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European Integration and Security in Ukraine Between 1991-2004: Failures and Successes

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ABSTRACT

As the world is linked, with regular connections based on a well-planned and comprehensive foreign policy, Ukraine, after achieving independence, attempted to reflect its national interests by building a conceptual framework for its independent foreign and security policy. The newly independent Ukraine was split between its relationship with the Soviet Union and its differences with the West. This, together with its tough economic challenges and numerous government changes, influenced its European foreign policy. The Kuchmagate affair, the loss of legitimacy for the oligarchic elite, and Kuchma's tenuous position in international politics precipitated a major internal and foreign policy crisis for Ukraine. This paper seeks to assess Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration agenda between 1991 and 2004. This work is largely broken into three pieces. The first part addresses the security of Ukraine with regard to the West. The second half addresses the strategies of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration, and the last segment examines the Ukraine-Western relationship and its numerous reasons and consequences for failure. This study uses primary sources of treaties, official documents, adopted legislation, and leaders' remarks. The study utilises textbooks, journals, and newspapers as secondary sources. The paper argues that the West has equal responsibility for what has transpired in their relationship since Ukraine's transition and the West's pre-invasion policy toward Ukraine. Ukraine's transition and diplomatic and security policies have been mainly influenced by Western policy.

Keywords: European Integration; Security; Ukraine, Russia, European Union.

INTRODUCTION

To overcome its prolonged artificial alienation from other nations of the continent, Ukraine's foreign policy, announced in 1990, sought to establish direct political, economic, trade, and other relations with other states (Burant, 1995). Ukraine is a large

European country located in Eastern Europe. Integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic frameworks and institutionalising its connections with the European Union and Western European Union (WEU) were seen as its major strategic objectives. Additionally, Ukrainians saw their European integration as a manifestation of historical justice and a return to their cultural past. Considering the economic benefits of European integration, Ukrainian analysts characterised Ukraine's European membership as both a moment of truth and a well-considered pragmatic choice. Keeping Ukraine's delicate geopolitical position in mind, policymakers see collaboration with NATO and the EU as an essential element of Ukraine's national security. Notably, many Ukrainian lawmakers saw independence from Moscow as a primary long-term goal, whereas Russia was viewed as an eastward threat. It was also declared that the ultimate objective of Ukraine's national forces, led by its first president, Leonid Kravchuk, was to establish an independent, sovereign, and European Ukraine and to be free from Russian and The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) influence in particular (Chandler, 1996).

During Leonid Kravchuk's administration, the aforementioned came to pass precisely. In terms of politics and security, the Kravchuk administration maintained a public pro-Western but anti-CIS/Russian strategy from the beginning of his tenure. During the government of Kuchma, these policies extended much beyond pragmatically creating bilateral relations with nearby neighbours and were codified in the goal of entrance into Central European institutions through forging deeper ties with such groups. As Central European institutions were part of the "grand plan," they served as stepping stones to membership in the more prestigious European organisations. Regarding Ukraine, they pursued a purpose with a vigour that belied the country's standing as a young, inexperienced nation without a tried and true foreign ministry. In the days leading up to Ukraine's independence, there was likely some misunderstanding among European leaders over dealing with the country. However, a growing realisation is that an independent Ukraine is not a passing occurrence. In addition, the demands placed on Ukraine since its independence to pay for its European integration have been vast and voluminous. The West desires that Ukraine cement its democracy, abandon its nuclear weapons, merge more closely with Central and Eastern Europe's (CEE) regional groups such as CEFTA, and embrace "Western" policies.

Nonetheless, despite numerous social gaffes and despondency, the Ukrainian administration had made vigorous and systematic efforts toward institutional integration with Europe while simultaneously blocking, slowing, or refusing to participate in renewing institutional ties among former Soviet Union states. Also, Ukraine had stated its desire to serve as a link in international ties between Western Europe and Eurasia (Auer, 2015). In light of this, Ukraine has been quite active on the international stage and maintains links with all major intergovernmental organisations. The West was less appreciative of all Ukrainian initiatives in the first half of the 1990s. However, when ties between Russia and the West deteriorated, Western relations with Ukraine strengthened substantially. The West acknowledged the significance of Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity in European security.

Furthermore, the West has designated Ukraine as a "strategic pivot," a "lynchpin," and a "keystone" of European security (Sergi, 2018). With the fall of Ukrainian economic reform, as Western aid slowed, however, ties with the West became acrid. Later on, political pronouncements from both sides about the strengthening of ties remained empty words, and Ukraine gradually shifted its foreign policy towards the east and became closer

to Russia. Despite all of this, Ukraine was unable to abandon its European objectives, and Ukraine-Western ties remained complex until the conclusion of the Kuchma government.

This paper attempts to assess Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration strategy regarding its significance to European security and Ukraine's national security between the year 1991-2004.

UKRAINIAN SECURITY AND ITS POLICY OF EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

The National Security Council produced Ukraine's national security concept in 1993, and the legislature considered it in October. In May 1995, the legislature accepted a new version of this idea (Loishyn et al., 2019). The article emphasised the need for an accurate appraisal of current and prospective threats to national security for domestic and international policy development. Other states' interference in Ukraine's internal affairs, territorial claims and other encroachments on Ukrainian sovereignty, separatist tendencies in some regions, and escalation of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts were cited as the primary potential threats to Ukraine's national security (Goncharenko, 1998). Kiev had major concerns for foreign interference in its internal affairs and territorial integrity. Internal economic instability and external challenges may harm Ukraine's national security. Due to Russia's lack of respect for Ukrainian independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty, its interference in domestic affairs, and its use of gas and oil deliveries for political bargaining, as well as Russia's imperial ambitions, Ukraine intends to have the appearance of a European country while remaining outside the Eurasian CIS community. Ukraine prioritised a westward foreign policy to alleviate security, political, and economic issues in preparation for potential Euro-Atlantic integration. Ukraine has a similar goal. Ukraine considers collaborating with the EU, WEU, and NATO crucial for its national security due to the economic advantages of European integration.

Security Concerns in Ukraine and the West

Due to Ukraine's geostrategic location, which borders nine countries in Central and Eastern Europe, its territorial integrity and independence are essential to European security. In an interconnected world, the West (particularly the US) recognised Ukrainian security in CEE, the EU, and its security (Dubovik, 1999). Thus, US-Ukraine ties appear crucial to a broader European agenda. Stable, secure, economically growing, and amiable, Ukraine is essential to the West. The growth of Ukrainian democracy is considered necessary for a new European order and Atlantic integration. Due to its history, geostrategic location, poor economic performance, and other circumstances, Ukraine face a wide range of national security vulnerabilities that must be handled with its military and political insecurities. In the 1990s, Ukrainian security was the most often discussed subject. However, the West attacked Ukraine's nuclear weapons inherited from the former Soviet Union rather than helping it handle these security challenges. The West needs Ukraine's disarmament for political and economic aid (Moroney, 1998). In the 1990s, Ukraine was perceived as a danger to the nuclear non-proliferation system because it had promised to become a nuclear-free state in its 1990 declaration of statehood. Following internal Ukrainian discussions, it was found that Ukraine lacked the competence to control and sustain its nuclear weapons. The logical assumption was that the nuclear weapons stationed in Ukraine did not provide the type of deterrence that

would secure the nation's security but instead posed a severe source of instability (Dubovik, 1999).

Since then, Ukraine has made steps to become an example of a non-proliferation policy. Rejecting becoming the third-largest nuclear state, it ratified the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-1). As a nuclear-free state, it joined the NPT. All tactical and strategic weaponry were abolished. China demonstrated its commitment to nuclear weapons by signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). When Ukraine surrendered its nuclear weapons, the US acquired responsibility for their security. Financial aid and security assurances from the US paved the way for Ukraine's nuclear disarmament. American aid for Ukraine's nuclear disarmament is crucial.

The US offered Ukraine the financial and technical help to safely dismantle and remove the nuclear weapons stationed on Ukrainian land. Nuclear disarmament is complex and costly, and the US committed money does not fulfil Ukrainian requests. Ukraine's financial situation is unstable since it is unlikely to get further cash. Security promises have no success claims. The US found no political backing for a commitment; therefore, present promises are invalid. In an external danger to Ukraine's territorial integrity, political independence, and security, the US will discuss and take necessary actions for a peaceful settlement in line with international law and OSCE principles (Dubovik, 1999). This guarantee is ineffective. It raises doubts about whether the US would vigorously defend Ukraine if challenged. Numerous analysts said this at the start of the Ukrainian security guarantee discussion. The academics claimed that the US was unprepared for Moscow to use military pressure to reintegrate Ukraine into a Russian-ruled political union (Goble, 1993). The US has supported Ukraine's national security and territorial integrity without providing specific security assurances. In the following years, US efforts to strengthen post-Soviet geopolitical pluralism may help Ukrainian security. Washington has rejected Russia's plan to divide the region into American and Russian spheres of influence and Moscow's claim to special rights, benefits, and obligations. Instead, Washington helped the non-Russian New Independent States, focusing on Ukraine.

What is most significant for Ukraine's security is that the US has consistently backed territorial integrity and border inviolability in the Crimea issue with Russia. Ukraine expects the US to stand firm.

Security in Ukraine and the Atlantic Community

Regarding Ukrainian security's existing and future state, the Atlantic community is practically unanimous. Regarding their security, however, there are substantial variations among Ukrainians. Some opinions, albeit articulated from a Ukrainian viewpoint, accord with those of North Americans and West Europeans in most aspects, but others do not. The consensus between North Americans and Western Europeans has several components. First, the security of Ukraine is a top priority for the Atlantic community since Ukraine poses a security issue for both Europe and itself. Second, given the importance of Ukraine's security to the Atlantic Community, the community should recognise Ukraine as a peer to Russia and attempt to cultivate strong ties with it. The United States should make particular efforts in this area as the most influential Western player in Ukraine. Third, Ukraine's participation in NATO and the European Union is not now on the table. Ukraine may never be invited to join NATO and may be forced to accept associate membership in the European Union (Albright, 1999).

Despite this, NATO and the EU have deepened their relationship with Ukraine via structures such as the Partnership for Peace (PFP) initiative, the EO-Ukraine Cooperation Agreement, and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), under NATO and the NATO-Ukraine Commission. Nonetheless, from the Ukrainian perspective, some Ukrainians regard engagement with the Atlantic Community and the United States via all of the institutions mentioned above as crucial in ensuring Ukraine's security. In addition, they argue that Ukraine should attempt to convince NATO to change into a collective security organisation and that Ukraine should join NATO to become wholly integrated into the European security system. However, a subset of Ukrainians supports Ukraine's integration into Europe. They support further contact with the EU and NATO concerning Ukraine's security while expressing different worries about the Atlantic Community and the United States. They voiced worry that the United States has pushed for the expansion of NATO without sufficiently considering the detrimental consequences this expansion may have on Ukraine's security. As a consequence of these worries, some Ukrainians propose that the country's security not depend exclusively on the Atlantic Community.

They recommend that Ukraine emphasise establishing a nuclear-free zone; second, it should limit its strategic contacts with superpowers; third, it should exploit the anticipated political conflict between the United States and Russia to strengthen its political position and security. Thirdly, Ukraine should strive to form security alliances with Central European nations, particularly Poland, which would serve as a deterrent against Germany and Russia. Fourth, Ukraine must retain considerable and efficient armed forces and organise a Central European "zone of stability and security" or regional security system.

The West supports Kyiv against Moscow

Due to its political limitations and Russia's hostility, Ukraine's links with Western organisations have limited progress (Holovaty, 1995). Membership in NATO is not on the table for Ukraine because Moscow may perceive it as a declaration of war by NATO against Russia. The US has guaranteed that Ukraine will not compromise its sovereignty even if Russian stability depends on it. Ukraine's independence is one of the West's most essential stability guarantees in Europe.

When Russia desired a "special partnership" with NATO and the EU that took Russia's superpower status into account, the US and the West established a "special relationship" with Ukraine. This move showed Moscow that the West wants to avoid meddling at Ukraine's expense and treat both countries equally. Despite this, Ukraine wants more specific security guarantees from the US and the West. It fears losing all protection obligations if NATO enlargement is confined to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In the event of a Russian invasion, Kyiv wants a long-term American military presence in Europe because it expects more support from the US than from Europe (Rahr, 1999). Many Ukrainian politicians fail to discern between Western diplomacy's superficial and substantial parts since there is a difference between Ukraine's relations with the West and the continual tension between the West and Russia.

Russia-U.S. Rivalry and Ukraine's Security

Despite Russia's highest-level acknowledgement of Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, "big brother" and other imperial tropes prohibit Russians from perceiving the newly independent Ukraine as an equal player in international affairs. Thus, attempts

to integrate Ukraine into Russia's area of interest have been made via economic (energy price rises, customs tariffs on Ukrainian exports, etc.) and political pressure (rejection of border demarcation, opposition to an equitable division of Soviet assets, etc.). Anti-Ukrainian acts and non-recognition of Ukraine's state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independent national interests will likely persist for years. When Russia acts like this, the American presence in Eastern Europe due to NATO expansion is untenable. At this point, NATO leaders' improved grasp of Ukraine's strategic significance, their growing tilt towards Ukraine, and Ukraine's Western orientation via strengthening links with Western organisations like NATO, heightened Russian resentment towards Ukraine. Gas and oil prices have risen, and Ukraine's energy sources have been cut off. In this setting, European politicians, political experts, and the public are very interested in NATO expansion into Central Europe. This issue is critical to Ukraine's national security.

Neither its exporters nor the Ukrainian people have paid enough attention to this problem's national security implications. While the Russian media has consistently shaped public opinion on NATO, the Ukrainian media has not produced enough pieces on the matter (Koval, 1999). Because this issue impacts Ukraine's national security, public opinion and diplomacy have prioritised it. In formulating its position, the Ukrainian government also considered that Russia's unwavering position toward Ukraine limits the Ukrainian government's foreign policy. (2) Ukraine's prospects of joining NATO are slim. (3) It is unclear how NATO's extension to Ukraine's borders will affect its security. (4) Extending NATO's zone of responsibility is a political policy that correlates with European integration (Koval, 1999). Ukraine's failure to make decisions is due to several factors. Helping the European integration process and participating as an equal member coincides with Ukraine's foreign policy aims and undermines Russia's security and stability. Due to its geopolitical position, responsible role in reinforcing regional security, and buffer zone location, Ukraine has proclaimed its perspective on NATO expansion: it should be an evolutionary and lengthy process. During the transition period, the PFP programme and the potential for the partnership it offers the member states should be carefully considered (Appatov, 1999).

NATO participation should not undermine other countries' security, especially Ukraine's. If NATO expands, it should help with CEE's overall security. The existence of NATO and the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty, which includes several CIS members, characterises Europe in NATO's eastward expansion. The West would love to consider Ukraine, one of Europe's strongest armies and a large radical anti-Russian political party, as a severe roadblock to Russia's geopolitical objectives. Since the Ukrainian and Russian economies are intertwined, Russia prefers to foster pro-Russian political organisations in Ukraine and use economic pressure to keep Ukraine in its control area.

Ukraine/NATO

Ukraine's membership in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 sparked NATO-Ukraine ties (Gerosa, 1992). The North Atlantic Cooperation Council is the institutional framework for NATO and CEE/FSU cooperation. President Leonid Kravchuk never opposed NATO's eastward expansion or Ukraine's eventual membership in this armed alliance. "Ukraine's membership in NATO would be the best security guarantee," Kravchuk remarked at Columbia (Kuzio, 1995). As a result of Kravchuk's opposition to a unified military force, Ukraine formed its own military. Kravchuk leveraged Ukraine's non-bloc neutrality to sign the Tashkent Collective Security Agreement in response to

Russian pressure. Kravchuk always wanted to keep a distance from the Tashkent CIS Collective Security Treaty while strengthening contact with Western security organisations (Kuzio, 1995). According to this plan, Ukraine joined NATO's PFP on February 8, 1994. In May, Foreign Minister Anatoliy Zlenko presented to the NATO Secretariat a memorandum outlining Ukraine's PFP involvement. The strategy proposes close ties between the Ukraine and NATO, especially in military reform, officer training, and joint exercises. It demands Ukrainian military engagement in UN and CSCE operations, open national defence and budget planning, democratic control over the military sector, and information exchange. Membership in Partnership for Peace would allow Ukraine to build its armed forces on a new foundation, in accordance with international norms, and to engage military components in various UN and CSCE activities, thereby increasing its authority (Ukraine Signs Partnership for Peace, 1994 in SWB, SU/1918, D/1). Ukraine considered the proposal a crucial, positive step toward nondiscriminatory, equitable political and military ties with NATO (Kuzio, 1995).

Russia is worried about Ukraine's growing ties to the West and NATO. In response to the Ukrainian-NATO relationship, a senior Russian foreign policy adviser said, "We would have to consider using their dependence on our oil and gas to damage the Ukrainian economy; causing destabilisation by stirring up the Russians in Ukraine, especially in Crimea; and greatly increasing military pressure over Sevastopol, which would lead to a first-order international crisis" (Anatol, 1995, p. 53). Pushing NATO to Russia's borders would likely result in violent Russian pushback. This would be followed by increasing political and economic pressure on Ukraine, including the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine conflicts. In the short term, Ukraine opted to maintain its non-aligned status while boosting bilateral ties with NATO and CIS members. Its weakness toward the West forces it to form close connections with NATO and the EU. Ukraine remains a PFP (Partnership for Peace) participant. NATO and Ukraine agreed to work in all nine PFP activity areas in their 1995 Individual Partnership Program (IPP) (Potekhin, 1997). Among them: are emergency preparation and crisis management. Ukraine valued PFP consultations. Ukraine, NATO countries, and other PFP partners have developed actual military cooperation.

In September 1995, Ukraine faced new challenges after NATO's expansion assessment. Foreign soldiers and nuclear weapons in neighbouring countries and Russia's reaction to the expansion process may be the reason for concern. Ukraine has to balance its ties to the West and Russia. Ukraine has a viewpoint on NATO's expansion plan and a strategy to minimise Russian reprisal. Non-NATO states should not have a veto over the alliance's enlargement since this is a crucial principle. As a country that gave up its nuclear arsenal, Ukraine protests the installation of nuclear weapons on the territory of potential NATO members. Ukraine wants a steady, step-by-step NATO enlargement. Ukraine favours non-member NATO cooperation. NATO will likely continue accepting fresh applicants. Ukraine's diplomatic and military strategy prioritises partnership with NATO, albeit not aspiring to full membership (Dubovik, 1999).

Ukraine had proposed a nuclear-free zone in East-Central Europe to reflect this attitude. When the US endorsed the idea of not installing nuclear weapons in new NATO member nations, Kyiv elevated its connection to a "special partnership." The NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership was signed in Madrid on July 9, 1997. (Alexandrova, 1997). Ukraine's signing of the charter was a big deal. It avoided isolation or facing Moscow alone. The charter had political importance while lacking judicial

jurisdiction (Wolczuk, 2002). The charter has five sections. The first section establishes the Ukraine-NATO alliance, including a commitment to more robust and broader coordination and a unique bond that strengthens European stability. The second portion highlights the relationship's underlying ideas, such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence. The third part defines consultation and military coordination areas, while the fourth covers fundamental institutions. The fifth portion discusses the security assurances given to Ukraine by the five nuclear countries upon its entry into the NPT and Ukraine's and NATO's vow to cooperate on crisis consultation protocols. The most important benefit of the NATO-Ukraine relationship is the establishment of networks that institutionalise and personalise the West's commitment to enhancing Ukraine's "role in securing European political and economic stability" (Wolczuk, 2002, p. 109).

NATO's Kosovo operations in March 1999 weakened Ukraine's ties with NATO. The left and right wings of the Ukrainian Parliament deemed it an attack on a sovereign state. The parliament also criticised Western alliance actions, with the left-wing pressing the president to withdraw Ukraine from the PFP like Russia. Communists proposed reevaluating relations with Russia and expelling Ukrainian ambassadors from NATO. Despite the criticism, the president remained committed to Ukraine's PFP membership and reinforced ties with NATO, stating, "Ukraine needs military and other NATO assistance" (Wolczuk, 2002, p. 19). NATO's bombing worsened Ukraine's issues, however. Ukrainians no longer see NATO as a stabilising influence. Second, Kuchma's multifaceted foreign strategy was threatened by worsening NATO relations (ibid: 110). Kosovo damaged Kyiv-Brussels relations. A year later, the relationship had thrived, with little long-term effects. Soon after, Ukraine joined NATO's PFP programmes and presented a detailed cooperation programme with NATO from 2001-to 2004. According to Kuzio (2003), Ukraine contemplated NATO membership in the context of NATO expansion on September 11, 2001, believing it would be less likely to generate difficulties in its relationships. NATO is ready to move Ukraine from the 2002 NATO-Ukraine Action Plan to a membership plan. NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson warned Kyiv to execute political, economic, and defence reforms and protect human rights, the rule of law, and media freedom (Kuzio, 2003). Ukraine and NATO launched a cooperative plan in January 2003. Due to Kuchma's poor reputation in the West, Ukraine will not be able to switch from its Action Plan to a MAP until after his presidency.

Ukraine-European Union (EU) ties

EU-Ukraine legal relations are short and uneventful. First, the European Community (EC) and the former Soviet Union, which included Ukraine, did not establish formal ties until June 1988, when the Joint Declaration on Mutual Recognition was signed in Luxembourg (COMECON) (Copsey & Mayhew, 2007). This paved the way for an EC-USSR trade, commercial, and economic cooperation agreement in 1989. The Soviet Union's disintegration, which followed the December 1, 1991, pro-independence Ukrainian referendum, ended a planned new, broader agreement between the EU and the USSR. The overwhelming vote for Ukrainian independence prompted the EC to issue a Declaration on December 2, 1991 (Copsey & Mayhew, 2007). This praised the democratic manner in which the referendum was organised and asked Ukraine to participate in an open and constructive interaction with the other fading Soviet Union nations to ensure

all international duties were satisfied. The newly independent Ukraine reacted positively to this text and other countries' measures.

On December 5, 1991, the Ukrainian Parliament passed an "Appeal to the Parliaments and Peoples of the World", stating its willingness to comply with the EC Declaration's significant aspects (Kubiček, 1994). The EC took some time to adapt to the post-Soviet reality. The EC and Ukraine's reconciliation process has not always been simple and has been marred by misconceptions. In the first half of 1992, the EC institutions made several rulings on import and export quotas for newly independent states. The Soviet Union had previously awarded quotas (Kubiček, 1994). The EC started reallocating its economic and technical support to the former Soviet Union under the TACIS (Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States) initiative, which seeks to help beneficiaries adopt a system of trade regulation consistent with the GATT (GATT). Such a framework would simplify CIS states' inclusion into the open international system and their market access. Within TACIS, new initiative programmes, including Ukraine's, have been signed with each former Soviet country. Ukraine prioritises privatisation as well. In its interactions with Ukraine and other newly constituted countries, the EC decided to negotiate unique cooperation agreements with each. On April 6, 1992, the EC Commission recommended to the EC Council of Ministers a directive on negotiating cooperation agreements with Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to replace the 1989 accord with the USSR. Before the EC and Ukraine began negotiating a cooperation agreement, it took some time. This delay may be due to numerous circumstances, although Ukraine and the EC have agreed on mutually beneficial themes. On September 14, 1992, talks in Brussels between Jacques Delors and Leonid Kravchuk reinforced their rapprochement.

At the first meeting of top officials from both sides, Leonid Kravchuk hailed the founding of TACIS and committed to basing Ukraine's work with the EC on the CSCE Final Act. Kravchuk and Delors signed a Joint Statement recognising the need for an exchange of letters to formalise Ukraine and the EC's 1989 trade treaties. They also expressed an interest in working together. Permanent Ukrainian missions to the EC and Ukraine were established. In December 1992, the parties began negotiating a cooperation and collaboration agreement. The delegations agreed on many important and difficult subjects during this meeting, including Ukraine's entry into the EU-FSU accords. Both sides' officials corresponded to resolve this issue. EC experts outlined the agreement's framework during these meetings. This new agreement aimed to provide Ukraine with a preferential trading system and lay the ground for expanding the four freedoms: free trade in commodities, free trade in services, and free movement of labour and capital.

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed by Kravchuk on June 14, 1994, peaked (Andres, 2018). Free trade was the sole distinction between this and the Visegrad Association Agreements. The cooperation and collaboration agreement gave Ukraine more economic opportunities, increased her foreign economic connections, and allowed her to integrate into the global economy.

The EU-Ukraine collaboration started with the PCA in June 1994 (Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2014). The approval of the EU's standard policy on Ukraine in November 1994 cemented this relationship. In 1996, the EU Action Plan for Ukraine emphasised supporting Ukrainian independence and sovereignty, encouraging democratic reform, preserving economic stability, and integrating Ukraine into the global economy. Several bilateral committees, including the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council and its

subcommittees, arose from the PCA, demonstrating a robust partnership. The National Strategy for Ukraine's Integration into the EU, signed in June 1998, the National Agency for Development of European Integration, and the EU section in the Foreign Ministry all seemed to imply that Ukraine was building an infrastructure to improve connections. The EU established formal ties with Kyiv and provided modest economic aid. Since it helped bring down the Soviet Union and ended a viable alternative, Kyiv has never received loans, assistance, or closer relations from a grateful West (Wolczuk, 2002).

The EU coordinated the G7 and G24's responses with the IMF and World Bank. The EU provided about 3 billion ECU in technical and financial assistance to Ukraine between 1991 and 1998. The EU and G7 Country Action Program for Chernobyl and the interstate Nuclear Safety and Cross-border Cooperation Programs channelled 538 million ECU to Ukraine between 1996 and 1999 (Wolczuk, 2002). These amounts are small for Ukraine. Grants, credits, and loans that followed connection formalisation did not prevent early tension between the parties. Kyiv is partly to blame. First, Ukraine has violated the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) criteria. Ukraine reneged on its commitments to eliminate protectionist policies and proceed toward trade liberalisation by introducing exorbitant and expensive certification, taxes, and excise charges. Ukrainian policymakers miscalculated how terrible a retreat from liberalisation would be for Ukraine's wider aims, such as joining the EU and WTO.

Second, Kyiv was afraid that the EU was not welcoming. Despite Kuchma's Interim Agreement with the EU, the EU had doubts. Ukraine is evaluating EU aid to Poland and Ukraine. In response, Kyiv said Ukraine was purposefully excluded from the European integration process and that the EU did not view Ukraine as a full member (Wolczuk, 2002). Third, Ukraine's political and economic changes have not lived up to its commitment to democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and minority interests. The oligarchic centrist political parties that dominate the government and parliamentary leadership and are aligned with the administration often advocate reform and European integration but can not make domestic changes to back up their support for EU membership (Kuzio, 2003). Aside from these issues, Ukraine's connections with the EU remained stagnant owing to uncertainties about Kyiv's commitment to a functioning market economy, i.e., price and trade liberalisation remain distant dreams; market entry restrictions remain strong. Property rights, legislation, and contractual obligations are unclear. Integration intentions and actions were often at odds. However, the EU is partly to blame for EU-Ukraine relations. The EU was considering how to aid Ukraine's reforms without guaranteeing membership. The EU had never said it wanted to negotiate an Association Agreement with Ukraine using the early 1990s approach.

Brussels says the EU signed these treaties in solidarity with post-communist nations in a different era (Kuzio, 2003). The EU has warned about "guns, drugs, and bugs" and migrants crossing Ukraine. It has tried to halt this by sealing the borders with Central and Eastern Europe. It is uncertain whether the EU considers the Western CIS part of "Europe" or "Eurasia," which prevents it from recognising Ukraine. Due to these concerns on both sides, EU-Ukraine relations made little headway despite Copenhagen's efforts to organise a Ukraine-EU summit on July 4, 2002. From Kyiv's perspective, EU membership was crucial to its ascension. To prevent Russia's economic and political backwardness, EU relations were fostered. Ukraine receives EU resources, technology, and markets,

which might speed up its modernisation. Despite being independent for more than a decade, Ukraine is still far from EU institutions.

UKRAINE-WEST RELATIONS' FAILURES AND SUCCESSES

The Ukraine-West relationship began negatively because the West underestimated Ukraine's efforts. In its early years of independence, the West did not consider Ukraine, a contributor to Western security. The West wanted to deal with one de-facto power on security and economic matters and made its policies Russo-centric and supported de-nuclearising Ukraine. During the first three years of Ukrainian independence, relations between Ukraine and the West were largely one-sided in a triangle with Russia. After US-Russian ties cooled in December 1993, Western policymakers debated the strategic relevance of an independent Ukraine based on Zbigniew Brzezinski's proposals to foster "geopolitical diversity" instead of a Russo-centric agenda in the former USSR (Brzezinski, 2016). This discussion coincided with START-I and the NPT and ushered in a new era of Ukraine-West relations. From 1994 to 2000, Western backing helped Ukraine achieve independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. By 1999, all of Ukraine's boundaries were recognised, and Russian-Ukrainian relations had improved. Growing agreement among Ukraine's elite supports a foreign policy approach that deepens collaboration and ultimate integration with Trans-Atlantic and European frameworks. Ukraine-West relations cannot endure forever. Due to stalling economic transformation and corrupt, entrenched interests in Ukraine's political system, its vigour has waned. Ukraine's ties with the West remained the same until Kuchma's second term ended in 2004. The West had mixed feelings about Ukraine's desire to join the Trans-Atlantic and European frameworks.

Ukraine-West relations

Since 1991, Ukraine's relations with the West have been strained by the West's Ukrainian policies. The West's position on Ukraine's security challenges varies. Ukraine's stance toward the West changed throughout its transitional history in reaction to internal and external forces. Ukraine's Western ties have gone through three phases. The first phase was independence from Kravchuk's presidency. The second phase started with Kuchma's election and ended with his first term. Kuchma's reelection launched the third phase, which lasted until 2004. Due to its orientation toward Russia, the West mostly ignored Ukraine throughout the 1990s. Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy approach currently prioritises the West.

Kyiv considered ties with the West to be consolidating Ukrainian sovereignty and independence and forming Ukraine's geopolitical character. Because of Russia's close relationship with the West, Ukraine-Western relations have been limited to diplomatic recognition. Western capitals believed that the success or failure of other post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine, would be determined by the Russian transition (Pavliuk, 2002). The West views Ukraine's inherited nuclear weapons as a barrier to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Ukraine's focus on national and state creation and state security, mainly in relation to Russia, led to Western indifference and pessimism regarding the country's prospects. In 1994, Ukraine's geopolitical importance was recognised in reaction to Moscow's assertive foreign policy and Russia's instability. The US, Ukraine, and Russia signed the Trilateral Agreement in February 1994, launching a new Western strategy toward Ukraine. Ukraine signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

(PCA) with the EU and joined NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Kuchma's election as president in June 1994 coincided with a change in Western opinions. Kuchma's resolve to denuclearise Ukraine, execute liberal economic reform, and desire for Western help led to a new Western approach toward Ukraine. The December 1994 decision to expand NATO eastward enhanced Western investment in Ukraine, boosted political and financial backing for Kyiv, and made Ukraine an important strategic ally of the West (Kuzio, 2003).

Ukraine's vow to adopt internal reforms has placed it closer to the IMF, the World Bank, and the EBRD (EBRD). These organisations began supporting Ukraine. Kyiv requested Western political and economic assistance in Turk. By 1996, Ukraine had stopped its record inflation, achieved microeconomic stability, established a new stable currency, and approved a democratic constitution. The US wanted to support Ukraine bilaterally via a "strategic partnership" and multilaterally through NATO as the "lynchpin" of European security (Kuzio, 2003). Ukraine became the third-largest US aid recipient and the most engaged CIS state in NATO's PFP Program. Ukraine's foreign policy stood out. It chose "integration with all European and Euro-Atlantic institutions" as its "strategic aim." Despite early reservations and fears, Kyiv enforced NATO's eastward expansion and negotiated a Charter on Distinct Partnership (Alexandrova, 1994).

The West recognised Ukraine's strenuous efforts, and the US and Canada became its closest allies. Officially, US relations are a "strategic alliance." President Kuchma and Vice President Gore have formed a joint working group to discuss bilateral issues. The West eventually recognised Ukraine's sovereignty, integrity, and stability as critical to regional and European security (The US-EU Joint Statement on Ukraine, 1997 in Pauliuk, (2002). As Russia's foreign policy barometer, an independent Ukraine was considered crucial to the CIS's geopolitical diversity. Ukrainian policymakers appeared to assume that focusing on Ukraine's "strategic relevance" would assure Western support and forgive Ukrainian mistakes. Political infighting and entrenched corruption in Ukraine have stalled reforms. By 1997 and 1998, it was clear that Ukraine's pace of change had not met expectations. Politically, Ukraine remained attractive and promising, becoming a stable, democratic country with authoritarian tendencies. The disparity between Ukraine's domestic and foreign policy rhetoric and reality irritated the West (Kuzio, 2003).

With the 1998 and 1999 presidential and parliamentary elections, Ukraine-Western relations entered their third phase. When Western demands to re-energise reforms were ignored, it became clear that Ukraine's problems were political. Persistent political tensions between branches and centres of power; inconsistent economic policies of Lazarenko and Pustovoitenko; non-transparent political processes; lack of responsibility and accountability; corruption; and other allegations about the Kuchma regime's inner workings harmed Ukraine's international image. The West expected Ukraine to expedite its reforms and grow closer to its more developed Central European neighbours. Losing patience, the West criticised and resented Ukraine's transitional status. Reform, corruption, and investor problems were significant issues in the Ukraine-West discussion. The Kuchmagate audio controversy, the murder of opposition journalists, the tightening of media restrictions, and the supply of Kolchugaradar equipment to Iraq violated UN sanctions in the summer of 2000, and Kuchma's attempts to arrest Tymoshenko further damaged Ukraine-Western ties. Ukraine's changing domestic and international policies gave the impression of a government unable to

establish its foreign aims. Contradictory signals weaken Ukraine's credibility by making it seem untrustworthy, one day pro-Western and the next pro-Russian.

Ukraine's dissatisfaction with the West intensified. Ukrainian officials say the West does not understand Ukraine's transition. As Kyiv pressed the West, the West's response weakened. The EU thought Ukraine's membership goals were too high. In 2000, a new government headed by pro-Western Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko brought new political energy and hope to Ukraine. The Yushchenko government committed to executing long-awaited changes like a balanced, cash-based budget, reforming the country's large and opaque energy sector, fostering private production via agricultural reform, and enhancing privatisation transparency. By year's end, tangible outcomes exceeded even the most optimistic predictions. Not surprisingly, significant oligarchic organisations attacked the Yushchenko government since its policies threatened shadow interests, especially in the energy sector. Outsiders saw growing tensions between Kuchma and Yushchenko. Ukraine could not attain the necessary growth consolidation to compete with other countries. Prime Minister Yushchenko's nomination, whose content was influenced by the West, garnered little support. The Financial Times criticised Yushchenko for mishandling IMF financing as Ukraine's central bank chief (Pauliuk, 2002). In a moment of stagnation between Ukraine and the West, the 9/11 attacks changed the geopolitical landscape. As the West sought new "geopolitical pivots" after 11 September, Ukraine dropped off the radar (Motyl et al., 2016). The EU remained cold to Ukraine's European aspirations.

UKRAINE-WESTERN RELATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Ukraine-West link lacked a stable basis, a shared commitment, and common challenges to solve and was instead characterised by individual interests. The West gave Ukraine an unwelcome signal from the start. Despite being in the middle, exemplary achievements like Ukraine's nuclear disarmament in 1994, economic reform in 1995-96, and NATO-Ukraine engagement defined the relationship. Overall, Ukraine-Western relations did not reach their potential, causing unhappiness.

Western Errors

Despite its political support, the West did not set clear objectives for Ukraine. The West knows what it does not want Ukraine to do, and its help discourages Ukraine from joining a Russia-backed union. It is policy. It does not address Ukraine's trans-Atlantic and European security architecture status. Other Western shortcomings contributed to the partnership's downfall. The West needs a long-term commitment to Ukraine, a comprehensive strategy, and a defined goal. Even though the West cares about Ukraine's security in the region and Europe, they have not shown the long-term commitment, and practical engagement needed to help Ukraine conduct internal reform and deal with geopolitical instability. Second, the US has prioritised geopolitical and security concerns above Ukrainian reform and democracy.

Third, the EU lacks a geopolitical vision regarding Ukraine and considers Ukraine and the CIS Eurasian. Ukraine got less Western aid than Poland and others. The repeated support for Ukraine's independence and sovereignty lacked comprehension of what was needed to cement it. Western funding primarily supported the administration but failed to build pro-reform and pro-European populations or strengthen Ukraine's ties to Europe. Fifth, the West's aspirations for a quick and solid transition were unrealistic.

Despite having differing starting grounds, Ukraine was often compared to its western neighbours. The “Russian factor” has always overshadowed Western Ukraine policy. While interacting with Ukraine, many Westerners considered Russia. Russian politics and Western-Russia relations shaped Western attitudes about Ukraine (Pauliuk, 2002). Seventh, the EU and its member states’ efforts toward Ukraine were weak, resulting in a gap between Ukraine’s and Europe’s goals. EU elites were reticent to embrace Ukraine’s membership, even as a distant prospect. The EU was slow to recognise and embrace Ukraine’s European outlook. No EU member state forged more excellent links with Ukraine or lobbied for it. The EU ignored the role it might have played in Ukraine’s domestic reform and geopolitical destiny (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017).

Globally, the West’s Ukrainian policy was weak from the start and peaked in and after 2000, during Ukraine’s change. The West lacks the desire to strengthen Ukraine’s pro-reform and pro-European forces against internal anti-reform factions and external Russian pressure. Ukrainian Europeanness Flaws, amorphous and declarative policies destroyed Ukraine’s Europeanness. Ukraine-Western connections were fading, suggesting it may become Eurasian. Kuchma’s desire to refocus Ukraine toward Russia and normalise relations shows this. Western authorities were perplexed by Ukraine’s multi-vector shift from Western to Eastern orientation and the “To Europe with Russia” plan (Kuzio, 2003). However, it is important to note that Ukraine’s previous mistakes have harmed its relations with the West.

Ukraine was initially unable to undertake needed political, economic, and social reforms. Its march towards democracy and a market economy was slow, and its adaptability was sometimes doubtful. Sluggishness, hesitation, complexity, and ambiguity are significant sources of unhappiness and frustration in the West. Second, Ukraine did not use its “return to Europe” to modernise the country, build a regulatory framework, or finish its “quadruple transformation” (Kuzio and Moroney, 2001, p. 123). Third, the Ukrainian executive was always terrified of European integration processes. Therefore, it merely announced its ultimate strategic goal without addressing how to achieve it. This is visible in Ukraine’s incapacity to implement deals and treaties, its predilection for simplistic statements, and its efforts to settle into a “third path” by keeping one foot in Europe and another in Eurasia. This paralysed Ukraine’s reform agenda and reduced Western aid. Ukraine was a poor economic partner and investment market for the West due to its self-serving bureaucracy, corruption, unstable laws, overregulation of business operations, terrible investment climate, arbitrary government involvement, and entrenched adversarial interests.

Fifth, Ukraine’s belief that its geopolitical position and strategic location relative to Russia would secure the West’s political and economic support was erroneous. Geopolitical considerations are essential, but they are ephemeral and inadequate for long-term sustainable collaboration with the West without significant Western economic and financial investment in Ukraine. The EU has concentrated more on Ukraine’s democratic progress, economic environment, and trade legislation than its geopolitical relevance. Sixth, Ukraine’s post-independence diversities, absence of a prominent national elite, and lack of direction made the country’s transition difficult. Poor transition performance led to a mismatch between Ukraine’s foreign policy goals and economic and political changes. This mismatch and Ukraine’s inability to further European integration domestically have harmed Ukraine’s EU relations, frustrating Brussels and other Western European cities.

The seventh component, the lack of a solid national consensus on foreign policy, charismatic leaders, and strong democratic constituencies, has led to a foreign policy dilemma that has perplexed domestic elites, foreign governments, and international organisations. The United States and the West no longer take Ukraine's foreign policy seriously due to the discrepancy between domestic and foreign policy goals and constantly shifting objectives. From the examination of Ukrainian faults that led to Ukraine-Western relations, it can be determined that Ukraine's failure to transform itself and its reactive rather than proactive attitude toward the West are the key culprits, among many.

CONCLUSION

Leonid Kuchma's presidency had a tremendous impact on Ukraine-Western relations. The relationship's failure has raised fundamental questions for the West, such as: Are US, NATO, and EU policy objectives and national interests being met in Ukraine? What would the West's policy measures be in Central and Eastern Europe without Ukraine? Do the West's objectives promote or restrict geopolitical pluralism in the post-communist world? First, the broken link alerted the West to Russia's loss of a key ally in Central and Eastern Europe. It has allowed the West to pursue proactive foreign policy moves in future ties with Ukraine, which will reduce Ukraine's "third-way" policy (neutrality, non-bloc status, etc.) and make Ukraine a more reliable strategic partner for the West. The West did not want to coerce Ukraine to undergo its "quadruple reform" if its ruling elites lacked internal political will. The changing relationship makes the West more aware of the need to keep geopolitical diversity and regional cooperation in the post-Soviet space through regional organisations like GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) and reduce the difference between EU and NATO policies to formulate a coherent Western strategy toward Ukraine. The destroyed relationships prompted the West to seek a fourth phase of relations with Ukraine.

The ramifications for Ukraine are far worse. Without the West's aid, Ukraine's chances of a smooth transition and excellent international standing cannot be achieved. Russia's effect on inflation When Ukraine's ties with the West soured, Moscow reaped the benefits. The Russian authorities immediately supported President Kuchma, who needed it. After political reconciliation, Russian military and economic involvement increased in Ukraine. As questions remain about Russia's ultimate goals in Ukraine, others have highlighted concerns about Ukrainian sovereignty. Third, Ukraine's foreign policy goals, which are integration into Europe, have not changed, but they have lost the way to get there. It is now stuck in the "no man's land" of "third waysim," which has stopped its "quadruple transition" and institutionalised partial retreat, so it can not move forward to Europe like the Baltic states or backwards to Eurasia like Belarus.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, signifying a sharp escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014. Since World War II, the invasion has generated the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe. The West holds equal responsibility for what happened in their relationship since Ukraine's transition and the Western strategy towards Ukraine before the invasion. Western policy has largely shaped Ukraine's transition and foreign and security policy. The West lacks the vision, long-term commitment, and practical effort needed to help a country like Ukraine, as shown in its declarations and aid offers. Despite Ukraine's internal instability and poor international image, the West has often cared but has not done enough.

Ukraine's foreign policy orientation toward the West relates to its European aspirations on two levels. First, political elites emphasised Ukraine's European origin, culture, and history to build a European, or Central European, identity. On a more obvious level, it gives a realistic strategy for resolving economic, security, and political concerns facing the former Soviet countries, such as their economic collapse since independence. The European institutions are a source of hope and, more significantly, financial aid for the Ukrainian elite. Russia's ability to spur economic revival is also implied. This is worsened by anxieties regarding future internal political developments in Russia and how Moscow's political elites see domestic and global challenges. Russia's stance toward Ukraine evidences this.

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