1993, p. 2).

[38]Interviews by the author with Borys Tarasyuk, deputy foreign minister of Ukraine, and Valentyn Lemish, head of the Ukrainian parliamentary Committee on Defense and State Security, November 23, 1993. See also *The Los Angeles Times* (February 26, 1993, p. A12).

difficult process before Russia reconciles itself to the existence of an independent Ukraine. The "October events" in Moscow served only to emphasize the former point. Although the Ukrainian leadership has consistently supported Yel'tsin in his struggle with the "red-brown" coalition of Russian nationalists and communists, there appear to be few illusions in Kiev about Yel'tsin and his supporters, who are largely viewed as the better of two evils. The fundamental question of whether or not Russia considers Ukraine a legitimate entity remains an open one.[39] Yel'tsin's Russia was one of the first to recognize Ukraine's independence, but the democrats in Moscow cannot be accused of being overly enthusiastic on this score. In early 1993, senior Russian officials were said to be cautioning East European states to limit their contacts with Ukraine, suggesting that its days as an independent state are limited. Western diplomats reported that, privately, Russia's ambassador in Kiev, Leonid Smolyakov, described Ukraine's independence as a "transitional" phenomenon, not likely to last more than eighteen months (*Financial Times*, May 7, 1993, p. 16). More concretely, no discernible progress has been made in negotiating a new Russian-Ukrainian treaty which, according to Ukrainian diplomats, has been held up by Moscow's unwillingness to commit itself to the recognition of Ukraine's territorial integrity.[40]

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Russian-Ukrainian relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been the fact that in spite of their burdensome historical legacy the two sides have sought to conduct their affairs and resolve their differences in accordance with internationally accepted norms. That process has been much more difficult in Russia, where the real political debate has been about the country's identity and its place in the community of nations, and which has had the effect of literally placing the protaganists on opposite sides of street barricades. Political elites in Ukraine, on the other hand, have not been preoccupied with such weighty issues, declaring self-assuredly that Ukraine sees its future as part of the Western democratic world. The affirmation of that conviction has largely been a function of distancing Ukraine from Russia. Although predictable and perfectly understandable, this distancing nonetheless minimizes the historical, political, and economic realities of Ukraine's real situation. In the final analysis, if Russia and Ukraine intend to continue on the path of normalcy, they will need to make a much more sober and reasoned estimate of where their crucial interests lie. In the process, Moscow could decide that it can live without Crimea, and Kiev might conclude that a nuclear arsenal is not the sole guarantor of security and stability.

[39]The "Public Opinion" Foundation in Moscow recently reported that a survey conducted in Russia yielded a 63 percent positive response to the question: "In your opinion, are Russians and Ukrainians representatives of the same people (*narod*) or not?" See *Ukrains'kyi vybir* (October 1993, p. 3).

[40]Interviews by the author with Anatoliy Matviyenko, Ukrainian co-chairman of the joint Russian-Ukrainian parliamentary commission, October 5, 1993, and Dmytro Pavlychko, head of the Ukrainian parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, November 23, 1993.

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