
BY

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LEGON AUGUST 2014
DECLARATION

I, Abdul-Baasit Rasheed Inusah, hereby declare that this Dissertation is the product of my own research for a degree at Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, and under the supervision of Dr. Vladimir Antwi-Danso. I state that this work has never been submitted for the award of a degree in any university. All references cited have been duly acknowledged. I am, however, responsible for all mistakes and omissions.

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(STUDENT)                       (SUPERVISOR)

Date: ..............................................    Date..............................................
DEDICATION

This effort is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Alhaji Inusah whose prayers and guidance has brought me this far in life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to Almighty Allah, He has been gracious to me and in fact he has made all things possible.

I also thank my brother, Alhaji Seidu Rasheed Inusah, my mentor and guardian, for his unrelenting support, advice, prayers and encouragement.

The immense counsel and direction offered by my supervisor, Dr. Vladimir Antwi-Danso cannot be over emphasized. His criticisms, comments, and fatherly advice have helped me shape the course of his work. I really do appreciate his kind efforts.

I duly acknowledge the support of my wife and kids during my period of scholarship. They have been extremely patient and accommodating.

I am also indebted to Mr. Mwini Ballans, who has been a source of inspiration and has played a huge role in the final outcome of this work.

A difficult task is to acknowledge all those who have contributed in diverse ways. There are many that have played an important part and my debt to each of them is great. I therefore appreciate the efforts of all those who helped me in diverse ways in pursuing my course of study, of which time and space would not allow me to list their names, may God reward you all abundantly.
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<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSTO</td>
<td>Collective Security Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CINC</td>
<td>Composite Index of National Capability</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>ENP</td>
<td>European Neighborhood Policy</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free Trade Area</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>MAP</td>
<td>Membership Action Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>Partnership and Cooperation Agreement</td>
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<td>SFSR</td>
<td>Soviet Federated Socialist Republic</td>
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<td>SSR</td>
<td>Soviet Socialist Republic</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
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ABSTRACT

Ukraine is closer to Russia historically, geographically, politically, traditionally, economically and socially than any of the other post-Soviet states. Due to this affinity, Russia sees itself as more deserving of Ukrainian support than any of the other strategic players in Eurasia, particularly the EU. Apart from the scramble for power and influence by the geopolitical units in Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine relations are also influenced by other factors, foremost among them, Ukraine’s existence as an independent state. Having been an integral part of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, Ukraine is almost a second home to Russians. Similarly, Russia is almost a second home to more than a quarter of Ukrainians. But the rest of Ukrainians, particularly in the central and western parts of Ukraine are more inclined towards Western Europe and do not want to hear anything about association or integration with Russia. In the face of this division, Ukraine has made tangible moves to join the EU and NATO against Russia’s invitation to join a regional Russian-led integration. Ukraine’s embrace of the EU has not only added impetus to its internal division, but has also provoked palpable tension in its relations with Russia. Relying solely on secondary sources, the study examined the post-Soviet relations between Russia and Ukraine in order to uncover the dynamics and complex nature of relations that has serve as a source of tension and friendship in Eurasia. The outcome of the study shows that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has gone beyond a conflict between political elites. Ethnic tensions between Russians and Ukrainians have also intensified and spilled over into violent insurgency in Ukraine. The work finally recommended that given the frosty nature of relations between Russia and Ukraine, the problem may exacerbate unless the EU and the United States limit their interference in exploiting the volatile nature of Russia-Ukraine relations. Ukraine must also see itself as an independent post-Soviet state and prosecute its post-independence agenda without promoting the anti-Russian sentiments which may seek to threaten its good neighbourliness policy with Russia. Russia should also demonstrate good faith in its relations with Ukraine by shedding its apparent hegemonic tendencies and inalienable rights over Russian dominated regions in Ukraine. Such a shift in Russia’s foreign policy of accommodation towards Ukraine may augur well for future peaceful coexistence between the two countries.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1   Background to the Problem

Russia and Ukraine were integral members of the former Soviet Union. The last President of the Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, on December 25, 1991 announced the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia’s power and influence in Eurasia started plummeting. Since the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), the thrust of Russia’s foreign policy has been to arrest this accelerated decline and recapture its power base in the region. To achieve the aim, Russia appeals to members of the defunct Soviet Union to come together again under a military, economic and political union resembling the European Union in Western Europe and led by Russia. This motive is the guiding principle of Russia’s relations with all its neighbors – Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.¹

Russia’s Eurasian integration project gathered its maximum momentum by 2012 with four ex-soviet states signing up to be members of a single economic space in the region. The agenda entails inaugurating the Eurasian Economic Union by 2015. With regards to the future membership of this anticipated Union, Russia is already assured of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, but not Ukraine, the next largest economy in the region. With a population of about 46 million people, Ukraine is second only to Russia in almost all dimensions in the region.² Its membership of the union is very relevant to Russian foreign policy. But, for one reason or other, Ukraine has been unable to re-enter any integration with Russia.
After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has become the focus of strategic players such as the US, China and Europe, all vying to entrench their presence and their influence in Eurasia. As expected, Ukraine is torn between aligning with Russia and aligning with these other players especially the European Union (EU). For instance, in direct opposition to the anticipated Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, the EU offered to sign an association agreement with Ukraine which will lead to Ukraine’s EU membership. But whereas some Ukrainians are willing to belong with Russia, some prefer the EU.

Ukraine is closer to Russia historically, geographically, politically, traditionally, economically and socially than to any of the other strategic players. Due to this traditional affinity, Russia sees itself as more deserving of Ukrainian support than any of the other strategic players, particularly the EU. Russia-Ukraine relations are thus expected to ebb and flow as Russia tactically exploits this competitive edge over the others in an attempt to get Ukraine to side with Russia once again.³

Apart from the scramble for power and influence by the geopolitical units in Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine relations are also influenced by other factors. For instance, having played a very significant role in the success of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, Ukraine is almost a second home to Russians. But the western part of Ukraine which is more inclined towards Western Europe does not want to hear anything about being one with Russia. The issue of Ukraine as a nation-state also bears heavily on its relations with Russia. Ukraine has made a move to join the EU and NATO against Russia’s invitation to join a regional Russian-led
Custom’s Union. Russia wants and has indeed taken the Black Sea region back amidst fierce resistance by Ukraine which is unwilling to cede it.

According to Trenin, Russia’s alleged attempts to influence the swing of Ukraine’s political pendulum in favor of pro-Kremlin leaders, Russia’s insistence on the adoption of the Russian Language in Ukrainian official discourse, Russia’s threats to cut gas supply to Ukraine and Europe, and to stifle Ukrainian exports to Russia are among factors negatively influencing Russia-Ukraine relations.⁴

Recent events have exacerbated relations between Russia and Ukraine. These events include happenings in Crimea, the ouster of Yanukovich and anti-Russian actions of the new government. Crimea voted to join Russia and Ukraine considers it as an annexation of the region by Russia. Yanukovich, a perceived pro-Russian Ukrainian President has been ousted and this has provoked political chaos in Ukraine. The new government that overthrew Yanukovich adopted a relentless anti-Russian stance and this has provoked increased separatist activity in Russian-speaking Donetsk and Lugansk. These events have exacerbated the already frosty relations between the two neighbors.

The normalization of relations between these two countries may very well depend on their mutual understanding on sensitive issues like the Ukrainian move to join the EU and NATO and the Russian response, transit of the gas pipeline through Ukraine and the determination of the price of Gas in Ukraine, the transition of Ukraine to the Customs Union involving Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the Black sea fleet, and the use of the Russian
language in Ukraine. The aim of this essay is to critically examine Russia–Ukraine relations since the demise of the Soviet Union.

For instance, Russia needs to understand the peculiar situation of Ukraine vis-à-vis these sensitive issues. Since 1992, Ukraine has been struggling to have an identity, a problem caused by its own history and the seeming continuation of the Cold War. Ukraine was, until 1992, very much a part of Russia. The strength of the umbilical cord between Ukraine and Russia goes beyond mere neighborhood to blood relations. Ukraine’s capital, Kiev, was the birthplace of Russian culture and is an integral part of the homeland for many Russians.\(^5\)

Upon independence, Ukraine built its identity on a foundation of statehood instead of nationhood. This resulted in the addition of several Russians to the Ukrainian state which has created the perception that Russia is part of Ukraine and Ukraine part of Russia. It also created room for separatism to be demanded by the large community of Russian nationals and Russian-speaking people who became nationals of Ukraine. The Crimea region for instance, which Nikita Khrushchev arbitrarily ceded to Ukraine in 1954 is predominantly populated by ethnic-Russians. The eastern half of Ukraine speaks Russian and many people there would be happy to return to Moscow's arms.

It is not only culture that influences Russia’s relations with Ukraine. It is also the need for security and a desire for power. When the Soviet Union disintegrated it ended 200 years of Russian hegemony in Eurasia and gave birth to fourteen successor states – Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan,
Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Of the fourteen ex-Soviet states, four have already thrown in their lot with Russia again in some kind of integration towards an economic union in the region. But Ukraine has not done so but has rather drifted further and further away from rejoining hands with Russia.

To Russia, Ukraine is of strategic importance because Russia needs to secure the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol in the Crimean Peninsula which is under Ukraine. Also, if Ukraine joins Russia, the latter can easily become a formidable Eurasian power with secured interests that cannot be easily ignored either by the EU or any other player in Eurasia. Yet, not only has Ukraine resisted multiple attempts by Russia to persuade or coerce it to throw in its lot with Russia, but Ukraine has actually partnered with the EU for trade and politics in preference to Russia.

To avert this possible action by Ukraine, Russia has responded with both threats and muscle, making the situation in the Eurasian region very complex. It is unclear in which direction Russia-Ukraine relations are headed. This study seeks to critically investigate the situation and throw analytical insights into the problem of Russia-Ukraine relations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The events which occurred particularly from February to August, 2014 have propelled Russia-Ukraine relations to the forefront of international relations sparking intense efforts by many countries to retool their foreign policy agendas. Russia is forcefully maintaining that the ouster of Yanukovich is undemocratic; that return of Crimea to Russia is the region’s exercise of self-determination; and that separatist activity in pro-Russian eastern and southern Ukraine is
justified. The United States and European Union have strongly rejected Russia’s claims, stridently raising concerns about territorial integrity and the sovereignty of state borders. The resulting confidence crisis between the USA, EU, and Ukraine on one side and Russia on the other is continually getting worse.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia is trying to reassert itself and Ukraine is struggling to find its own autonomous way forward in a complex neighborhood of different players, both powerful ones and weak ones. It is even more complex for Russia and Ukraine whose relations between each other are built on centuries of common culture, shared identity, shared history and regional idiosyncrasies. Although Ukraine and Russia are almost certainly willing to going to war over Crimea and eastern and southern Ukraine, the EU and USA are almost certainly not. Unlike the Cold War, the exacerbating state of Russia-Ukraine relations is not a simple US-EU-Russia-Ukraine issue. Rather, while Ukrainian and EU member-economies are heavily dependent on Russia to varying degrees, US and Russian interests converge and collide in a myriad of ways and places over issues spanning space, the Arctic, the Pacific, Iran and energy security.

What brought Russia-Ukraine relations to this crossroads? What is the crux of the current standoff? Is it that Ukraine desires to be free and clear of the former Soviet Union, while Russia wants to revisit the dissolution of the Union and re-address national borders that have been in flux for centuries? Is it rather an issue of the EU and United States making a surrogate of Ukraine in order to neutralize Russian influence and enlarge their geopolitical dominion over Eurasia? What are the near-future and long term implications of the stand-off in relations between the two countries?
Other countries of the global community, through varying relations with Russia, the EU, USA, Ukraine and others in the Eurasian region, are willy-nilly drawn into this crossroads of Russia-Ukraine relations. Governments, statesmen, diplomats, etc need to find answers to these questions and make crash but crucial decisions related to the region and its players. Regrettably, neither of them have enough time to take a crash course in East European history. But their consideration of options must be grounded in a realistic appreciation of Russia-Ukraine relations.

This has created a compelling reason investigate Russia-Ukraine relations. In order to understand the dynamics in how Russia-Ukraine relations arrived at where they are in this crisis, it is imperative to take account of the history between the two countries in order to arrive at current status of the situation in Eurasia. Therefore, the study will investigates the post-Soviet relations between Russia and Ukraine in order to uncover the dynamics and complex nature of relations that has serve as a source of tension and friendship in Eurasia.

1.3  Research Objectives

The study therefore aims at critically examining Russia-Ukraine relations by achieving the following specific objectives:

a. Examine Russia’s role as a successor to the USSR and how its implications on the relations with Ukraine
b. Describe how Ukraine, since the early 1990s, has been struggling to locate its identity
c. Explain why Ukraine prefers the EU to Russia as a primary trade and political partner
d. Highlight concerns of Russia and Ukraine about their future with respect to the European Union, and the implications for global geopolitics.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study covers the post-Soviet era, that is, the period from 1991 to date. This period has been chosen because that is the period when, in dealings with one another, both Russia and Ukraine are required by the disintegration of the Soviet Union to adapt to their new situation of independent states. The study assesses the various factors influencing the policies of Russia and Ukraine over this period as well as their possible future implications.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

By 1991, the Soviet Union had disintegrated and occasioned a drastic weakening of Soviet systems in the resulting independent states. But Russia continues attempts to bring the states back under its control. Against the backdrop of Russia’s dominant role in the region and the consistent Ukrainian attempts to shake off vestiges of Russian dominance, the study seeks to examine the relations between the two countries and their political and economic implications for the future. The work will be useful to students and scholars alike in the field of strategic studies, geopolitics, and post-soviet studies as it will augment the literature in these fields.

The study is also significant in offering insights that may guide diplomatic dealings with the nations that have converged in Eurasia after the fall of the Soviet Union. Ghana has interests in Russia and Ukraine both economic and in terms of its nationals. Russia has a remarkable
presence in Ghana and Ukraine could be aspiring for same. The relevance of this study to Ghanaian diplomacy is thus beyond doubt.

1.6 **Theoretical Framework**

The field of International Relations is a discipline full of theories developed from different and sometimes opposing angles: realism, liberalism, institutionalism, constructivism and many others. Each of these approaches has its own assumptions and conditions. Each has produced a family of theories each of which often leads to logical conclusions. This study is undergirded by the Hegemonic Stability Theory, a member of the family of theories that derives from realism.

Contrary to the view by Defensive Realists that balance of power between States will ensure stability of the international system, Hegemonic Stability Theory states that the international system is more likely to remain stable when a single nation acts as the dominant power. Writing on the political economy of international relations, Robert Gilpin (1987) recounts that, Charles Kindleberger pioneered the theory in 1973 when he proposed that economic disorder in the period between World War 1 and World War 2 could be attributed to the absence of a dominant powerful nation or hegemon.⁸

Much in the footsteps of Kindleberger, Robert Keohane analyzed Hegemonic Stability Theory from an angle of international economics. Expanding on Kindleberger, he argued that the hegemon is not the single stabilizing factor of the international system and that it is just one among other factors such as the strength of international institutions, economic openness and civic identity.⁹ Snidal added strength to these arguments by establishing that a hegemon's
absence does not detract from cooperation in the international system and that it may even increase it.\textsuperscript{10}

Gilpin focused on the security perspective of the Hegemonic Stability Theory by supporting the centrality of the hegemon to international stability, arguing that as a hegemon's economic and military capabilities increase, international instability decreases and vice versa.\textsuperscript{11} Spiezo\textsuperscript{12} as well as Volgy & Imwalle\textsuperscript{13} found evidence to support Gilpin's hypothesis on the security implications of the Hegemonic Stability Theory.

What emerges from the literature on Hegemonic Stability Theory is that power is a defining feature of hegemony. When a hegemon exercises leadership, either through diplomacy, coercion, or persuasion, it is actually deploying its "preponderance of power" to "single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangements of international political and economic relations".\textsuperscript{14} Though there are many other hegemonic theories, all seem to agree, as Thompson suggests, that those at which periods military and economic power is concentrated in the hegemon are characterized by relative stability while periods of waning hegemonic military and economic power produce instability.\textsuperscript{15} Overall, the literature shows sufficient correlations between hegemony and stability.

The Hegemonic Stability Theory can be a positive guide for investigating Russia-Ukraine relations. In the first place, Russia has all the pretensions of a regional hegemon. Russia has mustered the political strength, military force, and superior national power necessary for forging new laws and organizations in the Eurasian region. It has a large and growing economy, the will
to lead and the capability to enforce rules of the regional system. Finally, it is perceived to be committed to a regional system that will mutually benefit other actors. Russia subsidizes the economies of most of the ex-Soviet states. According to Stephen Krasner, hegemonic regimes rely on “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.” Russia could thus be said to be relying on the Eurasian Customs Union comprising of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

In the second place, Ukraine has all the trappings of a worthy contender to Russia. According to Gilpin for example, the emergence of a contender to the hegemon is one of the necessary recipes for conflict. The events of 1991 saw the emergence of Ukraine as a contender to the hegemony of Russia in the Eurasian region. Of the ex-Soviet states, Ukraine is next to Russia in population, military might and economic potential. Finally, the instability, both political and economic, that has been raging in Eurasia since 1990 to date, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, could be due to the absence or weakening of Russia as a regional hegemon.

Another angle from which the Hegemonic Stability Theory relates to the topic of this study has to do with arguments of critics against the theory. Critics argue that hegemons, under the guise of providing public goods, end up championing their self-interests. Also, the theory is criticized as allowing for powerful countries to exploit weaker ones. It is further asserted that a coercive hegemon can lead the international community into chaos.
Russia has been accused several times of promoting its own interest under the pretext of helping the interests of other post-Soviet states. In addition to accusing Russia of seeking its self-interest, Ukraine has also accused Russia of exploiting its resources and giving back very little in return. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Russian intervention in the Crimea, Lugansk and Donetsk could result in full-scale war engulfing Europe and the USA. The Hegemonic Stability Theory is thus applicable as a theoretical framework within which to study Russia-Ukraine relations. This study therefore attempts to gain an understanding the logic behind Russia-Ukraine relations within the theoretical framework of the Hegemonic Stability Theory.

1.7 Literature Review

Extensive literature exists on Russia-Ukraine relations. This section reviews selected books and articles that deal with the relationship between the two countries since 1991. In the book titled “Ukraine and Russia: The Post-Soviet Transition”, Roman Solchanyk makes use of primary sources to analyze Ukraine’s domestic and foreign policies as well as their security implications during the first ten years of its independence as an ex-Soviet state. In the beginning chapters of the book, the author describes how history has predisposed relations between the two countries and describes the dramatic transformation in their relations engendered by a collapsing USSR. As the two nations begin live in the unchartered path of independence after 1991, he argues, their success at nation-building and statehood will be largely determined by the normalization of their historically conditioned relationship.

The next chapters discuss the pervasiveness and strength of Russia’s presence in Russia-Ukraine relations and how it influences Ukraine’s political, social, economic, and even international
developments. The concluding chapters focus on Crimea as a mirror of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

Throughout the book, the author attempts to explain the fact that relations between Russia and Ukraine have been preconditioned and accepted over centuries to be a certain way. The complexity of this centuries-old preconditioned relationship is such that it continues to be central in determining Ukraine’s post-Soviet foreign and domestic policies which in turn influence Russia’s post-Soviet transformation.

However, the book focuses mainly on history and almost ignores contemporary challenges undermining the relationship between the two countries. Success or failure at normalizing post-independence relations between the two countries will have a profound influence on future regional and European security and foreign policies.

In “Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union,” Roman Szporluk notes that the key to understanding what happened to the Soviet Union in December 1991 lies in unraveling the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. With this as a backdrop, the author poses critical questions, the answers of which provide insightful new perspectives on the decline and fall of the Soviet system. A critical question of interest posed by the author is why Soviet leaders never found a successful resolution to the problem of Russia-Ukraine relations. This book seems to attribute the demise of the Soviet Union to the cardinal issue of Russia-Ukraine relations without considering other well-known factors such as the role of leadership and contribution of the other successor states.
With wide implications for European security and stability, the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in possibilities for cooperation. It also uncorked national feelings bottled up and suppressed over centuries under Sovietism. The book “Security Co-Operation between Russia and Ukraine in the Post-Soviet Era (Cormorant Security)”,\textsuperscript{20} examines the division of former Soviet security assets between Russia and Ukraine after 1991. The author examines the control of nuclear weapons and division of the Black Sea Fleet between the two countries. Ownership of nuclear weaponry and the Black Sea Fleet was left to Russia, while the location of the Fleet was put under the control of Ukraine. As a result, Ukraine’s tactical and strategic nuclear weapons were dismantled and removed.

Using the Russia-Ukraine relationship as a case study, the author, Deborah Sanders, explores factors that promote and those that hamper security cooperation and argues that the dynamics of cooperation between the two states can only be understood, if political factors domestic to both are taken into account. But it must be noted that, apart from Soviet security structures, Ukraine’s ambitions of joining NATO, in addition to being a geopolitical factor, also affects peaceful co-existence between ex-Soviet allies.

Following break-up of the Soviet Union, all former members of the Union were confronted with the task of reconstructing national identities from the debris of the USSR identity. In her book “Political Culture and National Identity in Russian Ukrainian Relations”,\textsuperscript{21} Mikhail Molchanov analyzes political and cultural factors underlying modern national identities in Russia and Ukraine. The author argues that domestic and international factors interact with the inherent characteristics of a people to produce national identities.
Being a key element of national identity, this "self-other" should not be ignored, particularly in newly independent states like Ukraine. Combining historical analysis with current developments, the author, Molchanov, systematically compares the political cultures of Russia and Ukraine which are very different and yet historically similar nations. He argues that both Russia and Ukraine have not been successful enough in reconstructing an identity apart from that of the Soviet Union. In an attempt to create the ‘Soviet Man’, the Russian system denationalized many Russians and has not been able to successfully reinstate them. Ukraine, the author argues, is neither a victim nor an opposite of Russia. As Russian resurgence recedes more and more into remoteness and its openness and cooperation with the United States becomes more and more valuable, estranging Russia and its neighbors through containment by means of local nationalisms in the “near abroad” is an ill-advised strategy.

The author believes in the interconnectedness and interdependence of Russia and Ukraine for success in their reform efforts. He says history is important in their case because of its influence on their current politics. Whilst looking at these two countries together, rather than one by one, history should also be combined with current events for a better understanding of their relations. Finally, the book examines the development of Russian and Ukrainian national identities from a perspective far wider than that viewed with the usual imperialism/nationalism spectacles.

Two years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, John Morrison, in an article entitled “Pereyaslav and after: the Russian-Ukrainian relationship”, examined Russia-Ukraine relations as the two countries begin life as independent states. According to Morrison, with no formal framework to guide their relations as independent states, the two nations, after the soviet
collapse, have been groping for a mutual political basis for their new relationship. The author argues that their disputes derive from their struggle “to redefine their statehood, nationhood and interests.”

Morrison proposes that the Pereyaslav Treaty of 1654 between Russia and Ukraine, though almost a myth today, is the underlying factor exerting an enduring influence over relations between the two countries. In the Treaty, Ukraine is said to have taken a unilateral oath of loyalty to Russia, albeit reluctantly.

The aspect of the myth the author highlights is that the Ukrainians regarded the Pereyaslav Treaty as binding on both signatories and "as a military alliance in the form of a personal union and (quasi) protectorate". But for the Russians "the treaty was simply the first step toward the military occupation of the Ukrainian Cossack state." The events that followed led to Ukraine’s loss of its independence to Russia and created an enduring suspicion of Russia’s true intentions towards Ukraine. According to the author, whilst the Treaty of Pereyaslav set the tone for deep-seated suspicion of Russia by Ukraine, it simply reinforced Russian belief that Ukraine is Russian. The Treaty was seen by Russia “as the culmination of a popular Ukrainian desire to reunite with Russia for evermore”. The mindsets created by the Treaty are that Ukraine is and feels like “little brother” whereas Russia is and feels like “big brother.”

The author argues that this “little brother” suspicion-ridden inferiority complex and “big brother” superiority complex shape relations between the two states and are at the root of all the disagreements between them since December 1991 – disagreements over the future of the black sea fleet, the division of former soviet property including control of nuclear weapons hitherto in the arsenal of the USSR, international debt repayments, energy deliveries, and the shape of the
According to him, Russia’s “imperial thinking” hinders it from coming to terms with Ukraine’s post-Soviet independence and further deepens Ukraine’s suspicion of Russia. On the other hand, Ukraine’s “little brother” complex inherited from the Pereyaslav Treaty makes it cry wolf where there is no wolf and even sometimes encourages “imperial thinking” on the part of Russia.

The author concludes by predicting that, if both sides are able to eschew these complexes, relations between them will normalize and improve. He argues that if Russia is unable to shake off the role of 'elder brother' and Ukraine persists in its paralyzing 'Pereyaslav complex', the two “may continue to have expectations of each other which differ too widely to enable them to build a stable relationship.” The worst case scenario of an unstable relationship, according to him, may be a security vacuum infested with all kinds of crises and the best case scenario will be an uneasy calm between the post-colonial master and its ex-colony.

Writing on Ukraine’s relations with Russia and the European Union in a much later period, Emmanuel Armandon, in his article entitled “Popular Assessment of Ukraine's Relation with Russia and the European Union under Yanukovych,” portrays Ukraine as the object of a fierce competition between Russia and the European Union in the Eurasian region. Ukraine is torn between belonging to one or the other of these two strategic players. The article looks at how the Ukrainian population views these competing powers who are Ukraine’s main foreign partners and finds that opinions are divided along regional and generational lines. According to the author, young people (even those in the pro-Russian east) favor ties with Europe. The situation
in some parts of Ukraine may confirm the author’s assertion but the current situation in the pro-Russian part of Ukraine does not support the author’s position.

The study contends that historical factors and the role of the media are key variables in explaining the content of Ukrainian opinion. In its analysis of opinion polls by various organizations, the study concludes that the Ukrainian public prefers a middle course of maintaining good relations with both sides as intended by the President, Viktor Yanukovych. The author therefore argues that the President’s tilt toward Russia has increased the popularity of closer relations with the EU. Preference for the European Union, he concludes, will ultimately affect Ukrainian foreign relations.

The study is an assessment based on opinion polls reported by the media. Since the study asserts that the media influences public opinion on the tug of war between Russia and the European Union, it is difficult to ascertain the true opinion of the Ukrainian public by merely analyzing polls reported by the media.

In his article entitled “Ukraine: between Russia and the West,” Michael Rywkin examines the conflicting influences that are competing to shape Russia-Ukraine relations. In western Ukraine pro-Western European sentiments dominate and this is in direct conflict with the eastern part of Ukraine which is closely tied to Russia by language and eastern Christian orthodoxy. He also notes, as we noted earlier, that the Ukrainian economy is faced with the dilemma of signing an association agreement with the EU or joining the Russia-led Customs Union. Rywkin argues that Ukraine’s association with the EU holds richer opportunities and that it will help Ukraine to
be more autonomous of Russia. However, he forgets to add that the association agreement will equally make Ukraine less and less autonomous of the European Union. He also admits that Russia’s determination to protect its economic and political interests in the region will make Ukraine’s decision to go with the EU a difficult one to take.

Rywkin describes the historical influences that shaped the geographical composition of populations in the various regions of Ukraine. He hints at the role of this composition in shaping Ukraine’s relations with Russia. Though his description suggests that strong European inclinations exist in Ukraine, a more obvious conclusion one may draw from his description is that pro-Russian sentiment is even stronger in Ukraine. He catalogues Ukraine’s historical swings between Western Europe and Russia from 1654 to the end of the Second World War in 1945. However, his catalogue reads more like a struggle for territory in which Western Europe consistently attempted to wrestle Ukraine out of Russia’s hands and in the attempt, suffered an almost lasting defeat in 1945.

According to Rywkin, the break-up of the Soviet Union did not include Russia’s desire to relinquish its influence within the borders of the Union, especially its influence over Ukraine and Belarus. But why should it when other groupings, particularly the EU, relatively further away from Eurasia, are consolidating their spheres of influence in the region? Moreover, every nation maintains a certain sphere of influence and where else is more ideal for Russia to do that than the former Soviet space. Russia and Ukraine were once one country by default (Kievan Rus’), and then they became one country by union (USSR). After the Soviet collapse, even America, represented in the Eurasian region by the EU, did not support any separation of Ukraine and
Russia and urged the former to remain united with the latter. Since then the two appear to have got on pretty well. Russia provides a market for Ukraine’s consumer goods, gas for its people and businesses, and even, industrial support as with Ukraine’s heavy industry in the east.

However, Rywkin defines this economic relationship as Ukraine’s economic over-dependence on Russia and an effective weapon for Russia to control Ukraine. But since the Soviet break-up, Ukraine has been quite free in taking decisions and does not seem controlled by Russia. Russia did not interfere with Ukraine joining the NATO Partnership for Peace, the European Atlantic Partnership and similar other organizations. Nonetheless, Rywkin argues that Ukrainian leadership gravitates towards Western Europe because they want to wean Ukraine from over-dependence on Russia.

In the same breadth, he mentions that unrests in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and now Ukraine are perceived by Russia to be instigated by the US and the EU. Even if this is only the perception of Russia as he claims in his article, the fact remains that Russia may not be as concerned about Ukraine as it may be about attempts by the EU or the US to rock hitherto satisfactory Russia-Ukraine relations.

The article identifies Ukraine’s present situation as a country pulled in opposite directions by the EU and the Russian Federation. Rywkin presents Ukraine as faced with three choices - signing an association agreement with the EU or joining the customs union of the Russian Federation or just remaining in a limbo. But viewed from the perspective of Russia-Ukraine relations, it
appears Russia is simply interested in protecting its economic relations with Ukraine whilst the EU is attempting to alter relations between Russia and Ukraine.

The author argues that Russia’s initial reaction to a possible association of Ukraine with the EU was intended to prevent Ukraine from signing the association agreement. But his description of Russia’s reaction does not support this argument: with no specific conditions, Russia offers Ukraine immediate cash and lowers the price of its gas to Ukraine. Such a reaction is more of persuasion than coercion. It is more like urging Ukraine and the EU to take Russia’s economic and demographic interests into account when signing their association agreement. Yet Professor Rywkin argues that Russia’s interest is to restore its superpower status rather than protect its economy and people.

Dismissing Russia’s excellent relations with Crimea, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan as cosmetic, he argues that Russia cannot succeed in reclaiming its superpower status. He concludes by saying that Russia has, instead, estranged Ukraine and other former Soviet republics, especially with its hints at claims on territories in Ukraine that speak Russian. What Rywkin failed to admit in his article is that Ukraine has always been in Russia’s sphere of influence even after the Soviet break-up. Russia could therefore not have set a goal of including Ukraine in its sphere of influence. It is probably more logical to assume that Russia is defending this sphere of influence against external predators, particularly the EU and United States.

The article also chooses to call Crimea’s autonomous decision to join Russia an annexation of Crimea by Russia. Whilst decrying Russia’s efforts to protect Russian-speaking Ukrainians in
east Ukraine, the article equally rationalizes the role of the EU and United States in disrupting relations between Russia and Ukraine.

A Russian expert, Sylatolav Shevtsov, in an article entitled “Bol'shaya igra na sammite v Vilniuse i ukrainskii vospros” (translated as “The Great Game at the Vilnius Summit and the Ukrainian Question), explains the reasons behind reactions of Ukraine and Russia towards the EU’s proposal to sign an Association Agreement with Ukraine. Shevtsov throws light on more current issues that may be affecting Russian-Ukraine relations. According to this author, the reasoning of Yanukovych, the deposed Ukrainian President, with respect to the Association Agreement is driven by four goals: get financial aid for the ailing Ukrainian economy, maintain Ukrainian access to Russian markets, prevent his only equal political opponent from contesting him in 2015 and poach some supporters of the opposition.

Russia on the other hand, the author suggests, aims at preventing Ukraine from signing the association agreement, maintaining Ukraine’s dependence on Russia for energy and growing Russian business. If these are Russia’s goals, then we can hardly talk of imperialist pretensions on its part. Equally, if Ukraine’s goals are as the author suggests, then it would appear that Ukraine is giving priority to its own needs independent of any external pressures.

The literatures considered above suggest that Russia-Ukraine relations are quite complicated. The political, economic and cultural dimensions encompassing these two states are complex. This essay enriches the literature by disentangling the intertwined threads of Russia-Ukraine relations within the framework of the Hegemonic Stability Theory.
1.8 Research Methodology

Research Hypotheses

a) Russia’s fixation with its dominance in the Eurasian region increases conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations

b) Ukraine’s fixation with complete independence from Russia increases conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations

Data Collection

The Research is based mainly on secondary sources of data. It obtained information from both online and offline sources: books, journals, reports, seminar papers and other records.

Analysis of Data

In the first proposition, Russia’s fixation with its dominance in Eurasia, which is the independent variable, is measured by extracting from the literature information on incidents or instances Russia used military force or threats of any kind of force in dealing with Ukraine. The second independent variable, Ukraine’s fixation with divorcing completely with Russia is measured by extracting from the literature information on every action by Ukraine intended to break Russian domination over Ukraine.

The dependent variable, conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations, is measured by gathering information from the literature on the relations between Russia and Ukraine since 1991 till date entailing threats, display or use of military force short of war, trade wars, sanctions, trade embargos, recalling of ambassadors, withdrawal (actual or threatened) from international bodies.
The method of analysis in this study is the case-study approach. Deductions about the relationships between the variables are made from the information obtained to determine whether to reject the propositions or otherwise. Although this approach is subjective with a higher risk of selection bias, it revealed much about Russia-Ukraine relations and also provided insights into the practicality of Russian dominance in the former soviet space.

1.9   Organisation of the Study

The Research is divided into four (4) chapters and organized as follows:

Chapter One contains a general overview of the study. It is basically the research design and deals with the background to and statement of the problem, the research questions, objectives, hypotheses and methodology. It also treats of the theoretical framework, literature review, rationale, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two provides a historical overview of Russia-Ukraine relations along the following lines:

- Historical events and experiences that continue to inform the behavior of the two nations towards each other even today
- Russia’s role as a successor to the USSR and its relations with Ukraine within that framework
Chapter Three focuses on Russia-Ukraine relations from 1991 to 2014. The chapter describes Ukraine’s resistance, since the early 1990s, to multiple attempts by Russia to bring it back under Moscow's control. It also offers some explanations as to why Ukraine has so far shown stronger signs of preferring the EU as its primary trade and political partner and examines the underlying motives of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It identifies what concerns Russia and Ukraine have about the future with respect to the European Union and discusses the possible implications of all this for international relations and global politics. In this chapter, deductions are made from the information retrieved in order to draw conclusions about the propositions of the study.

Chapter Four consists of the summary and the conclusions of the study. It also contains recommendations about future research in the area.
Endnotes

4 Dmitri Trennin, op. cit.
6 For a detailed analysis of this scenario, see Larrabee, Stephen. F., op. cit. p. 33-53
7 Walter Russell Mead, op. cit., reports further that, even Russian-speaking oligarchs in Eastern Ukraine believe that the EU offers greater opportunities and perhaps more security for their wealth than a closer association with Russia.
8 According to Gilpin, Kindelberger concluded that, since the hegemon, in providing collective goods, maintains the economic stability of the international system, its absence will result in a depression as witnessed between the world wars. See Gilpin, R. (1987). *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
14 See Gilpin Robert. (1987), op. cit
23 In the Pereyaslav Treaty, Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmelnitsky of Ukraine swore an oath of allegiance to the Tsar of Muscovy in return for the latter’s protection of Ukraine against Polish control. Khmelnitsky is said to have reluctantly sworn the oath because the Tsar, who was supposed to equally swear to protect the Cossack state against the Polish and allow it to retain its autonomy, refused to swear. Whilst the Cossacks ‘understood the Pereyaslav Treaty as obligating both sides and as a military alliance’ assuring them autonomy, the Muscovites, instead of viewing it as a commitment to protect the Cossack state and guarantee it autonomy, simply took it as the first step toward the military occupation of the Ukrainian Cossack state. The Cossacks considered this as a betrayal and always sought to repudiate the treaty. See Morrison John, op. cit.
26 Rywkin, Michael. (2014). Ukraine: Between Russia and the West, American Foreign Policy Interests. The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, 36(2), 119-126.
27 Shevtsov, S. (2013, November). "Bol'shaya igra na sammite v Vilniuse i ukrainskii vospros" [The Great Game at the Vilnius Summit and the Ukrainian Question]. Russia in Global Affairs.
CHAPTER TWO
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE RELATIONS

2.0 Introduction

Russia-Ukraine relations gained prominence and evoked specific attention in international relations in 1991 immediately upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union of which both countries were constituent republics. As separate states, each now maintains some representation in the other. Russia has an embassy in Kiev and consulates in Kharkov, lviv, Odessa and Simferopol in Ukraine. Ukraine, on the other hand, has an embassy in Moscow and consulates in Rostov-on-Don, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Tymen and Vladivostok. Relations between Russia and Ukraine are intricate and more so because of historical factors which continue to resonate in the post-independence existence of the two states.

Russia and Ukraine entered 1992 in the untried uniform of independent states, at least on paper; an independence that was won without any fight for it. Diplomatic roadmaps readily available to them were those used by Western governments in the 1990s (NATO, The Maastricht Treaty, The Paris Club, GATT, etc). Unfortunately these had been of little use to policy makers in Moscow and Kiev. Without any guide with familiar landmarks and signposts to use for their relations as independent states, each side is heavily inclined towards falling back on its own historical memories and myths as a guide to action, a tendency reinforced by domestic political pressures peculiar to each.
For Russia and Ukraine, both grappling with redefining their statehood, nationhood and interests, experiences of today could be less relevant than those of 1918, 1709, 1654, or even as far back as the tenth century. These historical reminiscences differ very sharply and have shaped widely differing expectations and aspirations on both sides. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin is alleged, in a publication in the Kyiv Post of 30 November 2010, to have threatened at a NATO-Russia summit in 2008 that, his country may contend Ukraine for Crimea and Eastern Ukraine if Ukraine were to join NATO.¹

With the election of pro-Russian Victor Yanukovych as Ukrainian President in early 2010, relations between the two countries improved.² Then relations deteriorated in 2014 with Russia’s military intervention in the Crimean peninsula. Later, Ukraine suspended many ties with Russia including military cooperation and export of defense equipment. These and many other individual instances of conflict or tension between the two countries are symptoms of deep historical factors underpinning and influencing each country’s approach to dealing with the other.

2.1 Critical Historical Underpinnings of the Relationship Between Russia and Ukraine

2.1.1 Ninth Century Kievan Rus’
As far back as the 9th Century, Russia and Ukraine were one country called Kievan Rus’, which was ruled by a coordinated grouping of princely states with the common interest of controlling trades routes along the Volkhov and Dnieper Rivers. There was brisk trade in furs, wax and slaves between Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire along these Rivers and the Kievan Rus’ state controlled the trade route.³
Russia and Ukraine thus have a common ancestral predecessor in the Kievan Rus’ state. This is a significant historical factor that is still resonating in current international discourse. Kiev, the modern capital of Ukraine, is often referred to as the cradle of Russian civilization. Whilst this often sounds patronizing to Ukrainians, it makes it difficult for Russians, especially the nationalists, to withstand the idea of Ukrainian statehood with Kiev as capital.

### 2.1.2 Fall of Kievan Rus’ and birth of Russia and Ukraine

Due to infighting between the princes who ruled it collectively, Kievan Rus' disintegrated and was eventually destroyed in a conquest by the Mongol Golden Hordes in the 13th century. After Kievan Rus’ fell to the Mongols, the northern and north-eastern part of the state, under the successful leadership of Moscow, then a province, defeated the Mongols and became a powerful state called Muscovy, the precursor to modern-day Russia.\(^4\)

South-western Kievan Rus’, on the other hand, came under the domination of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The advent of the Commonwealth encouraged the migration Poles, Germans, Lithuanians and Jews to the region. The peasants in this region, who fled from forced serfdom and fiercely resisted it, came to be known as Cossacks. In spite of their military usefulness, the Polish nobility who dominated the Commonwealth denied the Cossacks autonomy and instead were bent on assimilating them or forcing them into serfdom.\(^5\)

The militant Zaporozhian Cossacks refused Polish assimilation, and often clashed with the Commonwealth Government. Clashes gave way to full-scale rebellion which culminated in the
founding of Cossack Hetmanate, the Cossack state which is also usually viewed as the precursor to modern-day Ukraine.  

2.1.3 The Treaty of Pereyaslav

To help them to leave the Commonwealth and gain autonomy, the Cossacks sought protection from Muscovy, with which they shared much of their culture, language and religion. This culminated in a formal treaty in 1654 called the Treaty of Pereyaslav. According to this agreement, Muscovy protected the Cossacks in Left-bank Ukraine, which was under Polish control. 

In the Pereyaslav Treaty, Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky reluctantly swore a unilateral oath of allegiance to the Tsar of Muscovy. He is said to have reluctantly done it because the Tsar, who was supposed to equally swear to protect the Cossack state against the Polish and allow it to retain its autonomy, refused to swear. Whilst the Cossacks ‘understood the Pereyaslav Treaty as obligating both sides and as a military alliance’ assuring them autonomy, the Muscovites, instead of viewing it as a commitment to protect the Cossack state and guarantee it autonomy, simply took the treaty as ‘the first step toward the military occupation of the Ukrainian Cossack state’. The Cossacks considered this as a betrayal and always sought to repudiate the treaty. 

That Pereyaslav has produced enduring memories in the minds of Ukrainians is clear from the fact that in 1992, a ceremony was held in what is today the town of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky to renounce the Treaty once and for all. In fact, all of Ukraine’s negotiations with Russia appear to
take place in a long shadow cast by Pereyaslav which appears to be a scar on Ukrainian minds constantly reminding them that promises made by Russia will always be as worthless as the Tsar's promises in 1654 and that Russia will always break them. This has led Ukraine to an unspoken assumption that it is also entitled to break its promises to Russia when it sees fit.

The result is that Ukraine is almost always afraid that any deal with Russia is a potential trap, no matter how favorable to Ukraine its terms might be. Any Ukrainian leader who signs an agreement with Russia is immediately seen as risking a potential surrender of Ukraine’s independence on the pattern of 1654. In December 1991 for example, Kravchuk signed the agreement to establish the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) largely on Ukrainian terms. Yet he was accused of following in Khmelnytsky's footsteps and giving away Ukraine's sovereignty.

2.1.4 **Russian Defeat of Ukraine-Sweden Alliance at Poltava in 1709**

In a monumental about-turn, Ivan Mazepa, a Ukrainian Cossack Chieftain and then head of the Cossack Hosts, turned against the Tsar and made common cause with the then Swedish king, Charles XII to fight Muscovy. In 1709, this Ukrainian-Swedish alliance was irredeemably crushed at Poltava. The war with Sweden eventually ended in 1721. Independent Cossack institutions were liquidated later in the same century. Evoking Moscow’s ancestral lineage to the 9th century Kievan Rus’, he renamed Muscovy as Russia and thus redefined his kingdom to include all those who trace their ancestry to the Kievan Rus’ state. In addition to tsar, Peter assumed the title of emperor, and the Russian Empire was officially born.
Muscovy becoming Russia by evoking ancestral bonds with Kievan Rus’ produced historical consequences that have endured till today. Ukrainian nationality became subsumed under Russian nationality and due to the stronger kinship fostered by the common culture, language and religion of the two states, Ukrainians were indifferent towards, or even accepted, this ill-defined new national identity. By 1793, Ukraine was effectively absorbed into the Russian Empire. Though nationalistic embers kept glowing faintly in the background, Ukraine existed as anything else but autonomous or independent. The Ems Decree of 1876 was probably an attempt to nail Ukrainian nationalism in the head. By this decree issued by Tsar Alexander II, virtually all publications in Ukrainian were banned.¹⁰

Emerging from its military annihilation, Ukrainian nationalism metamorphosed into a cultural movement in the 1820s and 1830s. Its emergence was one of the unintended results of the tsar’s decision to set up a university in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev.¹¹

2.1.5  Events of 1917-1920

Another significant historical memoir from which Ukraine’s leadership draw lessons is the period from 1917-1920. The Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed after the Russian February Revolution of 1917. The February Revolution of 1917 completely overthrew the tsarist system in Russia and saw the formation of a Provisional Government. The Russian Provisional Government granted Ukraine independence and established official relations by sending a Russian envoy as representative to the Ukrainian Central Rada. Ukraine also posted a representative in the Russian Government. But in the same 1917, the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, took over power from the leadership of the Provisional Government and attacked Ukraine at the
beginning of 1918 without provocation. The Russian Red Army defeated Ukraine in 1919 and founded the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. By 1920, they had effectively crushed all Ukrainian resistance.¹²

Events of the period 1917-1920 have created the perception in Ukraine that Russia is a potential aggressor and an adversary; a situation which has made Russia-Ukraine relations unusually intricate and grim. Ukraine believes that it is playing a kind of zero-sum game with Russia, whereby any concession Ukraine makes on defense increases Russia’s military and financial benefits to Ukraine’s detriment. These events have made most Ukrainians (both leadership and led) feel that the slightest indication of military weakness on their part or the slightest diplomatic faux pas by Ukraine could put its hard-won independence at risk.

Russia has a different perception of historical events involving Ukraine. Russia does not see Ukraine as a contender but rather as an integral part of Russia. Russia traces its genealogy straight to Kievan Rus’ and views Ukraine, not as victims, but as traditional younger brothers or junior shareholders in the Russian empire.¹³ Thus, while Ukrainians remember Pereyaslav as the onset of three and a half centuries of Russian domination, Russians remember it as the fulfillment of a deep-seated Ukrainian feeling to reunite with their ancestral patrimony.

Modern day patriotic Russians see the return of Ukraine to the Russian fold as a genealogical necessity. The West and the US also accept this genealogical bond between Russia and Ukraine. An American political scientist wrote: ‘one should not forget that Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, was the birthplace of the Russian nation. It was here a thousand years ago that the Russians
accepted Christianity. Modern-day Russians believe that Kiev was the capital of Old Russia and they would not entertain attempts by Ukrainians to take it away from them.

Some Russian nationalists even believe that the idea of Ukrainians as ‘Little Russian’ does not arise because, in truth and reality, Ukraine, in addition to Penza, Volhynia and Byelorussia, is a part and parcel of the living body of Russia. According to them, there is no room for argument about the fact that these lands are a part of Russia.

2.1.6 Defining Memories for Russia and Ukraine from the Soviet Period

According to Norman Lowe, the history of Russia and Ukraine between 1922 and 1991 is essentially that of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Soviet Union. This ideologically based union, established in December 1922 by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, was roughly coterminous with Russia in late 1918 because by the end of 1918, the Bolsheviks controlled Ukraine, Belarus and Transcaucasia (i.e. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia). USSR, the new state, comprised of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (Russian SFSR), the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR), the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (Belarusian SSR) and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (Transcaucasian SFSR).

The Russian February Revolution of 1917 resulted in the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II and the installation of a leftist provisional government, while the October Revolution of the same year ousted the provisional government and established a permanent communist government. The Bolsheviks were primarily responsible for these revolutions. Bolsheviks were followers of
Vladimir Lenin's Marxist ideology and were typically members of Russia's working class. Immediately following the October Revolution, Vladimir Lenin declared Russia to be a socialist state officially dubbed the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

However, as not everyone in Russia supported the radicalism of the Bolsheviks, the Revolution immediately spawned the Russian Civil War, in which Bolshevik 'Reds' fought conservative 'Whites.' According to Lowe, although the anti-Bolshevik 'Whites' side was supported by the United States and other Western European democracies, they were unable to stop the tide of communism in Russia.

The Russian Civil War ended in 1922 with the Bolsheviks ultimately firmly entrenched in power. Lowe narrates that, upon victory, the Bolsheviks absorbed regions other than Russia proper – Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. From 23rd to 27th December, 1922, representatives (soviets) of the constituent republics of the anticipated Soviet Union converged in Moscow for what was called the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Of the 2,215 delegates, 488 were from the neighboring Bolshevik-controlled states of Ukraine, Belarus and Transcaucasia (i.e. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia). At the Congress, the Bolshevik leader, Josef Stalin made a speech proposing union of the Russian SFSR with the Ukrainian SSR, the Belarusian SSR and the Transcaucasian SFSR. His comrades at the Congress agreed and the USSR was born.

The constitution of the USSR was adopted in 1924. It established a federal system of government based on a pyramid of soviets in each constituent republic. This hierarchy of soviets
ended with the All-Union Congress of Soviets. However, while it appeared that the congress exercised sovereign power, this body was actually governed by the Communist Party, which in turn was controlled by the Politburo from Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, just as it had been under the tsars before Peter the Great. The Soviet Union and some events that occurred under the Soviet Union have left memories that continue to exert an impact on Russia-Ukraine relations.

2.1.7 Collectivization in the USSR and the 1932-1933 Famine

Top on the list of defining memories of the Soviet period from which Ukrainians draw lessons in dealing with Russia is the Ukrainian famine created on Stalin’s orders in the early 1930s. In 1929, Stalin embarked on a Five-year Economic Program which entailed state control of all economic activity – building of heavy industry, collectivization of agriculture and state control of manufacturing. In its collectivization program, the government took control of all farms through a decree in February 1930. By law, all farms were to be either state or collective farms. Any peasant who opposed state control lost his land and those who strongly resisted were executed.

A combination of bad weather, deficient and hastily established collective farms, and massive confiscation of grain by the state suddenly caused a serious famine from which several million peasants, mostly in Ukraine but also in southwestern Russia, died of starvation. During the famine, up to 7.5 million citizens of the Ukrainian SSR died. This is considered an unprecedented peacetime catastrophe in the history of Ukraine. Ukrainians remember the famine as a calculated attempt at wiping out their nationalists. They call it ‘Holodomor’,
translated severally as ‘extermination by hunger’, and ‘Terror-famine in Ukraine’, and ‘Famine-genocide in Ukraine’. Since 2006, the Holodomor has been recognized by independent Ukraine and several other countries as a genocidal terrorist act in history against the people of Ukraine.

Whilst Russia emphasizes that natural factors, deficient and hastily implemented collective farms, and above all, bad economic policies were solely responsible for precipitating the famine of 1932-1933, Ukrainians and scholars sympathetic to Ukraine disagree and conclude that Joseph Stalin premeditated the destruction of the Ukrainian peasantry. Contrary to Russia, they emphasize the famine’s man-made aspects such as rejecting outside aid in the heat of the starvation, confiscating all the foodstuffs of households, and restricting the movement of the people. Judging from such actions, Ukrainians are in no doubt whatsoever that the famine was an intentional starvation of their people in order to put Ukrainian nationalism to sleep forever.

In the absence of documentary proof of intent, one is persuaded away from defining the famine as genocide. Although Ukraine can hardly be convinced, the famine might ultimately have been as a result of the radical liquidation of private property and state monopoly of industrialization. However, what is in no doubt is that, in today’s Russia-Ukraine relations, memories of the ‘Holodomor’ still play a role, albeit not very positive.

An incident in history that Russia has never been able to forget is the whimsical ceding of Crimea in 1954 to Ukraine. Crimea was conquered from the Ottoman Empire with the blood of Russian soldiers and, along with Odessa and other areas, has always been known as an essential
part of Russia. For Russia, it was, and still is, unthinkable to lose it to Ukraine. The Crimea had always belonged to the Russian Empire and so was Ukraine itself.

However, in 1954, Nikita Khrushchev signed a decree turning over the Crimean region to Ukraine. In May of 1992 the Russian Supreme Soviet passed a Resolution annulling the 1954 decision to transfer the region to Ukraine. Thereafter, Ukraine renewed its claims to the region and the ensuing conflict was temporarily defused in summer of the same year by agreements reached between Yeltsin and Kravchuk, at Dagomys and Yalta respectively, to postpone the final disposition of naval units and facilities until 1995.\textsuperscript{23}

The Autonomous Republic of Crimea has an ethnic Russian majority, is home to the Russian Black Sea fleet but is strangely a part of Ukraine. Therefore, in order to operate its fleet, Russia has to lease Crimea (or specifically Sevastopol) from Ukraine. In 2009, one of such lease agreements was extended until 2042. Russia appears not prepared to ever accept unconditional Ukrainian sovereignty over the region.

Historically, Crimea evolved from three peoples – Russians, Ukrainians and Tatars. The Tatars are a Turkic people originating from central Asia. They took over and populated Crimea in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century following Genghis Khan’s great Mongol expansion. At first the Crimean Tatars were merely a minor part of the Mongol Empire but by mid-15th century, they had founded their own state, the Khanate of Crimea, which became an autonomous part of the Ottoman Empire and the main centre for the medieval white slave trade. Between 1440 and early 18th century, around a million slaves from what is now Ukraine and south Russia were abducted by the Crimean’s and
sold to Turkish and Arab buyers across the Middle East. Meanwhile, a thousand miles to the north, the Principality of Moscow (proto-Russia) was beginning to expand and by mid-16th century it was just a few miles from the Black Sea.24

Indeed, for the next two centuries, it was only the power of the Crimean Tatar state that prevented Russia from acquiring a warm water port. Yet as Russian power succeeded in preventing Tatar slave raids, the slave-based economy and the power of the Crimean state began to falter – and in 1783 Russia seized Crimea, built warm water navy and constructed a great port (Sevastopol) to accommodate it. The tables had been well and truly turned. Face to face with the Ottoman Empire, Russia increasingly found herself at war with the Turks – and it was the Crimean Tatars who often paid the price. It was at that point that Crimea became an overwhelmingly Russian-populated territory.25

Its demographic and geographical situation was anomalous. Although it was geographically an extension of Ukraine, demographically and politically it had become Russian. Indeed, ever since 1921, it had been part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (the RSFSR) – not part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.26

Another memory from history is Russia’s loss to Ukraine of Sevastopol, a naval post of the former USSR. After the conquest of Crimea, Catherine the Great founded Sevastopol and built the Black Sea Fleet there because it had become part of Russia. The situation in which Sevastopol belongs to Ukraine after 1991 is one that continues to cause significant irritation to
Russia-Ukraine relations. As long as Sevastopol continues to belong to Ukraine, Russia’s continued use of naval units and facilities in Sevastopol is an irritation to Ukraine.

In December 1992, the Russian Congress of People’s Deputies decided to investigate the legitimacy of Ukraine’s claims to Sevastopol and in August 1993, the Congress, by a vote 166 to 1, declared Ukraine’s claims as invalid and Sevastopol as a Russian city. This produced further heated exchange between Kiev and Moscow. It also added strength to the pro-Russian forces in Crimea that have been seeking independence from Ukrainian rule.²⁷

2.2 Russia-Ukraine Relations With Russia as Successor to the USSR

After three centuries of hegemony, is Russia still interested in claiming any special role? Does it wish to become the centre of a new empire and be favored over the other republics? Russia played this role before and has it been better off? Russia’s introspection in order to search for answers to these questions is the beginning of a bumpy road towards establishing a post-Soviet identity.

Russia succeeded the USSR with very difficult territorial dilemmas that have engendered tension in its relations with its neighbors, particularly Ukraine. Immediately after the Soviet collapse, Gorbachev proposed a new Union treaty which, of course, did not sit well with Ukraine because it promoted Russian imperialism. Boris Yeltsin scrapped the proposed treaty and replaced it with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which guaranteed Ukrainian independence. Russia assured Ukraine several times that it will no longer pursue an 'imperial' policy towards its neighbors among the former Soviet republics, many of whom shared Ukraine’s suspicions of
Russian policy. Despite these assurances, Ukraine, initially looked to by its post-Soviet neighbors as a counterweight to Moscow, has frequently complained that the 'imperial disease' still holds sway in Moscow.²⁸

Russia entered 1992 with the double personality – that of a nation-state and an agitated former empire. This dual personality has made it quite difficult for Russia to lucidly determine its boundaries and citizens. After the collapse of the USSR, the usual correspondence between citizenship, ethnicity and language got broken. For instance, following the independence of Ukraine and the other republics, several Russian citizens (both ethnic and Russian-speaking) suddenly found the protection of their Russian citizenship taken away and a different citizenship forced on them. The ensuing confusion and resentment that gripped both leadership and people in Russia continue to bear heavily on Russia’s relations with the other former Soviet republics.

Ukraine's share in the outcome of Russia’s self-definition is much higher than that of the others. Crimea, Sevastopol, Odessa and the other areas of southern Ukraine were a part of Russia and are predominantly, if not wholly, Russian (ethnically and Russian-speaking). Whilst Russia’s claim of these areas may in reality be driven by pure territorial motives, Ukraine and many analysts less sympathetic to Russia believe that its conduct is motivated by imperialist pretensions. Conflict and rumors of conflict have always characterized Russia-Ukraine relations when it comes to these issues.

Before 1992, Russia and Ukraine did not have to worry about separate foreign policies. After the demise of the USSR in 1991, Russian and Ukrainian domestic politics became severed from each
other for the first time and lost the vestiges of the all-Soviet framework. Both countries were suddenly confronted with the unfamiliar task of evolving an independent foreign policy. Politicians and parties with purely nationalist, rather than all-Union, pretensions rocketed to the fore. In Ukraine, for instance, the Rukh, a nationalist movement, gained considerable influence remarkably disproportionate with their numbers. The shift to national politics provided fertile grounds for disagreements with Russia in several areas.\textsuperscript{29}

The Russian domestic context was not much different. The polarity was between supporters and opponents of reform which circumscribed Russian leadership’s maneuvers in dealings with Ukraine. In 1992, whilst there was periodic personal friction between Yeltsin of Russia and Kravchuk of Ukraine, both leaders demonstrated mutual sensitivity to each other’s domestic challenges. Yeltsin had swiftly and unconditionally recognized Ukraine’s independence in December 1991. But Ukraine’s appreciation was rather short-lived as Russian nationalists such as Rhirinovsky, Vice-President Rutskoi and in the Russian parliament questioned the legitimacy of the 1954 transfer of Crimea from Russia to Ukraine.\textsuperscript{30}

There is no support in Russia for accommodating Ukrainian demands because that is widely perceived as a defeat for Russian interest. Similarly, the often hysterical rhetoric of political infighting in Moscow heightens Ukrainian suspicions of Russia’s genuineness or sincerity towards Ukrainian independence. The result is constant mistrust and tension in Russia-Ukraine relations. Russia’s questioning of Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea or Sevastopol becomes an unassailable armory for Ukrainian nationalist politicians opposed to any compromise with Russia.
2.2.1 Economic Side of Russian Post-Soviet Role in Russia-Ukraine Relations

Since February 1992, Russia’s post-Soviet economic role has also suffered polarity. One the hand, there is supporters of tighter integration between the post-Soviet member-states led by Kazakhstan and on the other, is the opponents of integration led by Ukraine. For Russia, no integration means giving priority to the interests of the Russian Federation with little regard for its post-Soviet neighbors and tighter integration means pursuing Russian interests within the framework of a wider alliance or union of post-Soviet states.\(^\text{31}\)

Russia tried to pursue both strategies; much to the bewilderment of Ukraine. It tried to put an end Russian energy export subsidies and to trade with all the post-Soviet states at world prices which also entailed tighter control of the rouble zone and effective expulsion from the zone of those not prepared to entertain Russia’s control of monetary policy. At the same, it pursued an integrationist approach by offering to shoulder heavy bills associated with areas like debt negotiations and arms control in order to maintain its ‘elder brother’ role.\(^\text{32}\)

Ukraine however stood its grounds for total independence, political and economic. Monetary ties to the rouble were severed in 1992 and, from 1994 Russian energy deliveries to Ukraine were at world prices with Ukraine also charging Russia world prices for pipeline trans-shipment of Russia's oil and gas via Ukrainian territory to Europe.\(^\text{33}\) In its euphoria for total independence, Ukraine underestimated its true relationship with Russia. The popular belief among Ukrainians was that Russia exploited Ukraine’s economic resources and gave little in return. But contrary to this, the real economic relationship between them was that Russia heavily subsidized its gas and oil supplies to Ukraine each year at prices well below world prices.
In fact, Ukraine has often complained that Russia uses Ukraine’s over-dependence on Russian energy to whip Ukraine into line on other issues. So the economic relationship of 1992 and 1994 whereby subsidies were removed did not help Ukraine at all. In addition, the Ukrainian currency took a nose dive against the Russian rouble in 1993 and made it even more difficult for Ukraine to pay for critical energy supplies from Russia.\textsuperscript{34}

2.3 Succession to Soviet Union’s Foreign Debts and Assets

In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Ukraine claimed that Soviet assets, including diplomatic property abroad and soft currency debts owed to the former Soviet Union by its Third World allies worth $70 billion were seized by Russia. Russia, on its part, argued that most of the Third World debts were bad and that the value of former Soviet diplomatic property abroad had been overestimated. But Ukraine, rejecting Russia’s offer to assume responsibility for both assets and liabilities of the Union, insisted on an equal share-out by which it was to settle 16.7\% of Soviet debt separately.\textsuperscript{35}

Whatever misgivings might have surrounded the level of altruism in Russia’s offer, it merited a degree of magnanimity and most of the other former Soviet republics happily accepted it. Ukraine's insistence on its right to settle its share of debt for political reasons was yet another misjudgment of its economic capabilities. By September 1993, Ukraine had accumulated a $2.5 billion trading debt to Russia, largely for oil and gas supplies. Ukraine was clearly highly indebted and unable to pay its arrears to Russia and the outside world. After a long resistance to Moscow’s formula, it finally capitulated in mid-1993.\textsuperscript{36} Yet again, as with the rouble zone, Ukraine was unable to sustain its campaign to be the successor state to the Soviet Union.
Russia’s economic succession to the Soviet Union did not come without souring relations between the two countries. Whilst in the other Soviet republics independence was based on nationhood (the political momentum behind independence was driven by ethnically based nationalism), Ukrainian independence was based on statehood rather than nationhood. Ukrainian pro-independence politicians feared the dangers of a split between the ultra-nationalist west Ukraine and the Russian-speaking east and in order to win the support of the more than 11 million Russian minority, deliberately veered away from nationalism to statehood linking independence to automatic economic prosperity. For Ukraine, building an independent state was incompatible with any form of integration with Russia, political, economic, military or otherwise. This probably explains why after noticing that it had misfired by leaving the rouble zone, Ukraine found it unthinkable to return.

As the Russian economy grew and the Ukrainian economy declined, disillusionment in the Russian-speaking east with the promise of a better life in total independence from Russia set in. By mid-1993, the Ukrainian economy was flat on its face and living standards in the industrial Russian-speaking east were so bad that they sparked huge and bitter strikes by workers. The Russian-speaking east had lost faith in independence under total divorce with Russia. This led to an east/west split with the east increasingly demanding regional autonomy. Without much circumspection, Ukraine was quick in blaming the situation on Russia claiming that the latter was deliberately undermining Ukrainian independence.37

From this historical review conclusions may not be difficult. Bonded by a common patrimony, the lives of the two neighboring countries have been intertwined in over 1,000 years of tumultuous history. Today, Ukraine is one of Russia's biggest markets for natural gas exports, a
crucial transit route to the rest of Europe, and home to an estimated 11 million ethnic Russians who mostly live in eastern Ukraine and the southern region of Crimea.

About 25 percent of Ukraine's 50 million people claim Russian as their mother tongue. David Clark, Chairman of the Russia Foundation, a think tank organization, probably got it right when it suggested that Russia lacks natural borders like rivers and mountains along its western frontier; so "its leaders have traditionally seen the maintenance of a sphere of influence over the countries around it as a source of security." That is especially true of Ukraine, which Russia regards as its little brother.¹³⁸ "Everybody knows that Ukrainians are Russians,…except for the Galicians’, says Kremlin Adviser, Sergei Markov. It is noteworthy that he used ‘Galicians’ in reference to the Ukrainian-speaking residents of western Ukraine.³⁹ Figure 1 below shows that about a quarter of Ukrainian nationals are Russian.

Figure 1: Map of Ukraine showing Russian-populated regions of Ukraine

Source: http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/.../formerUSSR.jpg
Further, Ukraine and Russia are tied together economically. Ukraine relies on Russia for about 80 per cent of its oil and gas. Russia is perceived as often using oil and gas as an economic weapon to exert extra pressure on Ukraine to fall in line in many negotiations. Fixating on total independence from Russia, Ukraine agreed to a deal of paying world prices for Russia’s energy supplies. But with an economy that was prostrate, it could not afford payment, thereby deepening the economic crisis which had an untold effect on the populace. Both the West and the United States favored Russia taking control of ex-Soviet nuclear weapons much to an almost overt displeasure of a hesitant Ukraine. Ukraine ended up giving up nuclear status in return for promises of compensation and guarantees for its security and independence.  

Relations with Russia are of strategic importance for Ukraine’s foreign policy. In spite of all the difficulties and problems existing in relations between Kiev and Moscow, bilateral cooperation ought to be founded on parity, mutual benefit, transparency and mutual respect for sovereignty. Russia-Ukraine relations should take into account the interests of both parties. There seems to be no alternative. Good neighborliness with the Russian Federation on the part of Ukraine is also one of the important conditions for Ukraine’s Euro-integration course. The very start of Victor Yanukovych’s presidency saw greater efforts being made to energize Ukraine-Russia relations at all the levels. A sudden change was observed in the nature and tone of dialogue between the two countries, both politically and diplomatically.  

It must be noted that the problems in Ukraine-Russia political relations are caused by different geopolitical orientations and different civilization choices of the two countries. Today, the relations are asymmetric and disparate in their nature. Ukraine makes a good deal of concessions
to Russia and the prospect further concessions keep decreasing. The policy of Russia towards Ukraine is goal-oriented and well-coordinated. The position of Ukraine regarding Russia-led re-integration efforts in the post-Soviet space is likely to keep influencing the nature and future course of relations between the two. Ukraine’s eastward integration is a risky and counter-productive exchange of its strategic national interests in return for tactical (and rather demonstrative) economic preferences.

The Ukrainian government has undergone large-scale and unprecedented pressure from Russia. Thus, bilateral relations between them are going through a difficult time. The Ukrainian-Russian partnership, however, is not doomed to move along the descending path. As it was previously mentioned, there is no alternative but to establish a mutually beneficial and equal partnership. Thus, the main task is to continue jointly searching for mechanisms of resolving the controversial issues, building an effective cooperation model based on coordination of the parties’ national interests and a strong restraint from coercive measures.

In terms of land mass, Russia, as a nation, is the largest of the ex-Soviet states. It was head of the USSR, a union by threat of force. As such, when the USSR ceased to exist in 1991, Russia the largest nation and former head of the Union emerged as a de facto dominator of the Union.\textsuperscript{42}

The contemporary Russian state, which emerged after the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, has no historical precedent. Its borders correspond to no previous historical entity. Of the successor states, only Russia possesses the capacity to become a global power. It comprises 76.2 percent of the entire territory and has half the population of the former USSR, just fewer than
150 million people. The country is richly endowed with natural resources and a skilled workforce. Russia has 90 percent of the oil and 80 percent of the former Soviet Union. The great majority of research institutes and educational establishments are also situated in Russia. See below for a map of present-day Russia.

**Figure 2: Map of present-day Russia**

![Map of present-day Russia](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/.../formerUSSR.jpg)

These seemed to give the Russian government many advantages in implementing successful economic reform. The task was nevertheless immense: to dismantle the economic system of
socialism in one of the world’s great countries. Russia was great in terms of its territory, population, and sophisticated economic structure.

For the second time in a century, Russia was to perform a vast experiment in social engineering, reshaping its state, society, and economy all at once. Russia was a federation in its own right and the reformist government faced the task of restructuring of the country’s state and political systems on genuine federative foundations which would take into account the country’s historical traditions and modern-day realities.

Ukraine appears to have wrongly conceived its capabilities vis-à-vis its northern neighbor. Whichever strategy Russia pursued in order to also redefine and assert its nationhood after the Soviet demise, Ukraine appeared to lose out. With the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine, on the other hand, saw itself in a new light altogether. It considered itself as a rich state, the second largest country after Russia and with enough military might (nuclear weapons) not only to be fully independent, but to become a new European power in its own right. Ukraine has seen Russia as the country that can block such ambitions. It has therefore looked at Russia with great suspicion and has tried in all ways to resist playing second fiddle to Russia.

Ukraine has since been blaming its consistent failure in its attempts to be the successor state to the Soviet Union on Russia. Whilst it is true that historical factors, economic factors, international influence and Russian diplomacy have determined the nature and direction Russia-Ukraine relations, it is even truer to say that Ukraine’s fixation on contending Russia over
succession to the USSR has blinded it to pragmatism in dealing with Russia. Such a conduct has had a telling effect on their relations.
ENDNOTES

1 For full article see Kyiv Post (2010, November 30). "After Russian invasion of Georgia, Putin’s words stir fears about Ukraine". Kyiv Post.


5 Ibid.

6 According to Serhy Yekelchyk, just as today Ukraine finds itself in a three-headed military and diplomatic rivalry between Western Europe, America and Russia, so also in history, the Cossack Hetmanate found itself torn between the Ottoman Turks, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy. See Yekelchyk, S. (2007). Ukraine: Birth of a modern nation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.


11 According to Charlotte Hodgeman the Tsar thought that encouraging Ukrainian (then known as ‘Little Russian’) culture would reduce Polish cultural and political influence in the region – but, instead, it led to the rapid emergence of a nationalist movement that challenged the Moscow-centric nature of tsarist Russia and advocated a more federal structure. See Hodgman, C. (2014, July 5). Complex Crimea: The history behind the relationship between Russia and Ukraine over Ukraine, at: http://www.historyextra.com/feature/


14 Ibid

15 Simes Dmitri believes that, whereas Russians can accept the independence of Poland, Latvia or Georgia, they feel their very identity threatened by the whole idea of Ukrainian statehood, nationality or even linguistic autonomy. See Dmitri, S. K. (1992, Summer). America and the post-Soviet republics. Foreign Affairs, 82.


17 Ibid


22 Ibid


24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE
RUSSIA-UKRAINE RELATIONS FROM 1991 TO 2014

3.0   Introduction

Chapter three focuses on Russia-Ukraine relations from 1991 to 2014. It explores Russia’s use of its dominance in the Eurasian region in dealing with Ukraine and Ukraine’s actions, aimed at entrenching its autonomy from Russia. The chapter describes Ukraine’s response to Russia’s attempts at forging a working relationship with the other ex-Soviet nations, particularly Ukraine. It highlights Ukraine’s resistance, since the early 1990s, to multiple attempts by Russia and the other states to bring about integration and a united front in confronting their respective challenges, both domestic and international, in the unchartered sea of independence, nationhood and statehood.

It does this largely by tracing the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and examining Russia-Ukraine relations within the Commonwealth. It also discusses the presence of the EU as a third party in Russia-Ukraine relations and the explanations as to why Ukraine prefers the EU as its primary trade and political partner. It further identifies and discusses the instances of conflict between Russia and Ukraine and, draws conclusions about the hypotheses or propositions of this study.

3.1   The Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS)

The Soviet Union disintegrated and its fifteen constituent members – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova,
Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – all in turn proclaimed their independence by the end of 1991. These successor states, through an agreement that recognized the independence, sovereignty and equality of all its members, formed the CIS to maintain economic and security links between themselves as former Soviet republics.¹

First, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, at a tripartite meeting, held near Brest in Belarus on December 8, 1991, proceeded to declare that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist as a subject of international law and that they, henceforth, constituted the CIS. At the same time they announced that the new alliance would be open to all republics of the former Soviet Union, and to other nations sharing the same goals.

Eight of the remaining republics – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Krygyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – at a meeting in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, on December 21 of the same year, followed suit with a similar declaration bringing membership to eleven. Georgia joined two years later, in December 1993. At this point, all former Soviet Republics, except the Baltic States of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, participated in the CIS. Integration of the countries, in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, is executed through its coordinating institutions (charter bodies, executive bodies and the bodies of branch cooperation of the CIS).

According to John Morrison, Boris Yeltsin had been hailed in Russia when he got rid of the Soviet Union and formed the CIS although by the end of 1992, his action was perceived as a monumental defeat for Russian interests. The good relations that existed between Russia and
Ukraine till then started looking shaky. As Yeltsin faced the increasing disillusionment of his people at home, his counterpart in Ukraine, Kravchuk, was discerning enough to foresee a bumpy road for Russia-Ukraine relations as Yeltsin’s nationalist opponents gained the upper hand. Similarly, due to the fact that the CIS did not have the status of a state, it was undoubtedly a memorable victory for Ukrainian interests though its development saw a continual decline in Ukraine’s influence on the other members.

3.1.1 Relations within the CIS Framework

A definite difference in the attitudes of Ukraine and Russia towards the CIS emerged immediately after its founding meeting at Minsk. After getting rid of Gorbachev’s proposal of a new state to inherit the Soviet Union, Yeltsin agreed to adapt the CIS to Ukrainian demands of unequivocal independence. He believed that, in return, he had secured an unspoken pledge from Ukraine for joint military, economic, and foreign policy integration. Instead, Ukraine substantially redrafted the CIS agreement to weaken Ukraine's commitments, all the while reassuring Russia, and thus creating the impression that the changes were purely technical and without substance. According to Paul Goble, as soon as Russia and Belarus ratified the original version, Ukraine, as if in revenge for the Pereyaslav myth, announced that the only valid text as far as it was concerned would be the Ukrainian amended text since neither Russia nor Belarus had objected to the Ukrainian amendments.

Goble writes that, the popular perception in Ukraine was that the CIS was a cover-up for Russian interests with little or nothing of political, economic or security benefits for the other members. Particularly, opposition nationalist politicians in Ukraine decried the CIS as a death blow to their
newly attained independence, describing it as a neo-imperialist structure intended to suck Ukraine dry of its resources. Opinion was sharply divided in Ukraine with one side calling for withdrawal from the CIS and the other advocating maintenance of economic ties with Russia.

Paul Goble notes that Ukrainian behavior was strategic. Short of exiting, Ukraine tried to maintain a middle course in its policy towards the organization. It adopted a strategy of exposing the organization for what it truly is (a Russian imperialist maneuver) and thereby keep it weak and powerless in order to successfully deal with Russia, wherever possible, on a bilateral basis instead. In pursuit of this strategy, Ukraine consistently attempted blocking all efforts at strengthening the effectiveness of the Commonwealth by often abstaining from agreements.

Out of independence euphoria and emotions, Ukraine had grossly misjudged reality. The truth was that Russia, through the CIS structure, was channeling huge subsidies, particularly cheap energy, to members. Whilst Russia was thus maintain the CIS at great cost to itself, Ukraine, the largest recipient of these subsidies, was busily working to either demolish or escape CIS structures. According to Goble, such conduct did not win Ukraine the favor of the other members and made it near-impossible for it to mobilize enough support from them against Russia on several multilateral issues. Though in the beginning many of the other members looked up to Ukraine as a credible counterweight to Russia, for its unfounded behavior, it was often orphaned in negotiations with Russia. Instead of negotiating as part of a coalition of former Soviet republics, Ukraine often faced Russia as the one unreasonable colleague. One classic example Goble gives of Ukraine’s lack of influence with its other colleague members, is its failure to get their support against Russia in the Soviet debt argument.
In order to make the CIS more effectual, Russia and Kazakhstan\textsuperscript{2} pushed to give it more powers by proposing a new charter that committed members to ‘a coordinated policy in the sphere of international security, disarmament, arms control and the organizational development of the armed forces’. The charter, signed in Minsk in January 1993 by eight member states employed a Soviet-style formulation that obliged signatories to respond jointly to security threats through ‘collective self-defense’ and included a secretariat with a permanent body of representatives from each state. Section 2, article 7 of the charter formalized the concept of membership. It defined a member as a country that ratifies it.\textsuperscript{3}

Turkmenistan did not ratify the charter and changed its CIS standing to associate member as of 26 August 2005 in order to be consistent with its UN-recognized international neutrality status.\textsuperscript{4} Although Ukraine was one of the three founding countries and ratified the Creation Agreement in December 1991, Ukraine chose to opt out of the CIS Charter.

Ukraine, which had been complaining about the organization’s ineffectiveness, was now confronted with a test of whether it was genuinely interested in seeing the organization work. If it was, it will support the new charter. If its complaints had ulterior motives, it will not sign on to the new charter. Citing its disagreement with Russia being the only international legatee of the Soviet Union as the reason for opting out was in sharp conflict with its persistent complaints that the organization was ineffectual. So Ukraine lost any lingering trust the remaining members had in it.
The charter was an eloquent expression of Russia’s readiness for a currency union, a debt agreement and a customs union, creation of an interstate bank and removal of all barriers to movements of goods, capital and services, which presupposed a common level of prices. Russia and integrationist states such as Kazakhstan were firmly in control of the agenda and were decided on an economic union which also presupposed a coordinated foreign economic policy, a collective security system and close cooperation in other areas like human rights and civil liberties. At first, member states were to come together in a customs union where Russia would abolish tax on energy exports and then move into an economic union by 2015.

The charter dilemma in Ukraine exposed deep cracks in the ranks of Ukrainian leaders. Whilst Kravchuk denounced it as a surreptitious attempt by Russia to resurrect the Soviet Union, Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma saw some saving grace in ratifying it. Kravchuk tried a compromise position by agreeing to economic integration while opposing political and military integration. But, as John Morrison notes, Russia made it clear to Ukraine that it could not eat its cake and have it. Ukraine could not expect economic benefits of CIS membership without conceding some political as well as economic sovereignty.

Despite attempts to vary the CIS framework, Ukraine was exposed to the risk of trading with the other members in hard currency and at higher tariffs if it completely withdraws from the CIS. By the second half of 1993 economic pressures pushed Ukraine to support the 'economic union' agreement drafted initially by Kuchma with the Russian and Belarussian governments as a blueprint for a more integrated CIS. According to Jonas Gratz, it was at this point that the EU
and USA stepped up their schemes to dissuade Ukraine from signing onto the customs union and ultimately the economic union.

3.2 Russia-Ukraine Relations and European Union

The European Union (EU) is a unification of twenty seven countries aiming steadfastly at creating a viable political and economic community. The precursor to the European Union, the Council of Europe, was established in 1949 after World War II, in an effort to unite the countries of Europe and end the period of wars between them. In 1950, six nations, referred to today as “founding members” of the EU, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands expanded their cooperation to cover coal and steel by creating the European Coal and Steel Community. During the 1950s, the Cold War, protests, and divisions between Eastern and Western Europe showed the need for further European unification. In order to do this, the Treaty of Rome was signed on March 25, 1957. The European Economic Community was then created.\(^5\)

Of all the treaties Europe had in place over the years, the Treaty of Maastricht signed on February 7, 1992 and put into action from November 1, 1993, is considered as the milestone at which the EU was fully matured. According to Amanda Briney, the Treaty of Maastricht identified five goals designed to unify Europe in more ways than just economically. The goals are to strengthen the democratic governing of participating nations, improve the efficiency, establish an economic and financial unification, develop the "Community’s social dimension", and finally, establish a security policy for member nations.
3.3 EU-Russia Relations

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that entered into force on December 01, 1997 set the legal basis for relations between Russia and the EU. Within the framework of the Agreement, the leaders of Russia and the EU defined four common areas for strategic partnership between the EU and Russia – economy, freedom, security and science. In May, 2005, the parties adopted a package of road maps for these four common spaces. These “common areas” stressing the importance of strategic partnership between Russia and the EU have been adopted as an alternative to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) that Russia refused to join. At the EU-Russia Summit held in June 2008 in Khanty-Mansiysk, official negotiations started on a new framework agreement to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Later, in 2010, the parties launched the Partnership for Modernization and approved a work plan for its implementation.6

The EU aims to surround itself with dependent countries possessing resources that it can use for its own needs. It would have been interested if Russia joined. But the latter may not, because it has successfully circumvented underdevelopment and the attendant canker of dependence. The EU has successfully concluded such agreements with countries located in the southern parts of the union. Those countries are so underdeveloped that the prospect of de-industrialization does not frighten them.

Russia, on the other hand, is offering the countries on the EU's eastern flank more promising projects involving a common market and joint development of advanced technologies. That, plus the fact that the process of de-industrialization is already underway in those countries
explains why the EU policy met with resistance in the East. Ukraine’s signing of the Association Agreement dealt a huge blow to Moscow by ruining plans for creating a common economic space that includes Ukraine, the second-largest market in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The battle for Ukraine is part of a larger geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West. European politicians even had the gall to say that the agreement would in no way adversely affect Russia’s interests. Everyone understands this is an outright lie, and such statements hardly serve as a strong foundation for positive relations with Russia. That is probably why Moscow acted to defend its own interests. But Russia is not opposed to the EU. On the contrary, Russia would like to build good relations with Europe.\(^7\)

If Europe genuinely wanted to include Ukraine, the EU could have offered Kiev full membership. But Brussels is not offering full membership to Ukraine. That is why Russia wants to create its own economic alliance – first, a Customs Union, and later a Eurasian Union. Right from the outset, the Eurasian Union is to be founded on the same principles and trade regulations as the EU. The idea is that, by establishing a common market, the member countries can reduce poverty, bring technological developments up to speed, and strengthen their economies along with their social and democratic political institutions. At that point, Sergei Markov notes, the Eurasian Union could join with the EU to create a Greater Europe, gradually formalizing common economic and humanitarian practices, establishing a unified set of rules and the free flow of trade, capital, people and ideas. That would make for a very strong Europe.
The collapse of the semi-colonial Association Agreement with Ukraine would not constitute a defeat for the EU. Rather, it may, thankfully, be a defeat for the geopolitical model that is determined to keep Eastern countries weak and dependent on Europe. Yanukovych's decision not to sign the Association Agreement was would help collapse the EU's fundamentally flawed policy toward Russia, one in which it sees EU-Russian relations as a zero-sum game. Hopefully, after EU leaders realize that they cannot beat Russia in this game, they will adopt a new strategy that will not exclude Russia as if it were somehow an inferior country and include it as a full-fledged equal partner. Russia advocates a Greater Europe and proposes holding talks on how all sides can work together on an equal footing. It is high time for Europe to respond in good faith.

Russia no longer sees itself as part of modern Europe. The idea of creating a common European space from Vladivostok to Brest appears to be failing. The ongoing rapid change of the European model seems to prompt Moscow to tread cautiously in respect of any long-term projects involving Europe. The only project on which Russia and Europe could have been strategic partners for decades to come is the European missile defense system.

The confidence crisis between Europe and Russia is obvious and appears to be worsening. Many co-operation programs that have already been launched are plagued by inertia, and hardly any new programs are appearing. The lack of progress in key areas directly relevant to Russian security will inevitably lead to a shrinking of co-operation on the whole spectrum of bilateral relations with the West. Even so, the scenario under which Europe will cease to be Moscow’s strategic partner and become a potential enemy is unlikely.
Russia will protect its geopolitical interests but, above all, will be focused on the regions that it considers to be its traditional zones of influence. By the same token, Moscow may continue its attempts to come to terms with the US on general standards of behavior in the world, because it no longer makes sense to discuss this topic separately with the European Union. One cannot rule out the possibility that Russian business will see the economic weakening of the EU as a chance to expand its sphere of influence. In spite of the unfavorable political climate it may continue its investment expansion into Europe obviously with the approval of the Kremlin.

Agreements on a European missile defense system may be a key decision capable of restoring Russia’s trust in the new-look European Union because Moscow feels its strategic interests threatened when the West refuses to give it binding security safeguards when deploying anti-ballistic missiles. Another positive sign could Europe’s desire for help from Russia solve the EU’s economic problems. One way forward could be to revive the “European troika” with Russia, France and Germany taking part. Finally, Europe will need to renounce the artificially induced wartime fears that “the Russians are coming”.

When speaking about the EU-Russia relations, one should note that the dialogue between Brussels and Moscow is complex, and rather conflicting and complicated. Fundamental differences in values, interests and goals define the geopolitical competition between the EU and Russia and affect the state and dynamics of both EU-Ukraine and Ukraine-Russia relations. First, Russia has been carrying out the political and economic expansion of the CIS in order to re-integrate the post-Soviet countries under its own auspices and to counterbalance EU influence on the continent. It therefore views the EU’s Eastern Policy as a threat to its national interests.
Moreover, Russia has proclaimed a negative stance on the Eastern Partnership Initiative implemented by the EU.\textsuperscript{11}

Second, the status of democracy in Russia, the rule of law, protection of human rights and freedoms, transparent and fair elections, etc. have been major sources of conflict between the EU and Russia. The relations between Moscow and Brussels were further complicated by the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev. In May 2011, Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, expressed deep concern over the ruling of a Moscow court, which confirmed a conviction for fraud, only reducing the original 14-year sentence by a year. Members of the European Parliament called for economic and visa sanctions against those involved.

On February 17, 2012, the European Parliament passed a Resolution “On the Rule of Law in Russia” in which it censured the situation regarding the second conviction of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, the cases of journalists Anna Politkovskaya, Natalia Estemirova and Anastasia Baburova, arrests of opposition leaders, persecution of community activists, human rights defenders, intimidation of non-governmental organizations and the mass-media.

But the Russian political elite perceive such actions on the part of the EU as political pressure and interference in Russian internal affairs. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decree “On Measures to Implement the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy” clearly defined Russian position on the issue at that time. The document stressed the need to “counter attempts to use
human rights concepts as an instrument of political pressure and interference in the internal affairs of states.”

The EU has equally been critical of the elections in Russia, stressing, inter alia, that the Duma elections of December 4, 2011 “did not fully comply with free and fair election standards and were marred by the convergence of the state and the governing party and by a lack of independence of the election administration, partiality of the media and state interference at different levels.”

Another issue that complicates EU-Russia relations is their differing approaches to security on the continent. EU leaders did not back the draft European Security Treaty proposed by the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in November 2009. Russia opposes NATO expansion eastwards. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) founded by Russia has been perceived as a Russian anti-NATO policy. Moreover, EU-Russia relations have been considerably strained by the US initiative to place a missile defense system on the European continent. Russia sees the initiative as posing a direct military threat.

Another irritant in EU-Russia relations is the difference between their positions regarding the armed conflict between Georgia and Russia in 2008. Following the five-day war in Georgia, Russia significantly increased its military presence in such pro-Russian enclaves as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose independence claims were not recognized by the EU states. The approaches of the EU and Russia regarding the situation in other “frozen” conflicts (i.e. Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh) also differ.
Bilateral relations in the energy sector also seem strained. The EU has been active in preventing Russia’s efforts at monopolizing the European energy market. EU member states have strengthened some preventive measures against expansion of the Russian gas monopoly. The conflicting positions of the relevant parties have complicated EU-Russia talks on changes in EU’s Third Energy Package.

The chill and thaw notwithstanding, Russia is the EU’s biggest neighbor and third biggest trading partner, with Russian supplies of oil and gas making up a large percentage of its exports to Europe. Overall, the EU and Russia cooperate on a number of challenges of bilateral and international concern, including climate change, drug and human trafficking, organized crime, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, the Middle East peace process, and Iran.

3.4 EU-Ukraine Relations

Relations between Ukraine and the European Union were first established in December 1991, when Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, then President of the EU, officially recognized Ukrainian independence on behalf of the European Union. In July 2010, Ukraine passed a law to ensure “the integration of Ukraine into the European political, economic and legal area in order to obtain the EU membership”. Long before this in 1993, Ukraine, through an overwhelming parliamentary majority, declared its aspirations to integrate into the EU.12

The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1994 initiated cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in a broad range of political, economic, trade, and humanitarian issues. Execution of the PCA allowed for the establishment of regular bilateral dialogue between
Ukraine and the EU, the introduction of trade regulations based on the principles of GATT/WTO, and Ukrainian adaptation of its legislation to European norms and standards.

Between 2000 and 2007, EU exports to Ukraine totaled 22.4 billion EUR, while its imports from Ukraine amounted to 12.4 billion. In 2007, Ukraine’s total trade with the 27 countries of the EU amounted to 34.7 billion EUR. In that year, Ukraine accounted for 2% of EU exports and 1% of EU imports, and was the EU’s 16th most important trading partner.

Generally, priority has been given Ukraine’s integration into the EU. A number of steps have been taken that draws Ukraine closer to joining the EU. In particular, Ukraine and the EU approved a number of cooperation programs (budget support programs for improving integrated management, public administration reform, reforms of the justice system, etc.). Ukraine also joined the EU Energy Community. As part of the EU-Ukraine dialogue, the Ukrainian Parliament has approved several laws, in particular, those related to the information and justice sectors. Ukraine has also signed the Association Agreement. Ukraine’s EU integration agenda thus appears to be on course.

3.5 Russia-Ukraine Relations and the European Union

The most pointed irritant of Russia-Ukraine relations after 1991 is the new role the collapse of the Soviet Union gave to Western governments and institutions, particularly the EU and United States, as potential mediators between Ukraine and Russia. Their mediation turned out to be self-seeking and hardly in the interest of either Russia or Ukraine. Since then, these supposed mediators have succeeded in plunging Russia-Ukraine relations down to their lowest nadir. The
EU, goaded on by the United States, exploited the Russian and Ukrainian difficulties of their post-Soviet self-identification efforts to expand its sphere of influence in the region. China’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Cheng Guoping, hit the nail on the head when he told Russian media:

Since Ukraine declared independence it has been looking for ways to develop according to its national characteristics. But at the same time foreign influence, first of all that of the US and Western countries, which are trying to make Ukraine follow the path towards Western-style democracy, cannot be ignored.¹³

But why does Ukraine matter so much to the EU and Russia. The Map below shows the areas of Ukraine that are leaning towards Europe and Russia respectively.

**Figure 2: Map of Europe-leaning and Russia-leaning parts of Ukraine**

Source: [http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/.../formerUSSR.jpg](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/.../formerUSSR.jpg)
Leonid Kuchma (1994–2004), Ukraine’s first President helped normalize the relationship between Russia and Ukraine. Whereas the Russians were assured of a non-nuclear Ukraine in 1996, Moscow formally recognized Ukraine as an independent state in the 1997 “Friendship Treaty.” Kuchma’s foreign policy always walked a fine line vis-à-vis Moscow, vacillating between a very close strategic partnerships and preserving Ukraine’s sovereignty. In practice, Ukraine remained outside the political framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Kuchma never really challenged Russia’s strategic interests in the post-Soviet space.\textsuperscript{14}

After Vladimir Putin’s rise to the Russian presidency at the end of 1999 and the subsequent growth of the Russian economy, Russia-Ukraine relations were set for better times until the exit of Kuchma and the onset of the elections in 2004. Jonas Gratz finds that, the EU could not countenance another Ukrainian President sympathetic to closer relations with Russia. So it exploited the elections’ weaknesses and played to the public gallery in Ukraine. Using surrogates, it organized the so-called Orange Revolution which saw the rise of Victor Yushchenko, a pro-EU President to power in 2005.

Yushchenko and his entourage made it clear from the beginning that relations with Moscow were to be subordinated to a euro-Atlantic course. Whereas integration into the EU and NATO had remained pure rhetorical constructs under Kuchma, Yushchenko promised to implement the necessary internal reforms and to make Ukraine a part of these Western institutions as soon as possible. As part of his pro-EU foreign-policy, Yushchenko resorted to an increasingly anti-Russian policy and discourse. For instance, he banned Russian vessels in the Southern Caucasus
from returning to Sevastopol in 2008. His use of the Holodomor and glorification of Mazepa and Bandera excluded any chance of a rapprochement with the Kremlin.

According to Andre Hartel, at the end of his presidency, Yushchenko’s pro-western policy did not achieve much beyond Ukraine’s membership of the World Trade Organization. Rather, relations between Kyiv and the EU seemed to have reached a standstill having been riddled with mutual misunderstanding and even distrust. Yushchenko only managed to secure a poorly-received Eastern Partnership Initiative and even more pragmatic issues like a visa-free travel agreement or the proposed Free Trade Area (FTA) did not materialize. Hartel observes that, NATO-membership initiative, once a cornerstone of Yushchenko’s foreign-policy strategy, became anathema for both NATO (which thwarted Kyiv’s hopes for a road map in late 2008) and Ukrainian politicians. With the possibility of a membership action plan long gone, Yanukovich’s Party of the Regions used the unpopularity of NATO among the Ukrainian public to gain votes.15

Due to the fact that Yanuckovich’s policy of rapprochement with Russia within the framework of mutual sovereignty was domestically owned, the people voted him back into power in 2010. According to Andre Hartel, he announced that he stood for a new, pragmatic and more balanced foreign policy. This approach especially included rebuilding the Ukraine-Russia relationship. He spoke about the necessary renewal of the once friendly relationship between Ukraine and Russia and promised to rebuild the strategic partnership between them “in all directions”.16
Whilst rebuilding relations with Russia, Yanukovich continued talks with the EU on a trade association agreement, which he signaled he would sign in late 2013.\textsuperscript{17} When he postponed signing the agreement, the EU used it as an excuse to topple his government. Under the guise of demonstrations in Kiev on what became known as the Euromaidan by protestors demanding Ukraine’s association with the EU, Yanukovich was illegitimately ousted and fresh elections scheduled for May 25.

Once again, the EU, for its self-interests, managed to overturn Russia-Ukraine relations which, by all standards, were headed for normalization. Russian attempts at influencing events in Ukraine are largely legitimate counteractions to prevent Ukraine from falling prey to the EU’s manipulation of Ukraine’s weaknesses to entrench Western dominance and US hegemony in the region.\textsuperscript{18} But they are described by the EU, US and paradoxically Ukraine itself as interventionist, fascist and even ‘putinist.’

Ukraine’s most prolonged and deadly crisis since its post-Soviet independence stems from the EU’s dissatisfaction with Ukraine’s dropping of plans to forge closer ties with the EU. The pro-EU nature of the ‘maidan’ demonstrations seem to confirm that the Orange Revolution had very little to do with the Ukrainian people’s dissatisfaction with domestic politics and a lot to do with the EU’s schemes to frustrate improvements in Russia-Ukraine relations.

The fact that there appeared to be a serious disconnect between Yushchenko’s “Orange Foreign Policy” and domestic politics is a clear indication that the Orange Revolution was probably not truly Ukrainian but rather EU-owned. The argument that Euromaidan was just a cover up for the
EU’s destabilization of Russia-Ukraine relations finds strong support in the fact that even though Yanukovich gave the protestors everything they asked for, they said it was not enough if Ukraine did not immediately sign the Association agreement with the EU.

The EU did not want a dispassionate evaluation of their association plan. Yanukovich’s government felt that the EU’s deal was not an entirely favorable deal and they wanted to review it further before signing. For instance, Russian interests were not considered at all in the deal. Yanukovich was pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy and for him, the EU’s offer needed further negotiating since it left out other parties that had interests in Ukraine. But all that Euro-centered news media reported was that Yanukovich had turned from the EU to favor Russia.

Another basis for arguing that the EU is the cog in the wheels of current Russia-Ukraine relations is its support of those who ousted the Yanukovich government. If the EU were not responsible for the Euromaidan and were to go by the Union’s democratic principles, it would not have supported a government installed by a violent coup d’état which overthrew the constitutionally elected regime. Armed groups such as the Svoboda and Right Sector secured the imposition of the new illegitimate government by chasing away 30% of the elected members of parliament and demanding a unanimous vote from the remainder through intimidation. Yet the EU and USA are vilifying Russia who demanded the return of the democratically elected Yanukovich as undemocratic and as destroying Russia-Ukraine relations.

In a similar vein, the new government, on its first day of seizing power, passed a law stripping all Russian speaking Ukrainians citizens of the official status of their language. It is this language
law that has driven Russian speaking areas of Ukraine to refuse to recognize the Kiev mob as a government and to demand secession from western and central Ukraine. Yet again, Russia is blamed and sanctioned for the separatist activities in Ukraine. Another significant incident is the anti-Kiev demonstration in Odessa in which most of the demonstrators died. The anti-Kiev demonstrators were unarmed. Yet the armed Right Sector shot at them and chased them into a building which they set on fire. Then, on the ground, they attacked and beat to death those who jumped from the flames. Yet this mass murder was blamed on Russia as a conflict between pro-Russian separatists and supporters of Kiev.

If the EU, backed by the USA, is not responsible for destroying Russia-Ukraine relations, why would it expect Russia to stand by whilst Russians are being murdered on a massive scale in eastern and southern Ukraine? As Russia counteracts these actions to save Ukrainians themselves, it is being squeezed by sanctions from the EU and USA. Whilst it is acceptable to them for pro-EU Kiev to count on their protection to break away from Russia, it is not acceptable for the Russian-speaking East and South to call upon Russia for help in resisting the EU.

The situation is even more confounding in respect of Crimea. The move by the new government in Kiev to hold elections on May 25, 2014 was countered by the Crimea administration which voted overwhelmingly to join Russia in a referendum on March 16, 2014 deemed illegitimate by the US and EU, but welcomed by Russia. In response, Ukraine, who was assigned the rotating leadership of the CIS in 2014, decided not only to give up the presidency, but to quit the Commonwealth altogether. It announced its plans to ask the United Nations to make Crimea a
demilitarized zone and to devise an evacuation plan for those who want to leave Crimea – where 96 percent of the people already voted to join Russia.  

Whilst the Crimea simply exercised its right to self-determination as a region recognized as autonomous by Ukraine, the EU and USA alike, the three blame its action on Russia by citing the presence of Russian soldiers in Crimea during the referendum. Whilst the EU and USA are not annexing Ukraine by their activities there to ensure signing of the Association agreement, they call the Crimea’s joining of Russia as a Russian annexation simply because Russia might have been there during the referendum. China’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Cheng Guoping could not have any closer to the truth when he submitted that, Western countries “played a negative part” in events in Ukraine and are now using double standards towards the developing crisis.

After consistently bruising it, the EU has ultimately killed Russia-Ukraine relations. Since the Association agreement has already been signed with much pomp and pageantry, Russia-Ukraine relations are henceforth subsumed under Russia-EU relations. This may reduce much of the complexity in Russia-Ukraine-EU relations. It may eliminate the problem unequal weights of parties that have plagued bilateral relations within the triangle. Hitherto the Association agreement, the EU and Russia were the key weights in Russia-Ukraine-EU relations.

Having bonded with the EU through the agreement, Ukraine has given the EU the platform to deal with Russia in a dual capacity (i.e. both as the EU and Ukraine). Russia-Ukraine relations (now Russia-EU relations) will henceforth be the subject of two different centers of influence in
the post-Soviet space and determined by concerns of ensuring security on the European continent and “energy” supply between the EU and Russia.

3.6 Conflicts, Who is to Blame: Russia’s Imperialist Thinking or Ukraine’s ‘Little Brother’ Complex?

In this study, conflict is used to refer to threats, display or use of military force, and other forms of tension. The balance sheet for Russia-Ukraine relations from 1991 to 2014 contains notable incidents of conflict that can be used to draw conclusions about the propositions of the study. Both propositions suggest that Russian dominance is the driving factor influencing its relations with Ukraine. This may be true to the extent that Russia entered 1992 with the remarkable history of an empire and a world power.

Russia is the international legatee of the Soviet Union, heir to the Soviet Union’s seat on the United Nations Security Council. In Article 1 of their fifth declaration, entitled ‘On UN Membership’, the ex-Soviet states which joined the CIS stated that "Member states of the Commonwealth support Russia in taking over USSR membership in the UN, including permanent membership in the Security Council’. Interestingly, the UN charter has never been amended since the Soviet collapse and the USSR, not Russia, continues to show as the permanent member of the Security Council.

Russia inherited most of the assets and liabilities of the Soviet Union and even after separating from the fourteen other Republics that are now independent states Russia is still the largest nation in the world. This status overhangs all of its relations and, to this extent, we cannot reject the suggestion that its dominance influences its relations with Ukraine.
With a potential ability to project force over the entire Eurasia, Russia exercises considerable authority over the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The National Power Index calculated by the Atlantic Council using the International Futures model and hosted by Google Public Data Explorer and the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) published by the Correlates of War Project show that Russia still has hegemonic potential over the region.

The National Power Index is a combination of weighted factors of a nation's GDP, defense spending, population and technology. It is expressed as a percentage a nation's relative share of all global power. According to the International Futures Power Index Forecast on Google Public Data Explorer, Russia was, in 2010, the world's 8th most powerful nation in a list of the top twenty most powerful nations. None of Russia’s ex-soviet member colleagues appeared on this list.26

The CINC also averages six different equally-weighted components representing a country's relative strength in economic, military and demographic power and produces a single score ranging between 0 and 1 for the country. The closer a state's score is to 1; the more powerful it is globally.27 In a list of countries by Composite Index of National Capability for 2007, Russia ranked fifth with a score of 0.039274. According to the Correlates of War Project, this score indicates how powerful Russia is in the world, economically, militarily and in terms of both quality and number of people.28
Below is an extract from the list containing Russia and the other former Soviet-states. It can be seen that Russia is very far ahead of them in strength, economically, demographically and militarily. This implies that Russia has the highest industrial and production strength in the region. It also means that in the event of a regional war, Russia is better placed than the rest to suffer human losses without experiencing acute shortages at home. Not only that, but also, it has the largest urban population, that is, the population with higher education, life expectancy, and ready concentrations that can be mobilized during times of conflict. Clearly, Russia has dominance in the Eurasian region. As its ex-Soviet neighbors try to assert their legitimacy and sovereignty as nation-states, they may encounter overt and tacit opposition from Russia.

**Table 1:** LIST OF COUNTRIES BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF NATIONAL CAPABILITY

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>.039274</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.000345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>.000253</td>
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Source: Data is from 2007, [http://correlatesofwar.org/.../Capabilities/...](http://correlatesofwar.org/.../Capabilities/)
Where there is a hegemon, there is also the likelihood of conflict between the hegemon and its potential challengers. Ukraine is the second largest and strongest state in the Soviet space and therefore a worthy contender to Russian hegemony. Russian strength could be an underlying cause of Ukraine’s internal conflicts and the territorial conflicts between the two countries over Crimea, Sevastopol, Donetsk and other eastern and southern parts of Ukraine.

But Russia’s dominance can be the cause of conflict in either or both of two ways. If Russia’s dealings with Ukraine are largely motivated by an ‘imperialist-thinking’, then we cannot fail to agree with the proposition that Russia’s fixation with its dominance in the Eurasian region increases the level of conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations. On the other hand, if Ukraine’s dealings with Russia are largely motivated by a ‘Russian-protectorate-thinking’, then we cannot fail to accept that Ukraine’s fixation with its independence from Russia is what increases conflict between the two countries.

After the collapse of the USSR, conflict arose between Russia and Ukraine over the sharing of Soviet assets and liabilities. Conflict still persists over the CIS, ownership of the Black Sea Fleet and its location, the Crimea region, and use of the Russian language in Ukraine. Russia offered to relieve its post-Soviet neighbors of the burden of Soviet debt and liabilities. Conflict arose between Russia and Ukraine because, at the time, Ukraine insisted on an equal share out of the debt.

Russia craved sole ownership of the Black Sea Fleet whereas Ukraine, after claiming almost all Soviet arms after 1991, would have none of that. Russia desires Ukraine to give up Sevastopol
and Crimea. Ukraine considers such a desire as territorial sacrilege. There is a sizable number of Russians who were made Ukrainian nationals by default after 1991 and Russia prefers that Ukraine makes Russian an official language. Ukraine’s resistance has engendered an enduring conflict between the two countries.

Russia works towards a CIS that would develop into a real post-Soviet political, social and economic community. This conflicts with Ukraine’s efforts to make the CIS ineffectual. Ukraine’s gravitation towards integration into the EU has worsened the tension between it and Russia. Ukraine’s signing of the Association agreement with the EU has resulted in violent clashes between the Ukrainian government and anti-EU sections of Ukraine whereby those in Crimea voted to join Russia and those in eastern and southern Ukraine are militarily demanding secession. The government in Ukraine has been quick to blame the situation on Russia, ostensibly because it considers all anti-EU Ukrainians as pro-Russian.

Russia’s reaction towards the situation in Ukraine has been to encourage the anti-EU Ukrainians. Ukraine and EU want Russia to stop supporting the anti-EU Ukrainians even if that will hurt Russian interests. As a result, the EU, Ukraine and USA have imposed sanctions on Russia and the latter has responded in kind.

Ukraine’s reluctance to see the CIS develop into a real post-Soviet economic community and its hopes of integrating its economy into Western Europe were not only based on its traditional suspicions of Russia, but also on its obsession with completely divorcing Russia. This obsession blinded Ukraine to the realities of the post-Soviet period; both its own reality and that of Russia.
Clearly, a stronger Eurasian institution like the CIS or Economic Union would have better chances of integrating into the EU than any individual post-Soviet nation.

Moreover, most of the solutions suggested for problems between Ukraine and Russia are always on Ukraine’s terms or more in its favor. But its fixation with challenging Russia as successor to the Soviet Union made it reject them. Russia is often left with very little options than to apply pressure of one kind or the other. In other words, Russian actions seem intended to save Ukraine from itself but Ukraine’s fixation or entrenched positions are perpetrating the raging conflict between the two countries.

From the analysis of incidents of conflict so far, it can be concluded that Ukraine’s ‘little brother’ complex has prevented it from coming to terms with its own independence. As a result, it keeps demanding independence from Russia when it is already independent. This attitude is largely to blame for increased conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Retrieved from rferl.org. See Turkmenistan reduces CIS ties to "Associate Member" (2005, August 29). At: http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1061002.html


6 Ibid

7 According to Sergei Markov, Russia has proposed the Greater Europe project in pursuit of improved relations with the EU. See Markov, Sergei. (2013). How Russia and EU can build a Greater Europe. At: http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/how-russia-and-eu-can-build-a-greater-europe/490718.html

8 Ibid

9 But Yevgeny Sheskatov observes that, under US pressure, the Europeans have refused to co-operate with Moscow on that issue. See Sheskatov, Yevgeny. (2012). Russia-EU-Europe. At: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../Russia-EU-Europe.html

10 Sheskatov believes that integration of Russia into the economy of a renewed European Union will enable both sides to overcome their mutual mistrust and greatly increase the number of issues on which Moscow and Brussels can successfully co-operate in the future. See Sheskatov, Yevgeny. (2012). op. cit.


15 Ibid

16 Hartel, Andre. (2010, March 16), op. cit.


19 Ibid


21 Ibid


25 Ibid


28 Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This dissertation is based on an investigation of Russia-Ukraine relations since the demise of the Soviet Union. This chapter summarizes findings of the study and contains conclusions arrived at. It also makes recommendations for the future of relations between the two countries.

4.1 Summary of Findings

There are sufficient grounds to be pessimistic about Russia-Ukraine relations. Though the overly optimistic may be adamant to make dire predictions, the possibility of a large-scale armed conflict should not be dismissed. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has gone beyond a conflict between political elites. Ethnic tensions between Russians and Ukrainians have intensified and separatist pressures have spilled over into violent insurgency in southern and eastern Ukraine.

It remains to be seen whether the Association agreement between Ukraine and the EU will mark the start of a new phase in relations in which Ukraine will essentially be able to leverage on the EU and impose its own terms, using Western and United States sanctions against Russia to extract concessions from Russia in most areas. The Ukrainian view is that most of the problems between Kiev and Moscow would quickly vanish, if Russia would abandon ‘imperial thinking’ and come to terms with Ukrainian independence as a state, instead of a nation. But the alternative view is that Ukraine, the EU and USA are equally to blame. Ukraine has been unable to come up with a realistic strategy for relations with Russia and Ukrainian policies have
invariably tended to exacerbate ‘imperial thinking’ in Moscow. The EU and USA are also unduly meddling in relations between these countries.

By signing the Association agreement, Ukraine has, to a large extent, succeeded in transforming Russia-Ukraine relations into Russia-EU relations and Russia needs no longer worry as much about Ukraine as about the EU and USA. Russia-Ukraine dialogue and conflicts will now become dialogue and conflicts between the EU and Russia. Even though signed, the Agreement still has to be ratified by all member states, and that will take time, even if all are already in unison. Signing of the agreement does not only exacerbate Russia-Ukraine relations but also extends the lifespan of issues over Crimea, Sevastopol, southern and eastern Ukraine, use of the Russian language and energy that have persisted as sources of strain in Ukraine’s relations with Moscow.

4.2 Conclusions

From the analysis of incidents of conflict so far, it can be concluded that Ukraine’s ‘little brother’ complex has prevented it from coming to terms with its own independence. As a result, it keeps demanding independence from Russia when it is already independent. This attitude is largely to blame for increased conflict in Russia-Ukraine relations.

Crimea’s secession from Ukraine to join Russia loudly calls into Ukrainian sovereignty over Sevastopol into question and Russian-Ukrainian relations may deteriorate into armed conflict. An outright Ukrainian military invasion of Crimea (presently Russia to all intents and practical purposes) is quite likely. The de facto and de jure loss of Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet to
Russia occasioned by Crimea’s separation may be used by Ukraine as a pretext to intervene in Crimea under the guise of liberating it from Russian annexation; if annexation indeed it is. In the event of any intervention, Russia will rise up to Crimea’s defense militarily. Though Ukraine now has the leverage of the EU in negotiating with Russia, it is relatively unlikely that NATO will get involved if Ukraine militarily intervenes in Crimea.

Due to the fact that the EU and USA called up sanctions against Russia in order to give Ukraine leverage in Russia-Ukraine relations, there are many apocalyptic accounts about the future of Russia. But according to Christopher Chivis, Russia has valuable relations with local companies and influential statespersons in the EU, particularly in Germany and France and is therefore likely to navigate the sanctions and survive.

According to Vladimir Socor, Russia control of energy supplies in Europe and Ukraine, it has an important means of influencing Europe and will continue to use energy supply as leverage the same way it has been using it in respect of Ukraine. The trend for Europeans has been to prioritize gas supplies over regional squabbles and they are likely to end up siding with the supplier rather than the country providing the conduit such as Ukraine.

Chivis notes that, Germany’s biggest concern is not that Russia may turn off the gas, as it did to Ukraine in January 2006, but that Russia may not have the production capacity to meet all of Europe’s need for gas over the long term and that Germany could face serious shortfalls of Russian gas in the future. Germany may therefore react cautiously to actions that could lead to a
deterioration of relations with Moscow. This will make the pursuit of a coherent transatlantic policy toward Russia much more difficult in the future.

The EU may therefore end up relaxing their position against Russia. With the EU now firmly in the driving seat, it may encourage Ukraine to privatize Ukraine’s gas transit system even if private ownership would include Russian shareholding. The EU may eventually become a positive moderating force in Russia-Ukraine relations and help Ukraine gain the strength and confidence to let go of Crimea and the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine and build a more viable state based on nationhood out of western and central Ukraine.

The USA may not press either because its attention is focused on areas beyond Europe’s borders. Ukraine is less central to Washington’s foreign policy than Iraq, Iran, China, North and the Arab countries where it strategically needs Russia.

Today, Russia has significantly recovered in every respect and, with teeth that can bite and visible influence abroad, it will to continue an assertive policy. Russia will continue its demands to be recognized as part of the post-Cold War security order in Europe which was imposed upon it at a time when it was weak. It will continue to strengthen and increase its voice in both the geopolitical and international spheres using a variety of means including the Customs Union, the Eurasian Union, gas transit consortium and CIS free trade zones.

There is a flurry of views and complaints about Russia’s resurgence as if it cannot, as a country, maintain trusted allies just like every other country. Its every action is treated as an act to return to hegemony. Russia’s goal appears to be home grown democracy with a civic identity different
from that of the USA and Europe. Moscow’s goals are largely defensive. In its relations with Ukraine, especially after the latter’s association with the EU, it will continue to defend its interests whether the West calls it pursuit of a sphere of influence or not. Just like EU countries and the USA are obliged to protect Europeans and Americans wherever they are, Russia will also continue protect Russians in Ukraine.

4.3 Recommendations

Given the frosty nature of relations between Russia and Ukraine, the problem may exacerbate unless the EU and the United States limit their interference in exploiting the volatile nature of Russia-Ukraine Relations in order to curve out a sphere of influence within a post-soviet space. For its part, Ukraine must also see itself as an independent post-Soviet state and prosecute its post-independence agenda without promoting the anti-Russian sentiments which may seek to threaten its good neighborliness policy with Russia.

Similarly, Russia will have to demonstrate good faith in its relations with Ukraine by shedding its apparent hegemonic tendencies and inalienable rights over Russian-dominated regions in Ukraine. Such a shift in Russia’s foreign policy of accommodation towards Ukraine may augur well for future peaceful coexistence between the two countries.

As an African Country, Ghana has always maintain an excellent relations with Soviet Union and its successor State - Russia. With the EU and USA given its tacit support to Ukraine, it is likely that Russia may explore foreign markets particularly in Africa. Therefore, Ghana may stand to benefit from such move given the warm relations between Ghana and Russia. Already, Ghana is
still a beneficiary of Russia Government Scholarship and FDI particularly in the Oil; and Gas Sector
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