



REPORT

## NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN?

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE

| JAMES SHERR |

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Cover page photo: Matryoshka dolls depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) are on sale at a street market in St. Petersburg, Russia, 10 December 2019. EPA/ANATOLY MALTSEV/Scanpix

Photo on page 21: French President Emmanuel Macron, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting of the Normandy Four leaders at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, on December 9, 2019. Eliot Blondet-Pool/Scanpix

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For over 25 years, he has been regularly consulted by Western governments on the foreign, defence and security policies of the Russian Federation and since 1995 has had an active advisory role in Ukraine, including its defence and security establishment. Since 1991, James has been a frequent visitor to Estonia and its Baltic neighbours before taking up residence in January 2019.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The axiom, 'Ukraine will never be able to stand by itself' has been the basis of Russian policy for three hundred years. But for Russia's Imperial rulers and present-day leaders, the axiom not only describes policy, but fact: the inherent unsustainability of any 'state project' on that land. Long before Vladimir Putin launched his so-called 'hybrid war' against Ukraine in 2014, this much disputed 'fact' had been imposed at enormous cost and with doubtful success. From the time of Peter the Great, the ostensibly 'common' history uniting Russia and Ukraine was forged by coercive measures to 'eradicate from memory' Ukrainian traditions, rewrite history and suppress the Ukrainian language. In the fulness of time, it produced strong affinities, tangible dependencies and deep resentments. This history, at least the Kremlin's view of it, has become a pillar of legitimacy for Putin's Russia.

Upon the dissolution of the USSR, a Ukrainian state, recognised in much of the world and by Russia itself, became a legal fact for the first time in Ukraine's history. But from the very beginning, Ukraine's independence was treated by Moscow as an aberration and a formality. Friendship was equated with integration. For the self-styled 'democrats' who briefly took the helm in Yeltsin's Russia, the complex interdependencies of the former USSR would make it impossible for any of the former Union Republics, least of all Ukraine, to exercise independence in any meaningful sense. Policy proceeded on the idyllic assumption that Russia's integration with the West and the integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States were complementary enterprises. But before very long, it was recognised that this goal would depend upon a tough and proactive approach. By the time Yevgeniy Primakov replaced Andrey Kozyrev as Foreign Minister in 1996, great power ideologies and politics both obstructed this vision and altered it. Russia's principal task ceased to be integration with the West. Instead it became the securing of Western recognition of Russia's 'equality' and its 'special responsibilities' in 'former Soviet space.'

Then and since, the strength of Ukrainian national sentiment was consistently underestimated by Russia. So was the capacity and resilience of the new Ukrainian state and the resourcefulness of its governing elites. By the mid-1990s, Ukraine's political and industrial elites were reaching their own lucrative understandings without Russian help. They also were becoming adept at extracting economic benefits from Russian integration projects while minimising political commitments.

By restoring the 'vertical of power' in Russia's 'multi-voiced' state, Putin made this a much more difficult proposition. Not only did he coordinate and subordinate the economic actors that had been privatising Russia, he leveraged economic pressure against Ukrainian political concessions. Once he brought the full powers of the state to bear, Ukraine's defences began to crumble. Yet as they did, Ukraine's civil society entered the equation. The Orange Revolution of 2004-5 was a complete surprise to Russia. Yet the failure of Ukraine's elites to consolidate it enabled Russia to return to the offensive.

The bitter desert was the victory of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. Yanukovich had no taboos about Russia, but he had no loyalty to it. His overriding purpose was to make his own position in Ukraine impregnable. At the heart of his policy was a Faustian bargain. By abandoning integration with NATO, he hoped to secure a free hand with the EU. Moscow, which had never agreed to this bargain, had no intention of accepting it. Instead of diminishing pressure, Putin and Medvedev increased it, demanding full sectoral integration and the 'synchroniz[ation] of socio-economic relations.' With NATO out of the equation, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement became the new *casus belli*. But once again, Ukraine's civil society turned the tables. Having secured everything he sought from Yanukovich, Putin lost Yanukovich, and he lost Ukraine as well.

The war that began in 2014 not only launched a new chapter, but a new era. It marked the end of a twenty-five year effort to 'synchronise the development' of Russian-Ukrainian relations by peaceful, albeit obliquely coercive means. In the months following Petro Poroshenko's election as president, military-industrial cooperation was halted, Russian banks were sanctioned, trade dramatically curtailed and gas imports reduced almost to nought.

The annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas are not about territory. They are about statehood. For Russia, the war is also a means of reversing twenty-five years of perceived Western encroachment upon Russia's historic 'zones of influence' and efforts to undermine the system of governance in Russia itself. By the time of Volodymyr Zelensky's election in April 2019, it had produced a costly stalemate, seemingly immutable to negotiation and pressure. The question that is still with us is whether Zelensky, the forces around him and Ukraine's Western partners have the mettle and the wisdom to untie that knot.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CSTO</b>	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
<b>DCFTA</b>	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
<b>ECU</b>	Eurasian Customs Union
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>KGB</b>	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i> [Committee for State Security]
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>NKVD</b>	<i>Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i> [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>OUN</b>	<i>Orhanizatsiya Ukrayins'kykh Natsionalistiv</i> [Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists]
<b>PACE</b>	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<b>SVR</b>	<i>Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki</i> [Foreign Intelligence Service]
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UPA</b>	<i>Ukrayins'ka Povstans'ka Armiya</i> [Ukrainian Insurgent Army]
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

shared history, culture, traditions and family ties' – they were understood either in purely formal or largely symbolic and decorative terms.<sup>2</sup>

*For Russians, the axiom, 'Ukraine will never be able to stand by itself' has been the basis of perception and policy for three hundred years*

## INTRODUCTION

More than six years after Russia annexed Crimea, the intractability of the conflict and the intransigence of Moscow's policy have aroused no small degree of disquiet. With studied implacability and defiance, Russia has borne the burdens of opprobrium, exclusion from capital markets, restrictions on high-technology imports, 'deterrence and reassurance measures' by NATO and even the possible undoing of its most cherished economic project in Europe, the Nord Stream II pipeline. In February 2014, one of the more influential observers of Russia-Ukraine relations, Matthew Rojansky, warned that 'we [the West] can't devote the resources that Russia will deploy to maintain its interests in Ukraine.'<sup>1</sup> Today that case is at least as disputable as it was then. But it is a reminder that Russia's level of interest in Ukraine is exceptional.

Many in the West have been slow to appreciate this, in no small part because the principles set out in the Charter of Paris that formally ended the Cold War removed any distinction between the rights of the newly independent states of the former USSR, those of the former Warsaw Pact and those whose independence had been restored after the Second World War. In the West these principles were taken seriously and, in some quarters, literally. In Russia, many were prepared to regard them as a *fait accompli* in the former Warsaw Pact. But in what only recently had been the Soviet Union – a region characterised 'by many centuries of

Even in this context, Ukraine was always a special case. For Russians, the axiom, 'Ukraine will never be able to stand by itself' [*samostoyatel'noy ukrainiy nikogda ne budet*] has been the basis of perception and policy for three hundred years. To many, even before the formation of the post-1990 Ukrainian state, that axiom has evoked the depth, and arguably the permanence, of Russian influence in that country. Yet in Russian minds it also refers to a deeper 'truth' that existed well before Muscovite Russia exerted any authority in Ukrainian lands: the inherent unsustainability [*nesostoyatel'nost'*] of any 'state project' on that territory thanks to the supposedly anarchic essence of the Ukrainian Cossack-Hetmanite tradition.<sup>3</sup>

What outsiders regard as Russia's policy is, for those who craft it, as much a reflection of the objective nature of Russian influence as it is of Russian national interest. Ukrainians have good reason to regard much of this influence as the product of conscious decision and calculated, often devious action. Nevertheless, there would be far less of it if Russia did not have powerful allies in Ukraine and if Ukraine's laws, elites and institutions were less corruptible than they are.

<sup>1</sup> Krishnadev Calamur, "Ukraine: 4 Key Debates Yet to Shake Out," *National Public Radio*, February 24, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/02/24/282077499/ukraine-key-topics-to-watch?t=1590589020515>.

<sup>2</sup> Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union, "Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to questions at a meeting with the students and faculty of MGIMO University and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," September 1, 2017, <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-remarks-and-answers-questions-meeting-students-and-faculty-0>.

<sup>3</sup> "Pochemu Ukraina istoricheski ne sloznilas' kak samostoyatel'noe gosudarstvo i ne budet takovym nikogda" [Why Ukraine historically was not formed as a self-sustaining state and never will be one], *Russkaya Vesna*, May 18, 2016, [https://rusvesna.su/recent\\_opinions/1463489484](https://rusvesna.su/recent_opinions/1463489484). Ukraine should not be considered unique in this respect. In 2012, Putin wrote that amongst the multiplicity of peoples that made up Russia, only the Russians have 'state-forming qualities. See Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya: natsional'niy vopros" [Russia: The national question], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 23, 2012, [www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1\\_national.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html).

Until the events of 2014, the sources of Russian influence in Ukraine were relatively uniform. What Russian leaders term the ‘common’ history, identity and religious faith of the two countries has invariably aroused ambivalence, discord and resentment. Transnational linkages in industry, energy and finance have proved especially enduring, not least because they serve the interests of those who profit from them in Ukraine. The presence of Russian proxies in industry and surrogates in the information space is still a reality in 2020. More subtle and no less deleterious are collusive and partially criminalised business cultures, a networked economy, based on patron-client relationships, as opposed to an open market economy based on laws and rules. To this, one must also add a polity deficient in transparency, accountability, judicial integrity and property rights.<sup>4</sup> These conditions provide rich pickings for Russian intelligence services, whose primary functions, as in Soviet times, are recruitment, disinformation, destabilisation and ‘waging ideological struggle.’ At the time that Ukraine achieved international recognition as an independent state in December 1991, the interaction of all these factors made Russian influence not only significant but systemic. In other words, Russia was not only a major external actor but a structural factor in Ukraine’s domestic affairs. But Russian influence is not only structural. It is dependent on the policies and actions of both countries.

The report that follows explores the relationship between the structural and political factors that have shaped the relationship between Russia and Ukraine since the latter became an internationally recognised state in 1991. Principle, treaties and international law conferred upon Ukraine the same prerogatives of sovereignty enjoyed by any other state in Europe and the wider world. But history, along with the complex interdependencies of the post-Soviet world created very different expectations in Russia as well as serious obstacles for Ukraine. For thirty years, the interaction of these factors has shaped perceptions of reality. But they also have provided a set of tools employed to realise

specific as well as overarching objectives – in economic relations, security, defence and not least with respect to the outside world, notably the EU and NATO. After considering the burden of history, the report examines the continuities and evolution of Russian policy – and Ukraine’s responses to it – in both the Yeltsin and Putin eras. The war that began in 2014 represents an important break in continuity, not only because of its brazenness, but as dramatic evidence of Russia’s failure to ‘synchronise the development’ of both states by peaceful means. It therefore forms a separate section of the report, leading to a final consideration of this relationship’s character, its future prospects, and a set of recommendations for the West. We offer the report as a framework to assist those who wish to explore the detail of the political, economic and security relationships between these states. It does not aim to examine these subjects in depth.

## 1. THE BURDEN OF HISTORY

The Imperial legacy is not an artefact. One reason for this is that the Russian Federation, unlike its Soviet predecessor, proudly embraces this history as its own. It has become a pillar of legitimacy for Putin’s Russia, its illiberalism, its indictments of the European security order and its claims on those with whom its fate is supposedly ‘entwined.’ The struggle to control history is a struggle to control others. History is now politics. In this arena, Ukraine has become a central battleground.

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A second reason is that until quite recently, most of Ukraine’s history has been written by Russians and rewritten by them, often to order. From the time of Peter the Great, Ukraine was at the epicentre of what we have called ‘wars of narratives and arms.’<sup>5</sup> One of

<sup>4</sup> Vadim Kononenko and Arkady Moshes, *Russia as a Network State: What Works in Russia When State Institutions Do Not* (London: Palgrave, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> James Sherr, “A War of Narratives and Arms” in *The Russia Challenge*, eds. Keir Giles et al (London: Chatham House, June 2015), 23, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field\\_document/20150605RussianChallengeGilesHansonLyneNixeySherrWoodUpdate.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150605RussianChallengeGilesHansonLyneNixeySherrWoodUpdate.pdf).

Catherine the Great's cardinal aims in her wars for 'Novorossiya' (1764-1775) was to 'eradicate from memory' the period of the hetmans.<sup>6</sup> Imperial narratives once again are matters of dogma: the ostensibly common origin of what we now call Russia and Ukraine, the conflation between the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, with its historical connections to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople and the Russian Orthodox Church, with its Patriarchate in Moscow; the disparagement of the Ukrainian language or the 'Little Russian tongue' (which according to a commission of Tsar Aleksandr II, 'has never existed...and still does not exist') and the 'inauthenticity' of the Ukrainian nation and its political culture.<sup>7</sup>

Historical blank spots are no less important in this official history: the 300 year division of *Rus'* by the Mongol conquest, the Polish, Lithuanian and Turkish inheritance in Ukraine;<sup>8</sup> the imprint of Polish Catholicism and the Greek Catholic Church (which, like the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, is designated 'schismatic' by the Moscow Patriarchate);<sup>9</sup> the period of 'Ukrainisation' in the 1920s and its genocidal denouement in the 1930s;<sup>10</sup> Khrushchev's war against the Ukrainian *intelligentsia*, both before and after he came to power;<sup>11</sup> the russification campaigns instituted under Leonid Brezhnev;<sup>12</sup> and the efforts to suppress news of the scale of the Chernobyl catastrophe under Gorbachev.<sup>13</sup>

No part of this history has united and divided Ukrainians from one another, or from Russia

– and no part of it has produced more contradictory narratives – than the war of 1941-5. The war for Ukrainian independence waged by Stepan Bandera's Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the mobile groups of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA); as well as its aftermath – the punitive campaigns undertaken by the Red Army and NKVD/*SMERSH* – represent one part of the story.<sup>14</sup> Yet the magnitude of that conflict was dwarfed by Ukraine's contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany. Between 4.5 to 7 million soldiers of the Red Army, came from Soviet Ukraine (in contrast to 40,000; at the most extreme estimate, 200,000 members of UPA).<sup>15</sup> What is more, only in Belarus does the totality and genocidal character of occupation by Axis forces match that experienced by Ukraine. There were anywhere between 6.5 to 10 million Ukrainian fatalities in the war, civilian and military: greater in proportionate terms (and in historian Timothy Snyder's assessment, *absolute* terms) than in Soviet Russia.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the siege of Leningrad (where approximately 800,000 perished), the forced reduction of Kharkiv's population (which stood at 450,000 in December 1941, 190,000 April 1943) took place under German occupation.<sup>17</sup> None of these facts discouraged Vladimir Putin from stating that Soviet Russia suffered 70 percent of the USSR's overall wartime losses and that it could have defeated Germany entirely on its own.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 135, 137, 141.

<sup>7</sup> Andrii Danylenko, "The Ukrainian Bible and the Value Circular of July 18, 1863," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, Tomus 28, 3. For a broader historical overview, focusing on the role of the Orthodox churches, see James Sherr and Kaarel Kullamaa, *Russia's Orthodox Church: Faith, Power and Conquest* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, December 2019), 9-19, [https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ICDS\\_EFPI\\_Report\\_The\\_Russian\\_Orthodox\\_Church\\_Sherr\\_Kullamaa\\_December\\_2019-1.pdf](https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ICDS_EFPI_Report_The_Russian_Orthodox_Church_Sherr_Kullamaa_December_2019-1.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 49-73.

<sup>9</sup> James Sherr and Kaarel Kullamaa, *Russia's Orthodox Church, 15-20, 23, 24*; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History, 4th Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), Kindle locations 1809-2044.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power* (Penguin Press, 2014), 350.

<sup>11</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, Kindle locations 8769.

<sup>12</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, Kindle locations 10692-10771.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Gray, "The True Toll of the Chernobyl Disaster," *BBC Future*, July 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190725-will-we-ever-know-chernobyls-true-death-toll>.

<sup>14</sup> Volodymyr Yaniv, "Stepan Bandera," Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, last accessed May 26, 2020, <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5C%5CA%5CBanderaStepan.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> John-Paul Himka, "World wars," Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, last accessed May 26, 2020, <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5C%5CWorldwars.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Snyder puts the total who died in the occupation at 6.5 million but also claims, '[m]ore inhabitants of Soviet Ukraine died in the Second World War than inhabitants of Soviet Russia as calculated by Russian historians.' See "Timothy Snyder on Germany's Historical Responsibility towards Ukraine + Discussion," YouTube Video, 2:13:51, June 22, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDjHw\\_uXeKU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDjHw_uXeKU).

<sup>17</sup> Michael T. Westrate, *Living Soviet in Ukraine from Stalin to Maidan* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 41.

<sup>18</sup> "A Conversation with Vladimir Putin, Continued 2010 (English Subtitles)," YouTube Video, 4:25:59, September 29, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8B9wGcDWVI>.

## 2. THE TIME OF YELTSIN

In view of this history, the Belovezhskaya accords that dissolved the USSR on 8 December 1991 could not possibly have enabled Russia and Ukraine to construct their relations on a blank slate. For Ukraine's first president, Leonid Kravchuk, the CIS represented a 'civilised divorce'; for Boris Yeltsin it signified 'the rebirth of Russian statehood.' But the first years of Yeltsin's presidency were characterised by an extraordinary dissonance (what Russians called 'multi-voicedness') in the perspectives and interests of the plurality of forces that emerged. However, where Ukraine was concerned, two realities were constant: first the belief that its independence was an aberration; second, an equation between friendship and integration (or 'drawing closer').

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During the first, brief stage of Yeltsin's presidency, the self-described 'liberals' and 'democrats' at the helm pursued a course that Dov Lynch has described as 'benign complacency.'<sup>19</sup> This approach stemmed from the widespread assumption that the interdependencies of the former USSR would make it impossible for any of the former Union republics to exercise independence in any meaningful sense. In the words of Yeltsin's State Secretary, Gennadiy Burbulis, 'there is a logic that will bring the republics back again our way.'<sup>20</sup> Moreover, 'Europe will not take them as they are.'<sup>21</sup> Ukraine's independence was described as a 'transitional phenomenon' by no less a figure than Russia's first ambassador

to the country.<sup>22</sup> Policy proceeded on the idyllic assumption that Russia's integration with the West and the integration of the CIS were complementary enterprises. Some liberals even expressed the view that because Ukraine was more European than Russia, its integration with Russia would facilitate Russia's integration with Europe.

The second stage, beginning in summer-autumn 1992, was marked by a recognition that Russia required a tougher and more proactive approach. In the first MFA paper on the 'near abroad,' First Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev stated that 'Russia must be leader of stability and security on the entire territory of the former USSR' – to be pursued by a 'firm and coordinated policy,' based not only on diplomacy, but 'divide and influence' tactics.<sup>23</sup> Over the protests of Shelov-Kovedyayev and other liberals, force was added to this mix in Russia's first military doctrine (January 1993). Although Yeltsin increasingly questioned the liberals' over-reliance on the West, he for a time shared their belief that key Western powers (and even the UN) could be persuaded to 'grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability.'<sup>24</sup>

The defining theme of the third stage was the return of great power politics. It became visible well before SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service) Chairman Yevgeniy Primakov's replacement of Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev in January 1996 made it obvious. In the words of Yeltsin's spokesman, Vyacheslav Kostikov, in April 1994, 'the time when we could throw ourselves into the embrace of Western countries while forgetting national interests is over.'<sup>25</sup> Whereas Russia's

<sup>19</sup> Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS: The Cases of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 45.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Alexander Goncharenko, *Ukrainian-Russian Relations: An Unequal Partnership* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1995), 4-19.

<sup>21</sup> These views were not confined to Ukraine and still are not. In July 2013, one of Russia's most senior envoys, Vyacheslav Kovalenko, reminded his hosts of the old Russian axiom: 'Armenia can either live with Russia or not at all.' See Emil Danielyan, 'Ex-Russian Envoy Warns Armenia Over European Integration Drive,' *Radio Free Europe*, July 8, 2013, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/25040228.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Goncharenko, *Ukrainian-Russian Relations*, 4-19.

<sup>23</sup> Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, "Strategiya i taktika vneshney politiki Rossii v novom zarubezh'ye" [Strategy and tactics of Russian foreign policy in the new abroad], author's copy, undated. For a public reference to this internal MFA paper, see "Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev: on ne uletel. No vernut'sya obeshchal" [Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev: he has not flown away. But he promised he will return], October 15, 1992, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/26688>.

<sup>24</sup> Boris Yeltsin, Speech to the Civic Union, February 28, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> He also stated that 'Russia increasingly sees itself as a Great Power, and it has started saying this loudly.' Europe has understood that Russian interests will no longer dissolve in the interests of European diplomacy.' See Veronika Kutsyllo, "Vyacheslav Kostikov: Rossiya ne rastvoritsya v Zapade" [Russia will not dissolve itself in the West], *Kommersant*, April 9, 1994, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/75772>.

liberals regarded ‘aggressive nationalism’ as Russia’s main opponent in Ukraine, the ‘centrists’ and great power ideologists [*derzhavniki*] who gradually displaced them feared that the West might become its principal foil. The principal task of Russian diplomats would no longer be integration with the West, but securing Western recognition of Russia’s ‘equality’ and its ‘special responsibilities’ in former Soviet space. Russia’s *derzhavniki* had also begun to grasp the geopolitical potential of trade, investment and the leveraging of dependencies and debt to political concessions. On 26 April 1994, Yeltsin declared in a speech to the SVR:

There are forces abroad that would like to keep Russia in a state of controllable paralysis.... Ideological conflicts are being replaced by a struggle for spheres of influence in geopolitics.

As long before as 1988, Vladimir Kryuchkov, then Head of KGB Foreign Intelligence and soon to be its Chairman, spoke of the KGB’s ‘strong positions in the world of business.’<sup>26</sup> Unsurprisingly in his April 1994 speech, Yeltsin added, ‘[g]uaranteeing access to other countries markets is an important task both for foreign policy *and the intelligence service*’ [author’s emphasis].<sup>27</sup>

Under Primakov’s direction, the SVR produced a report that provided an authoritative statement of these views. The sovereignty of the newly independent states was ‘irreversible’; nevertheless, key areas of sovereignty should be ‘delegated’ to Russia.<sup>28</sup> On becoming Foreign Minister in 1996, Primakov set out the following hierarchy of priorities: strengthening the cohesion of the multi-national Russian Federation, ‘strengthening centripetal tendencies on the territory of the former USSR’

and only then, ‘stabilisation of the international position on the global level.’<sup>29</sup>

Yet Russia’s *derzhavniki* were unable to change the realities of 1990s Russia, well summarised at the time by Stephen Blank:

Even where consensus exists...real policy arises out of the activities of uncoordinated private, factional or institutional groups pursuing their own aims with no concern for a greater Russian national interest.<sup>30</sup>

Despite a considerable evolution of thinking during all of these stages, what did not change were Russia’s fundamental presuppositions about Ukraine. The first concerned identity. Many understood Russia’s and Ukraine’s ‘common’ history. Very few understood their distinctive histories, let alone the ways in which Ukraine’s identity and political culture diverged from Russia’s. So engrained was the Russian belief in unity that Yeltsin and his entourage assumed that reaffirmations of it would reassure Ukrainians. As he put it in November 1997:

Not so long ago, we had a joint economy. The Russians and Ukrainians lived in a communal flat, so to speak....Some even took it into their heads to divide our common history and cultural legacy.... Let us recall...how we were stung to the quick by reports on NATO manoeuvres in the Black Sea.... Unfortunately, all of our difficulties have been skilfully exploited by the Russian and Ukrainian opposition. I have to remind those Russian politicians who often go to Ukraine...that no one is allowed to put Russia and Ukraine against each other....Today, Russian-Ukrainian relations are on the up. We have not forgotten how to rejoice in each other’s successes....We are rooting for the Ukrainians in all the arenas and stadiums of the world as we are for our own sportsmen.<sup>31</sup>

Yeltsin also wanted the Black Sea Fleet accords to include a provision that ‘[w]e take part in defending Ukraine,’ a suggestion the Ukrainians were most unwilling to take up.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Vladimir Kryuchkov, *Deyatel’nost’ organov gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti na sovremennom etape* [Activities of the organs of state security at the present stage] (Moscow, 1988), from KGB documents released by the Gajauskas Commission in Lithuania, quoted in Françoise Thom, *Les Fins du Communisme* (Paris: Criterion, 1994), 63.

<sup>27</sup> Boris Yeltsin, “Speech to the Foreign Intelligence Service,” ITAR-TASS, quoted in “BBC Summary of World Broadcasts: Former Soviet Union,” BBC Monitoring Service, April 27, 1994; Jefferson Adams, *Strategic Intelligence in the Cold War and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2015), 134-5.

<sup>28</sup> Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), “Rossiya — SNG: nuzhdaetsya li v korrektyrovke pozitsiya Zapada” [Russia and the CIS: Does the Western position need correction?], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, September 24, 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Evgeniy Primakov, “Zapis’ Press-Konferentsii Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii E.M. Primakova” [Transcript of press conference of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, E.M. Primakov], January 12, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen J Blank, “Towards the Failing State: The Structure of Russian Security Policy,” Conflict Studies Research Centre, Paper F56, November 1996, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Boris Yeltsin, Radio address broadcast, *Radio Russia*, November 21, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> Minister of Defence, Army General Igor Sergeyev, as quoted in James Sherr, “Russia-Ukraine Rapprochement: The Black Sea Fleet Accords,” *Survival*, vol 39, no 3, Autumn 1997, 33.

The second presupposition was that Ukraine's economy would be entirely dependent upon Russia's. Yet what emerged after 1991 was not a crippling dependency, but an asymmetrical interdependence that gave Ukraine as well as Russia cards to play. Apart from energy, where the Russian monopolist *Gazprom* found itself uncomfortably reliant on Ukraine's gas transit system, that part of the Soviet defence sector based in Ukraine had accounted for close to one-third of Soviet defence-industrial production.<sup>33</sup> After 1991, its titular nationalisation generated opportunities and constraints for both sides, and this was true for several other sectors of the economy as well.

*Although it is true that some of Ukraine's 'new' political figures and economic managers were even more sovietised than Russia's, for this reason they knew how to build their own power bases*

Although it is true that some of Ukraine's 'new' political figures and economic managers were even more sovietised than Russia's, for this very reason they knew how to build their own power bases. Like many of his contemporaries, President Leonid Kuchma (who vowed he had not come to power to be a 'vassal of Russia') was proficient at the traditional Ukrainian arts of temporising, manipulation and manoeuvre. By the mid-1990s, Ukraine's political and industrial elites were concluding their own lucrative understandings without Russian help. They also were becoming adept at playing what Rilke Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk called an 'integration game,' designed to 'extract economic benefits [from Russian integration projects] while minimising political commitments.'<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> "Ukraine Defence Industry," Global Security, accessed May 26, 2020, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ukraine/industry.htm>; Charles Recknagel, "Complex Ties: Russia's Armed Forces Depend on Ukraine's Military Industry," *Radio Free Europe*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-military-equipment/25312911.html>; Vladimir Voronov, "Na ukrainskoy raketnoy 'igle'" [On the Ukrainian rocket 'needle'], *Radio Svoboda*, March 25, 2014, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/25308098.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Rilke Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "Between Dependence and Integration: Ukraine's Relations with Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (June 2016): 678-698, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2016.1173200>.

Moreover, it is hardly incidental that the Russian reformist template was being destroyed in Russia itself. The legalisation of 'market forces' effectively decriminalised the illicit economic networks and 'mafias' long present in the Soviet economy. They wasted no time in forming alliances – and corporate structures – with the progeny of the Soviet *nomenklatura* and 'former' KGB. These networks not only threatened to privatise the Russian state. They acquired transnational scope.<sup>35</sup> For Ukraine, these 'shadow structures' were a security as well as an economic problem, because they provided concealed points of entry for Russian interests. But the untidiness and amorphousness of these interests frustrated Moscow's ability to convert them into political instruments.

The third presupposition was that, where national armed forces were concerned, Ukraine had inherited even more of a mess than Russia, whose own armed forces, formally established in May 1992, were described as a 'collection of ruins and debris' by the Russian Federation's first Minister of Defence, Andrey Grachev. As with the economy, this assumption was true in part. In 1991 Ukraine did not inherit an army. What it inherited was a force grouping – without a Ministry of Defence or General Staff, and without central organs of command-and-control. All senior Ukrainian officers had been educated in the Soviet system, and the majority of junior officers had been educated by those who spent their careers inside it. For

*Kuchma's largely eastern Ukrainian and Soviet trained elite proceeded methodically and capably to construct institutions of national security and defence, run by professionals*

several years, the Russian MOD and General Staff assumed that the Ukrainian Armed Forces would build little and go nowhere. Yet Kuchma's largely eastern Ukrainian and Soviet trained elite proceeded methodically and capably to construct institutions of national security and defence, run by professionals. They in turn

<sup>35</sup> James Sherr, "Russia: Geopolitics and Crime," *The World Today*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (February 1995), 32-36.

identified and promoted a corps of officers and civilians to work alongside NATO in the cause of defence reform and transformation. By 1997, the year the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership was concluded, the NATO-Ukraine relationship had become part of the geopolitical fabric. This entire state of affairs, by turns mocked and condemned by Moscow, took it largely by surprise. The 'Big' Interstate Treaty and Black Sea Fleet Agreements of May 1997 would not have been concluded otherwise.

By the time Yeltsin left office, Ukraine had provided its own refutation of the axiom, '*samostoyatel'noy Ukrainiy nikogda ne budet.*' Yet Vladimir Putin did not accept that conclusion. Instead, he chose to reconfirm the validity of the axiom by restoring the power of the Russian state.

### 3. PUTIN AND THE REVIVAL OF RUSSIA

Vladimir Putin became Acting President of Russia on 31 December 1999. The fifth cut-off of oil supplies to Ukraine that virtually coincided with his appointment was very much his doing.<sup>36</sup> The Ukrainians tasked to resolve the issue realised swiftly that they were dealing with something much more than a dispute about terms of trade and the siphoning of Russian gas. Putin's approach, tenacious as well as conniving, was in his own terms 'pragmatic.' If to the Western mind pragmatism connotes working within the grain of existing realities, from the Leninist perspective that Putin inherited it connotes a strictly unsentimental approach to the relationship between means and ends. As noted by state broadcaster ORT, 'Kyiv is sure that from now on Russian-Ukrainian relations are going to be on a much tougher and more pragmatic footing than

<sup>36</sup> The change in approach became discernible after Putin became Prime Minister in August 1999 – most certainly with the relaunching of the Chechen War on 26 August – though the ground was being prepared from the time he became Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) in July 1998 and acquired greater substance during his tenure as Secretary of the Russian Federation Security Council (March-August 1999).

before.'<sup>37</sup> *Izvestiya* described the new policy as 'cold, businesslike.'<sup>38</sup>

In June 2000, Russia published a new Concept of Foreign Policy. The policy's 'main principles' and 'fundamental aims' would be the 'formation of a belt of good-neighbourliness on Russia's perimeter,' the 'elimination of existing and prevention of future hotbeds of tension and conflict in adjacent regions' and the 'all-encompassing defence of Russian citizens *and compatriots* abroad' (author's emphasis). It also spoke of 'joint development and use of national resources in CIS member states' and the need to ensure 'preservation and augmentation of the joint cultural heritage in the CIS.'<sup>39</sup> Three months before the Concept's publication, Putin stated that the new policy would allow 'the interests of our compatriots [to be defended] more attentively, in a more balanced way and at the same time more aggressively.'<sup>40</sup>

In principle, there was little that distinguished these aims from those of the latter Yeltsin years. But in practice, they differed in two respects: by the intensity and harshness with which they were pursued and because the wider political context was changing at both the domestic and international level. First, Putin was restoring the state. Whereas 'issues were never settled' in the 1990s because of systemic incoherence, under Putin they were prolonged as a matter of policy. Restoration of the 'vertical' was making it possible to subordinate, coordinate and leverage key economic actors that in the 1990s were effectively privatising the state. Even as early as December 1999, Putin had no apparent difficulty cutting the supply of oil to Ukraine (mainly supplied by *Lukoil*) in response

<sup>37</sup> ORT Perviy Kanal, April 18, 2000, as quoted in James Sherr, "A New Regime? A New Russia?," in *The Second Chechen War*, ed. Anne Aldis (Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> The full quotation is, '[i]t seems that the new Russian President is prepared to be far tougher towards the Commonwealth countries than his predecessor was....The warm style of contact between the "brother Slavs" is being replaced by the cold, businesslike style of contact between foreign policies linked to one another by legal obligations,' *Izvestiya*, April 18, 2000, as quoted in James Sherr, "A New Regime? A New Russia?."

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," June 28, 2000, <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 56.

to a gas supply dispute with *Gazprom* (which did not have a state majority on its Board until June 2000) and keeping the dispute alive until Ukraine had met Russia's *political* terms. As we have seen repeatedly over the past twenty years (not only in the energy sphere, but with respect to cease-fires in Donbas and Syria), issues apparently closed are later reopened at a time of Moscow's choosing.

Second, in the years preceding Putin's accession to the presidency, the external environment was becoming more problematic. President Leonid Kuchma had concluded a Distinctive Partnership with NATO in 1997. NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 deeply unsettled Russia and raised questions about the possibility of more brazen 'humanitarian interventions' in former Soviet space.<sup>41</sup> Yet Russia's deficiency of means kept Moscow focused on the indirect approach. As set out by Dmitry Trenin in early 2004:

Resting on strengthening economic links, Moscow will definitely be able to secure political loyalty from the CIS countries....The principal instrument for realising the 'CIS project' will be the achievement of understandings with the governing elites of the CIS. This will demand long-term and painstaking work to create and promote in neighbouring countries groups of influence orientated towards Moscow and a gradual weakening and neutralisation of pro-Western circles.<sup>42</sup>

As expressed by the Ukrainian expert, Oleksandr Sushko three years previously, the Kremlin sought to maintain the linkage between Ukraine's dependency on Russia, its isolation from Europe and the 'dominance of authoritarian tendencies in the system of [Ukrainian] political power.'<sup>43</sup> That same year, Dmitriy Rogozin (then Chairman of the Duma State

Committee on International Affairs) welcomed the appointment of Viktor Chernomyrdin as ambassador to Ukraine in 2001 in the following terms:

Of course, Chernomyrdin should not just conduct himself as an ambassador in Ukraine. He should be taking a more active part in the solution of... some Ukrainian problems, too...[He] will have to act as a kind of arbitrating judge in the solution of numerous conflicts, even those of an internal political nature.<sup>44</sup>

*Ukraine's oligarchic defences began to crumble once Putin brought the full powers of the Russian state to bear*

Not surprisingly, Ukraine's oligarchic defences began to crumble once Putin brought the full powers of the Russian state to bear. Putin not only demanded a change in Ukraine's geopolitical course as the price of ending the 1999-2000 gas dispute but the removal of several figures 'unhelpful to good-neighbourly relations' — demands partially conceded after the Kuchma-Putin summits of April and August 2000.<sup>45</sup> Energy was not the only instrument. Trade wars tightened the corset. Equally important was Putin's ability, as a congenital and

*Equally important was Putin's ability, as a congenital and trained chekist, to play across the diagonals and use provocation, deception and other active measures to drive wedges between Ukraine and the West*

trained *chekist*, to play across the diagonals and use provocation, deception and other active measures to drive wedges between Ukraine and the West. By these means, Putin helped to weaken and discredit Kuchma after the

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Russian armed forces daily stated, '[t]oday they are bombing Yugoslavia, but thinking of Russia,' *Krasnaya Zvezda*, March 27, 1999, as quoted in James Sherr and Steven Main, "Russian and Ukrainian Perceptions of Events in Yugoslavia," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Paper F64, May 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Dmitry Trenin, "Proyekt SNG— noviy prioritet rossiyskoy vneshney politiki?" [The CIS Project — The New Priority of Russian Foreign Policy?], author's copy, February 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Oleksandr Sushko, Monitoring: *Occasional Report no. 3* (Kyiv: Centre for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine), February 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Interview to Radio Rossiya, May 15, 2001, as quoted in James Sherr, "Viktor Chernomyrdin's Appointment as Ambassador to Ukraine," Conflict Studies Research Centre, Occasional Brief 82, May 18, 2001, 4, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97588/01\\_May.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97588/01_May.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> James Sherr, "The Dismissal of Borys Tarasyuk," CSRC Occasional Brief, October 2000, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97637/00\\_Sep\\_2.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97637/00_Sep_2.pdf). A high-ranking MFA official told the author in summer 2000 that lists of such 'unhelpful' individuals, including Tarasyuk, Ihor Smeshko (Head of GUR Military Intelligence and Coordinator of Intelligence Services) and himself had been submitted to Kuchma on three occasions.

Gongadze and Kolchuga scandals of 2000.<sup>46</sup> He also succeeded in realigning the interests of a good portion of Ukraine's oligarchic structures. By the end of 2001, Russia had secured control of Ukraine's aluminium industry, 40-50 percent of its oil refining sector, as well as direct and indirect ownership of much of the country's broadcast media.<sup>47</sup>

Yet for all of these inroads, the main prize, Ukraine's incorporation into Russia's integration projects, eluded it. For a time, Kuchma fought rear guard actions to limit Ukraine's participation in both the Eurasian Economic Community (2001-2) and the more ambitious Single Economic Space established in 2003. By the time he felt impelled to make major concessions, he found himself constrained by countervailing pressures within his own administration and the *Verkhovna Rada*, which passed to the leadership of the national-democratic opposition in the parliamentary elections of 2002. Those elections brought civil society into the equation for the first time since 1990.

## 4. REVOLUTION AND REACTION

In late 2004, the Orange Revolution erupted. Yushchenko's triumph was Putin's defeat. Suddenly, the most ambitious hopes (NATO and EU membership) acquired an aura of realism. Ukraine's trade with Russia actually increased in 2005. But it did so with Yushchenko's blessing, because he believed that the spell of subservience had been broken and that normal state-to-state relations could begin. Nevertheless after the rancorous Orange divorce in September, it became clear that these hopes were woefully premature. By the end of the year, the Kremlin concluded that the

'Orange menace' had crested, and it resumed its offensive. This time, the field of battle was 'civilisational' as well as economic. But its main weapon remained energy. The gas crises of 2006 and 2008-9 inflicted much economic damage on Ukraine, and Ukraine's mismanagement of the latter crisis incurred reputational costs as well. With losses from the global financial crash added to the mix, Ukraine lost 15 percent of its GDP in 2009, by which time it had forfeited a good deal of the West's respect.

*Yanukovich had no taboos about Russia, but he had no loyalty to it*

The bitter desert was the victory of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. The principal myth about him, then and now, is that he was 'pro-Russian.' Yanukovich had no taboos about Russia, but he certainly had no loyalty to it (in contrast to the Kremlin's *de facto* plenipotentiary in Ukraine, Viktor Medvedchuk). His overriding purpose was to make his own position and that of his oligarchic 'family' impregnable. In this quest, the national interest was no more than a variable. At the heart of Yanukovich's foreign policy was a Faustian bargain with Russia that Kuchma never would have contemplated. Its official part consisted of the two so-called 'gas-for-fleet' agreements concluded with President Medvedev in Kharkiv on 21 April 2010. These

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extended Russia's lease of naval facilities in Crimea to 2042 and introduced a 30 percent reduction on the gas price agreed between Tymoshenko and Putin in 2009. The second part was pure supposition: that in exchange for meeting Russia's long-standing concerns about NATO (including formalisation of 'non-bloc status by the *Rada* on 2 July), Moscow would graciously afford Ukraine a free hand with the EU and with economic policy in general.

Moscow, which had never agreed to this bargain, had no intention of accepting it. Instead, a mere five days after the gas-for-fleet accords, Prime Minister Putin presented Kyiv with a draft agreement that would grant Russia

<sup>46</sup> "Kuchma: Nash [P]rezident" [Kuchma: Our [P]resident], *Izvestiya*, February 12, 2001, <https://maidan.org.ua/arch/arch2001/981980331.html>. On the murkiness of the alleged weapons transactions see Valentinas Mite, "Ukraine: Kyiv Accused of Selling Weapons to Iran in 2002," *Radio Free Europe*, February 2, 2005, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1057229.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Arkady Moshes, *Ukraine in Tomorrow's Europe* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2003), 21-22, [https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/upi-report\\_04\\_2003.pdf](https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/upi-report_04_2003.pdf).

*de facto* control over Ukraine's gas production, transmission systems, internal gas trade and export, as well as nuclear power generation. On 30 April he added the merger of Naftogaz and Gazprom to this list. On 17 May, President Medvedev arrived with an even more ambitious package designed to 'synchronize the development of [Russian and Ukrainian] socio-economic relations.'<sup>48</sup> When Yanukovich protested that Ukraine was being pushed too far, too fast, Medvedev replied, 'it's only the beginning.'<sup>49</sup>

The sequel was a cascade of escalating pressures to block Ukraine's integration into the EU. For years, Russia had professed a benign indifference to what long had been a lukewarm Ukraine-EU relationship. But once the Eastern Partnership turned the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, into real possibilities, Russia interposed obstacles. Its most ambitious integration project, the January 2010 Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Eurasian Customs Union (ECU), was too lopsided in its tripartite form to be a thriving concern, let alone a countervailing dynamic to an expanding EU. For Russia, the logic of Ukraine's membership was compelling. Because the ECU was neither a blueprint for democratisation nor economic reform, it also had an elementary appeal to Ukrainian enterprises fearful of the economic consequences if the DCFTA came into force.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, even Yanukovich recognised that the aggregate tradeoffs of joining the ECU were negative. Membership would have immediate implications for Ukraine's terms of trade with the 159 members of the WTO, to which it acceded in May 2008. Ukraine duly initialled the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in December 2011. But in July 2013, it also secured

observer status in the ECU Commission. Behind these steps were three calculations, all illusory: the EU would relax its conditionalities, Ukraine could combine DCFTA membership with partial adherence to the ECU, and both trading regimes could be implemented *à la carte*.

Unfortunately for Yanukovich, Putin understood the weaknesses in Ukraine's position better than he did. In August 2013, the Kremlin leaked the contents of a report drawn up by Sergei Glazyev on the vulnerabilities of the Ukrainian economy.<sup>51</sup> When Armenia the following month was forced to choose between joining the ECU and losing its defence guarantees under the CSTO, the warning was there for all to see.<sup>52</sup> By October, the cumulative impact of Yanukovich's economic mismanagement had brought the country to the brink of default.<sup>53</sup> The rest was all but inevitable. At their 12 November meeting in Sochi, Putin applied what Prime Minister Azarov described as 'very strong pressure' over the Association Agreement.<sup>54</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup>, negotiations with the EU were abruptly suspended. On 17 December, Yanukovich concluded a broad range of accords with Moscow. By doing so, as we warned at the time, he put both himself and the state at risk.<sup>55</sup> Those forecasts came to fruition in February 2014.

*Like his earlier campaign of pressure against Leonid Kuchma, Putin's campaign against Yanukovich failed only after it succeeded*

<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Socor, "Medvedev's Second Visit Pulls Ukraine Closer to Russia," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 99, May 21, 2010, <https://jamestown.org/program/medvedevs-second-visit-pulls-ukraine-closer-to-russia/>.

<sup>49</sup> "Yanukovich: 'tak bystro rabotat' nel'zya,' Medvedev: 'pridyotsya'" [Yanukovich: 'it's impossible to work so quickly,' Medvedev: 'we will have to'], *Fokus*, 17 July 2010, <https://focus.ua/politics/119044>.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Coalson, "Oligarchs Give Ukraine's President Crucial Support in EU Drive", *Radio Free Europe*, September 12, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-oligarchs-eu-support/25103769.html>; Arkady Moshes, "Will Ukraine Join (and Save) the Eurasian Customs Union?," PONARS Eurasia, Policy Memo 247, April 2013, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/will-ukraine-join-and-save-eurasian-customs-union>.

<sup>51</sup> "O komplekse mer po vovlecheniyu Ukrainiy v evraziyskiy integratsionniy protsess – vnutrennyaya politika" [The complex of measures required to enmesh Ukraine in the Eurasian integration process: Internal policy], *Zerkalo Nedeli*, August 16, 2013, <https://zn.ua/internal/o-komplekse-mer-po-vovlecheniyu-ukrainy-v-evraziyskiy-integratsionny-process-.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Personal conversations with officials from the Armenian President's office, September 2013; "Armenia to Join Russia-Led Customs Union," *Radio Free Europe*, September 3, 2013, <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-customs-union/25094560.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Anders Aslund, "Ukraine's President Yanukovich Opts for Robber Capitalism," November 21, 2013, <http://blogs.piie.com/realtime/?p=4107>.

<sup>54</sup> Personal communication with EU representatives in Kyiv, November-December 2013; Aleksey Solomin, Interview with Inna Bogoslovskaya, *Ekho Moskvy*, December 5, 2013, <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/1211877-echo/>.

<sup>55</sup> James Sherr, "Ukraine is in a Dangerous Situation," *Kyiv Post*, December 23, 2013, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/euromaidan/james-sherr-ukraine-is-in-a-dangerous-situation-334161.html>.

Like his earlier campaign of pressure against Leonid Kuchma, Putin's campaign against Yanukovich failed only after it succeeded. In each case the baton passed from elites that Putin understood to a country he did not.

## 5. REVOLUTION AND RÉVANCHE

For the outside world, the most striking feature of Russia's attack upon Ukraine was its brazenness. Russia is not the only country to have used force against a sovereign state in post-1991 Europe. But the Crimea operation marks the first time it was used without plausible justification and without efforts to resolve the dispute by other means. NATO's 1999 intervention over Kosovo, which Lavrov compares to Crimea's annexation, was preceded by exhaustive diplomatic efforts in which Russia played a key role.<sup>56</sup>

NATO's Operation Allied Force followed the displacement of over 230,000 persons and three UNSC resolutions harshly critical of Serbia's actions. Ukraine's record on Russian minority rights, Moscow's ostensible *casus belli*, had earned praise from the OSCE, PACE and, almost a year into the conflict, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.<sup>57</sup> Between the signing of the Russia-Ukraine State Treaty in May 1997 and Yanukovich's fall from power in February 2014, Russia brought no official complaint against Ukraine regarding its treatment of Russian 'compatriots'.<sup>58</sup>

For Ukrainians, the shock arose from the fact that Russia had taken military action at all. That it would spy, bribe, intimidate and economically coerce

was long taken for granted. But the axiom that 'Russian will never fight Ukrainian' was deeply entrenched even among the country's security professionals. When one of the most senior of these professionals met the author in April 2014, he burst into tears.

This is not the place to chart the course of the war or the negotiation process. But three summary points are pertinent.

First, the war has reaffirmed the connection between Russia's cardinal interests in Ukraine and its broader geopolitical interests in Europe. As noted above, even by the beginning of Yeltsin's second term, the West had come to be seen as the main enabler of Ukraine's defiance.

*The war has reaffirmed the connection between Russia's cardinal interests in Ukraine and its broader geopolitical interests in Europe*

By the start of Putin's third presidential term, this view had become almost unchallengeable. That the second Maidan, like the first, was designed to bring Ukraine into the Western security system, deploy NATO infrastructure in Ukraine and undermine Russia's own stability was a view sincerely held in leadership circles.<sup>59</sup> Neither Ukraine's rapid consolidation within weeks of Russia's intervention, nor the unravelling of the *Novorossiya* project, let alone the encirclement and near destruction of the Donetsk and Lugansk militias altered these assumptions.

*The war in Donbas is not about territory. It is about Ukrainian statehood*

Second, unlike the annexation of Crimea, which has an absolute value for Russia, the war in Donbas is not about territory. It is about Ukrainian statehood. For Kyiv, a key issue in the Minsk accords is the control of Ukraine's

<sup>56</sup> RT News, "Lavrov: If Kosovo is a special case then Crimea is also," YouTube Video, 16:19, March 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MicqZRnAkOg>.

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues: Mission to Ukraine*, A/HRC/28/64/Add.1, January 27, 2015, <http://ask.un.org/faq/14438>.

<sup>58</sup> The treaty, which obliges the parties to 'respect the territorial integrity and ... inviolability of borders between them,' contains general and specific provisions regarding minority rights (Articles 3 and 12). See United Nations, *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation*, Kiev, May 31, 1997, United Nations Treaty Series, No. 52240, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/52240/Part/I-52240-08000002803e6fae.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> See for example, an interview with SVR Lt. General (ret'd) Leonid Reshetnikov, Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, in Aleksandr Chuykov, "Tsivilizatsiya Rossiya" [Civilisation Russia], *Argumenty Nedeli*, No. 12 (453), April 2, 2015, <http://argumenti.ru/toptheme/n481/394395>. Founded in 1992 as a closed analytical centre of the SVR, the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies was re-subordinated to the President's Administration in 2013.

eastern border. For Russia, what matters is the control of its western border. The ambiguities of the February 2015 Minsk II accords are not a roadmap, but a maze. The vexed issue of sequencing, which has consumed endless amounts of time, would be removed in two hours if Russia's terms – Ukraine's 'federalisation,' neutralisation and the incorporation of the 'people's republics' into its structures of power – were met. Otherwise, Russia would be willing in principle to have them remain until the end of time. In practice, its efforts to 'coerce Ukraine into friendship' have become a continuous and holistic effort to sabotage the state and make the country ungovernable.

Third, Russia's dramatic effort to 'coerce Ukraine into friendship' by military means represented the equally dramatic undoing of its more than twenty-year effort to 'synchronise the development' of Russian-Ukrainian relations by peaceful, albeit far from agreeable means. After the election of Petro Poroshenko as president in May 2014, military-industrial cooperation between Ukraine and Russia was halted, 29 Russian banks were sanctioned, 30 Russian TV and radio channels were deprived of their licenses, and ten of eleven border checkpoints closed. Moreover, the volume of trade between 2013 and 2017 declined from \$37.8 bn to \$9.9 bn. Between 2016-17, Ukraine purchased no gas from Russia, and by 2018, its dependency on Russian nuclear fuel declined to 45 percent from its pre-war level of 93 percent.<sup>60</sup> Although some of this ground was recovered by the time Poroshenko left office, force and the threat of force had become Russia's principal means of achieving its objectives in Ukraine, at least until Volodymyr Zelensky's succession to the presidency.

## 6. RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND ZELENSKY

When President Putin instructed Russia's security services in July 2017 to 'reset the ruling regime in Ukraine,' it can be assumed that he had something more in mind than

removing Petro Poroshenko from office.<sup>61</sup> The following year witnessed, *inter alia*, a spate of assassination attempts (successful and foiled) of Russian *émigrés* in Ukraine as well as officers of Ukraine's special forces; 'false flag' operations against Roma and Jewish targets and provocations against Donbas war veterans by the pro-Russian opposition. More brazenly, on 25 November 2018, Russia tore up the last vestiges of the 2003 Azov Sea Agreement when it opened fire on three Ukrainian naval vessels transiting the Kerch Strait, impounded the boats and interned their crews.

But changing the 'regime' in Ukraine would have been all but impossible had Poroshenko been re-elected for a second term. In the event, on 21 April 2019 he lost 24 to 73 percent to the television comedian, Volodymyr Zelensky, who had not so much as a political footprint, let alone political experience. In the words of Ukraine's indomitably forthright analyst, Vitaliy Portnikov, on the day of his victory, 'Volodymyr Zelensky is the Kuchma, Yushchenko and Poroshenko of 2019, the candidate of hopes in a pure form.'<sup>62</sup>

There is little trustworthy evidence that Zelensky is a 'Moscow project,' though it has been alleged, and whilst the Kremlin has approached his presidency as an opportunity, it also has proceeded with wariness and guile.<sup>63</sup> Far from welcoming Zelensky with open arms, it greeted his arrival with further trade restrictions.<sup>64</sup> The more credible charge against Zelensky is gullibility. With no less boldness than his pledge to 'tear down the system' of corruption in Ukraine, he came to

<sup>61</sup> "Putin orders intel services to achieve 'reset of Ukraine's ruling regime' – SBU chief," *UNIAN Information Agency*, 22 July 2017, <https://www.unian.info/politics/2043429-putin-orders-intel-services-to-achieve-reset-of-ukraines-ruling-regime-sbu-chief.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Vitaliy Portnikov, "Ukrainians once again are voting for someone they hope has a magic wand," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, April 19, 2019, <http://www.ukrweekly.com/ukrainians-once-again-are-voting-for-someone-they-hope-has-a-magic-wand-says-portnikov/>.

<sup>63</sup> On Zelensky's furthering of Russian objectives, see *inter alia* Vitaliy Portnikov, "Putin's coalition now rules Ukraine," *Euromaidan Press*, March 7, 2020, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2020/03/07/portnikov-putins-coalition-now-rules-ukraine/>; Ariana Gic, "Ukraine's Reality Check," *Emerging Europe*, April 26, 2019, <https://emerging-europe.com/voices/ukraines-reality-check/>.

<sup>64</sup> Veronika Movchan, "Trade Geography of Ukraine 2019: Declining Russia, Rising China, Slowing EU," Ukrainian Liaison Office in Brussels, February 17, 2020, <https://ukraineoffice.blogactiv.eu/2020/02/17/trade-geography-of-ukraine-in-2019-declining-russia-rising-china-slowing-eu/>.

<sup>60</sup> Arkady Moshes and Ryhor Nizhnikau, "Russian-Ukrainian Relations: The Farewell That Wasn't," FIIA Briefing Paper 235, March 2018, <https://www.fiaa.fi/en/publication/russian-ukrainian-relations>.

office promising to end the war with Russia. A majority of Ukrainians share his view that peace should be the country's top priority. But at the same time, an even larger majority oppose ending the war on Russia's terms.<sup>65</sup>

At a tactical and certainly at a public relations level, Zelensky has not been afraid to embarrass Moscow. The December 2019 Paris meeting of the four-party 'Normandy' group was a personal triumph. Not only did Zelensky reiterate Ukraine's long-standing red lines, he rightly insisted that the Ukrainian people would accept nothing less. Moreover, he added new conditions, more stringent than those set out in the February 2015 Minsk-II accord: the border will need to revert to Ukraine's control before elections take place in the occupied zones, representatives of 1.5 million displaced Ukrainians will need to agree the modalities of those elections; and those who have been displaced must have the right to take part in them. Putin's moroseness was evident, and the temper tantrum of Donbas *kurator*, Vladislav Surkov, made quite an impression on Zelensky's advisers.

*Zelensky's understanding of Russia is shallow, he seems to have no grasp of the existential nature of the threat that Russia poses*

The problem is that Zelensky's understanding of Russia, like his understanding of economic reform, is shallow, and his benchmarks for progress appear to be driven by image and popularity rather than fundamental national interests. Unlike most of his predecessors, he seems to have no grasp of the existential nature of the threat that Russia poses. Like his counterpart in Paris, Emmanuel Macron, he appears to believe that Putin would like

<sup>65</sup> According to the survey 56 percent support the return of Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts on their pre-war basis, only 15 percent believe that the war is a civil war, 'only 12% would support the separation of the territories occupied by the DNR and LNR from Ukraine...only 10% would support the recognition of Crimea as Russian territory in exchange for the liberation of Donbas.' See "Gromads'ka dumka pro situatsiyu na Donbasi ta shlyakhi vidnovlennya suverenitetu Ukrain nad okupovanymi teritoriyami" [Public opinion on the situation in Donbas and ways to restore Ukraine's sovereignty over the occupied territories], Razumkov Centre, October 11, 2019, <http://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/gromadska-dumka-pro-sytuatsiyu-na-donbasi-ta-shliakhi-vidnovlennya-suverenitetu-ukrainy-nad-okupovanyimi-terytoriyami>.

to find a way out of the conflict and that disengagement zones, prisoner exchanges and other conciliatory measures will provide that way out.

Already Zelensky has been given two sharp warnings that this is not so. Following the Normandy summit, Putin suddenly demanded the inclusion of five members of the dreaded *Berkut* (special police) in an already agreed prisoner exchange. These personnel, charged with the murder of protestors in the Euromaidan, have no relationship to the present conflict; they were not Russian servicemen but individuals under Ukrainian jurisdiction. Oblivious of creating a possible precedent for Russia to intervene in Ukraine's internal affairs outside the conflict zone, Zelensky acceded to Putin's request. Then on 18 February, Russian proxy forces launched a brief but heavy bombardment of Ukrainian forces deployed on the perimeter of the newly established Zolote disengagement zone. Yet instead of responding to this display of contempt towards his conciliation strategy, Zelensky vowed that this 'provocation' would not deflect him from it.

Zelensky's willingness to make unilateral concessions for peace is probably the main reason why a seasoned intriguer, Vladislav Surkov, was replaced on 11 February with a seasoned negotiator, Dmitriy Kozak. If Moscow wished to signal a 'new approach' with his appointment, it is unlikely that its proxies would have launched a bombardment near the Zolote disengagement zone one week afterwards. To the contrary, Kozak's first substantive step was to entice Zelensky's Chief of Staff into an agreement to cross a long-standing Ukrainian 'red line' by including representatives from the self-styled people's republics into a new Consultative Council. Only a furious public riposte from Ukrainian civil society unravelled this agreement. Kozak's most celebrated contribution to peace negotiations has been the infamous 2003 'Kozak memorandum' in Moldova, containing some of the very elements ('federalisation' and 'special status') that have proved so intractable in Ukraine. At some point, Zelensky might realise that Putin has no intention of ending the war on terms that he can safely accept. But that revelation does not appear to be imminent.

## 7. WAGING FRIENDSHIP

Today as throughout much of its history, Russia has been masterful at managing problems that have been largely of its own making. Nowhere has this been more striking in application or more detrimental in its results than in the Russia-Ukraine relationship. By all normal standards of affinity and logic, it should be an unusually close relationship. Yet for the past thirty years, the prerequisites for such a relationship, independence and freedom of choice, have been treated as manifestations of rejection or hostility. Even in Yeltsin's time, friendship was construed as 'drawing closer' and 'coordinating' more and more domains of activity, not least security and defence, which sovereign states rightly regard as the ultimate guarantors of independence. The fact that all six presidents of Ukraine have defined it as a European state has aroused suspicion in Russia.

*Today as throughout much of its history, Russia has been masterful at managing problems that have been largely of its own making*

A further obstacle to friendship has been Russia's proclivity to view Ukraine's identity as an extension of its own. When President Medvedev, in a celebrated appeal to President Yushchenko stated that Russia and Ukraine 'are united by a common history, culture and religion,' did he mean to reassure Yushchenko, or did he recognise the insult for what it was?<sup>66</sup>

Guided by these approaches, Russia gradually discredited the idea of friendship until it finally was replaced by war. Had things been otherwise, Kuchma's original multi-vector policy might have continued to command the support of a solid majority inside Ukraine up to the present moment. In early 2000, in the wake of NATO's much criticised Kosovo intervention, support for joining the Alliance stood at under 33 percent (23.4% were in favour joining in 5-10 years, and another 9.3% were in favour

of joining in 10-15 years).<sup>67</sup> By mid-2015, it was 53 percent according to Pew's survey, whereas the figures of seven other leading polling organisations ranged from 43 to 54 percent.<sup>68</sup>

The past thirty years are depressing from another standpoint. Some have hoped that respect for Russia's 'legitimate interests' could serve as a golden mean between unacceptable Russian demands and unrealistic Ukrainian aspirations.<sup>69</sup> When Putin warned the NATO-Russia Council at the fateful 2008 Bucharest summit that Ukraine's incorporation into the Alliance could 'put the existence of the [Ukrainian] state into question,' some who were horrified by his language nonetheless feared that he might be correct. Over the years, that apprehension has been shared by much of Ukraine's political and military leadership. It was a major factor in Kuchma's multi-vector policy and, in less considered form, the 'non-bloc' policy of Victor Yanukovich. By the same token, some of the strongest supporters of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership inside Ukraine's military establishment also feared that Ukraine could lose all if it took partnership to the point of membership. Yet when Yanukovich removed that bone of contention — even stripping the relationship with NATO of soul and substance — the EU took its place. By anticipating Russia's 'legitimate' concerns, and even pre-empting them, Yanukovich accomplished nothing. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement became

*The only golden mean that Russia will accept in this 'fraternal' relationship is one that makes itself the arbiter of what 'independence' means and how it is to be pursued*

<sup>66</sup> President of Russia, "Poslanie Prezidentu Ukrainiy Viktoru Yushchenko" [Appeal to President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko], Administration of the President of Russia, August 11, 2009, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/5158>.

<sup>67</sup> Andriy Bychenko and Leonid Polyakov, "How Much of NATO Do Ukrainians Want?," *National Security & Defence*, no. 8, 2000, 5, [http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/journal/eng/NSD8\\_2000\\_eng.pdf](http://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/journal/eng/NSD8_2000_eng.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid," Pew Research Center, June 10, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/>; "Claim in 2018: 54 percent of Ukrainians now support joining NATO," *Russia Matters*, <https://www.russiamatters.org/node/13078>.

<sup>69</sup> For one considered critique of 'years of zero-sum behaviour on the part of Russia and the West,' see Samuel Charap and Timothy Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia* (London: IISS, 2017).

the new *casus belli*. The only golden mean that Russia will accept in this ‘fraternal’ relationship is one that makes itself the arbiter of what ‘independence’ means and how it is to be pursued. President Zelensky has yet to appreciate this.

Some in the West have failed to appreciate this themselves. One of the stronger points in the latest report of the International Crisis Group on the current conflict is that Ukraine’s conflict with Russia cannot be divorced from the discord between Russia and the West as a whole.<sup>70</sup> But the authors of the report say almost nothing about Russia’s military-political conditions for overcoming this discord. As we have set out elsewhere, these conditions are unlikely to find support in most European capitals.<sup>71</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, Russia’s conditions for peace in Ukraine and security in Europe are the latest incarnation of perceptions and prescriptions with deep historical roots. This has been a severe history, and its ‘lessons’ have an inner coherence and strength. But these lessons have equally severe implications for the liberty and security of others. This tension lies at the heart of the difficulties between Russia and Europe. But with respect to Ukraine, there is a further tension: the refusal to accept, in Kuchma’s words, that ‘Ukraine is not Russia.’ In the end, we are impelled to ask whether Russia is doomed to prefer the coerced subservience of Ukraine to friendship with a free and independent neighbour. For Vladislav Surkov and the Russian president who thinks like him, the question is naïve if not absurd:

There is no Ukraine. There is Ukrainness, that is to say a specific disorder of the mind....A kind of blood-stained folklore. A muddle, hodgepodge

<sup>70</sup> International Crisis Group, “Peace in Ukraine I: A European War,” International Crisis Group Report No. 256, April 27, 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/256-peace-ukraine-i-european-war>.

<sup>71</sup> James Sherr, “The Militarisation of Russian Policy,” 2017 Paper Series, No. 10, Transatlantic Academy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, August 21, 2017, <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/Militarization%20edited.pdf>.

instead of a state. Borshch, Bandera, Bandura. ‘Independent Ukraine’ exists, but Ukraine does not.... For Imperial and Soviet bureaucracy Ukraine was always bothersome. Compelling them by force into brotherly relations is the only method historically shown to be effective.<sup>72</sup>

If Ukraine and its partners are not willing to demonstrate that this ‘method’ is as damaging to Russia as it is to Ukraine, who will prove Surkov wrong? Several premises should guide our policy today and in future.

First, history matters. A commanding portion of Russia’s elite and a large portion of Russia’s citizens view Ukraine as an extension of the Russian homeland. No matter who replaces Vladimir Putin or what finally replaces the ‘Putin regime’, Russia is most unlikely to regard Ukraine as a country like any other for the foreseeable future.

Second, unless the West is prepared to abandon Ukraine and Ukraine is prepared to surrender its independence, a difficult relationship with Russia is inevitable. Our challenges are to make attempts to resolve Ukraine’s defiance by force hazardous for Russia to undertake and make the costs of stalemate increasingly difficult for

*Our challenges are to make attempts to resolve Ukraine’s defiance by force hazardous for Russia to undertake and make the costs of stalemate increasingly difficult for it to sustain*

it to sustain. Even if we succeed in advancing these goals, they will be accomplished gradually, with reverses and retreats, and with a lesser or greater degree of ‘provocation’ and tension. There is no magic formula that will secure agreement with Russia on terms that Ukraine and the West can accept. Our aim must be to create conditions that diminish the saliency of Russian pressure and stimulate a search for new approaches – and a deeper reassessment – inside Russia itself.

Third, neither the West nor Ukraine can overcome the impasse by offensive military means.

<sup>72</sup> “Surkov: mne interesno deystvovat’ protiv realnosti” [Surkov: I am interested in acting against reality], *Aktual’nye Kommentarii*, February 26, 2020, <http://actualcomment.ru/surkov-mne-interesno-deystvovat-protiv-realnosti-2002260855.html>.

Firmness and the prudent intensification of pressure are both necessary and realistic. So are measures that strengthen Ukraine's ability to solidify the elements of deterrence that already have emerged inside Ukraine itself. These are realisable goals. But provocative measures will not only fail. They will undo progress already achieved, pose dangers to Ukraine as well as undermine the cohesion and resilience, possibly even the security of the West. Russia is weaker than it was, even a few months ago. But Western policy must be predicated on the assumption that it will remain a strong and resourceful country, with very potent military instruments at its disposal. 'Strategic patience' will only succeed if there is a strategy as well as patience. That strategy must be active, multi-faceted and persistent containment.

Fourth, the present climate of Transatlantic relations, not to say the exploitation of Ukraine's security by the Trump White House for electoral purposes, leaves Ukraine sorely in need of reassurance by those able to provide it. Zelensky's still inexperienced administration is internally conflicted for its own reasons, as is Zelensky himself. But NATO Allies and EU members who know what is at stake should

leave Ukraine in no doubt about the depth and firmness of their support.

Fifth, we should remain mindful of the importance of 'diversion' [*diversiya*], both as a staple element of Russian 'active measures' and as a component of Russian military operations. Progress in accomplishing our goals might well be accompanied by Russian exercises in diversion, overt or covert, more or less dramatic, either inside Ukraine or in domains far removed from it. No state, certainly not Georgia, any of the Baltic states, or even the United States, should consider itself immune.

Sixth, we should be prepared to take advantage of any formats of dialogue and discussion that are open to us. But Sun Tzu's axiom is as pertinent to negotiation as it is to war: '[i]f you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.'<sup>73</sup> The Russians would far prefer to subdue us by talking than by fighting.

Finally, we should recognise that a productive discussion of Russia's 'legitimate interests' in Europe will only be possible when Russia is prepared to reconsider those interests.

<sup>73</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated with an Introduction by Lionel Giles (Norwalk: Puppet Press, 2001), 52, <http://www.puppetpress.com/classics/ArtofWarbySunTzu.pdf>.

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