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# Neither East Nor West

## *Ukraine's Security Policy Under Kuchma*

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Taras Kuzio

Ukrainian security policy under Kuchma had no ideological foundation. As a result, Kuchma flip-flopped on Western integration to suit his personal interests.

AS Ukraine approached the end of Leonid Kuchma's decade-long presidency, none of his stated Euro-Atlantic goals had been achieved. These included membership in the World Trade Organization, market economic status, and a free-trade zone with the European Union as a stepping-stone to associate and then full membership. Instead, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe repeatedly threatened to suspend Ukraine, while NATO refused to give Ukraine a Membership Action Plan. Why did Kuchma's security policy fail so miserably? The answer lies in the shallowness of his approach to democracy, as will be shown in the discussion that follows.

### **Domestic Influences on Ukrainian Security Policy**

Western scholars, policymakers, and media usually explain Ukraine's multivector security policy during the presidencies of Leonid Kravchuk (1991–94) and Kuchma (1994–2004) as the product of competing and contradictory domestic influences. Ukraine's inherited regionalism, pro-Russian and anti-Russian sentiments, state institutions (i.e., parliament, government), civil society, political parties, media, and public opinion are all understood as included within the category of domestic influences.<sup>1</sup>

This line of analysis starts with four assumptions. First, that the national or state interests defended by Ukraine's ruling elites under Kravchuk and Kuchma were interests in the same sense that this term is commonly understood in the United States. Second, that the ruling elites understood, listened to, and took heed of

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domestic influences. Third, that ordinary Ukrainians are concerned enough about security policy to make it a priority issue. Finally, that ordinary Ukrainians concerned about security policy issues are in a position to act on their concerns.

All four assumptions are problematic. Ukraine's ruling elites under Kravchuk and Kuchma had little understanding of the national (state) interest. Such issues were continually debated throughout the thirteen-year period they ruled the country. In addition, Ukraine's inherited political culture closely identified the leader with the state. This made it difficult to separate national (state) interests from those of the president and his close political allies. The rise of an oligarchic class allied to Kuchma during his second term (1999–2004) reinforced the confusion. Kuchma believed that the creation of a "national bourgeoisie" was an important component of state building. Any step that benefited Kuchma and this newly emerging national bourgeoisie (i.e., the oligarchs) would also, so it was claimed, be beneficial to Ukraine.

The gulf between the ruling elites and the people was very wide in the Soviet Union and became even wider during the post-Soviet Kravchuk and Kuchma eras. By the eve of the 2004 elections, more than 80 percent of Ukrainians felt they had no influence on central or local government. By the end of Kuchma's second term, the gulf was so great that elites and ordinary people were living in two different worlds. Ukrainian and Western scholars began to describe Ukraine's ruling elites as living in their own isolated "virtual worlds."<sup>2</sup> Two examples of how this isolation from reality led to miscalculations in the 2004 elections are the Kuchma team's selection of a candidate with a criminal record, Viktor Yanukovich, and its firm belief that revolution was impossible because "Ukrainians are not Georgians."<sup>3</sup>

The assumption that Ukraine's citizens are especially interested in security policy is surprising. Even in consolidated democracies like the United States, ordinary citizens do not display a strong interest in international affairs. Indeed, American electronic and print media outlets devote little space to nondomestic issues. CNN, for example, which broadcasts to the United States and Canada, focuses primarily on U.S. domestic affairs. The affiliated CNN International, which broadcasts out of London, focuses more on international affairs and actually is unavailable in North America.

As citizens of a transitional democracy that suffered from a severe socio-economic crisis during the Kravchuk era and during Kuchma's first term until 1999, Ukrainians were preoccupied with survival. Interest in

international affairs was very low. They assumed that such matters, as in the Soviet Union, would be managed by the ruling elites with little input from society at large. Crime, the low standard of living, unemployment, corruption, and similar issues were far more salient with voters than security policy.

Lack of interest in security policy has always been prevalent in Russophone eastern Ukraine. Opinion polls taken in eastern Ukraine since 1992 have regularly shown support for a pro-Russian orientation, tighter integration with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), joining the Russian-Belarusian union, or full participation in the CIS Single Economic Space. However, people in eastern Ukraine have never acted on these views as a coherent regional pressure group.

This is not only due to their placing a low priority on security policy issues. A second more important factor is the weakness of civil society in Russophone eastern Ukraine, where identity is fluid, confused, and not consolidated. The weakness of civil society in eastern Ukraine in comparison to other regions was clearly seen during the pro-democracy Orange Revolution that followed round two of the 2004 presidential elections.<sup>4</sup> Although eastern Ukraine has a large population base and contains most of Ukraine's largest urban centers, Yanukovich failed to mobilize a counter-movement to offset the Orange Revolution. The thousands of Yanukovich supporters who arrived in Kyiv from eastern Ukraine were not driven by the same "fire in the belly" as those supporting the Orange Revolution. Yanukovich supporters either returned to Donetsk after a few days in Kyiv or defected to the Orange Revolution.

Ukraine's political system is best described as a semi-delegative democracy, and it is this characteristic that explains the discrepancy in the ability of the Yushchenko and Yanukovich camps to mobilize supporters.<sup>5</sup> In eastern Ukraine, citizens are largely passive between elections. They usually vote either for the Communist Party or for centrist parties that are *kryshy* ("roofs") for oligarchic and regional business interests. Attempts to generate electoral support for Russian nationalistic or pan-Slavic parties have failed. In the 2002 elections, two pro-Russian East Slavic parties garnered a combined vote of less than 2 percent throughout Ukraine.

The description of Ukraine as a delegative democracy does not hold outside of eastern Ukraine. Here citizens are active in political parties and civil society non-governmental organizations *both* between and during elections. In the 2002 elections, the non-communist opposition dominated the country's western, central, and northern regions. Polls show that security policy

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and Ukraine's foreign orientation are far more burning issues for residents of these regions.

What, then, is a better way of understanding why Ukraine had a multi-vector foreign policy under Kravchuk and Kuchma? Ukrainian security policy has been the preserve of a very small elite concentrated around the executive and his political allies. During the Kravchuk era and Kuchma's first term, these allies included national democrats. However, after Ukraine's oligarchs emerged in 1998–99, this group replaced the national democrats as Kuchma's primary support base. The informal alliance of national democrats and centrists that had existed throughout the 1990s collapsed between November 2000, when the Kuchmagate crisis began, and April 2001, when the Yushchenko government collapsed after a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

As Kuchma increasingly came to rely on a narrow group of oligarchs for political support, Ukraine's national (state) interests became even more narrowly focused. Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy therefore shifted not because of the impact of domestic influences, but because of the personal fortunes of Kuchma and his allies. In other words, multi-vectorism was dominated by short-term fluctuations related to the ruling elites, not by medium- or long-term strategic interests.

### **Pro-Kuchma Security Policy**

Kuchma described Ukraine's security policy as neither pro-Western nor pro-Russian but pro-Ukrainian. In reality, this translated into a pro-Kuchma security policy because national (state) interests were conflated with those of the president and his oligarch allies. If the president and his oligarchic allies are understood as the equivalent of "Ukraine," then Kuchma could indeed be understood to be following a "pro-Ukrainian" foreign policy. For this to be true, however, two assumptions would have to hold.

First, Kuchma and his allies would have had to be broad-based ruling elites. In reality, the executive and the centrist oligarchs only represented a portion of the elites who have—in the World Bank's terminology—"captured" the Ukrainian state and refuse to share power (in parliament, for instance, they controlled but half of the deputies). Had Yanukovich won in the 2004 presidential elections, state capture would have increased, however.

Second, to pursue a "pro-Ukrainian" foreign policy would require an elaboration of the country's national interests. As Ukrainian commentators and opposition

politicians have pointed out, the executive and its oligarchic allies had been unable to formulate any clear national interests for Ukraine since independence. National interests would require that long-term goals (i.e., EU membership) be backed up by domestic policies. But there was a radical mismatch between Ukraine's declared foreign policy goals and its domestic policies. Ukraine had not achieved the strategic foreign policy goals outlined by the government in the 1990s, such as becoming an associate member of the EU or joining the World Trade Organization. In fact, Ukraine was further away from achieving these goals in 2004 than in the 1990s.

The contradictory signals between domestic and foreign policy had two repercussions in the West. Kuchma's international image dropped so low that it could not be changed before he left office. Western governments and international organizations no longer believed statements made by Kuchma and his allies, and did not treat Ukraine as a serious country, a factor long pointed out by Ukrainian commentators and opposition politicians.

The West's lack of trust in Kuchma and his allies led to a kind of "Ukraine fatigue." The West perceived President Kuchma and his allies as possessing a neo-Soviet political culture. This confirmed the deeply held stereotypes in the EU and elsewhere that Ukraine was culturally not a "European" country (the fact that it is geographically inside Europe, as Ukrainians continually point out, was irrelevant). This view of Ukraine only began to change after the Orange Revolution, which transformed West European and North American perceptions of Ukraine from that of Eurasian outcast to European ally.

Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy was geared toward fulfilling the short-term objectives of President Kuchma and his allies—it was not responsive to domestic factors. These short-term horizons were an outgrowth of the foreign policy being only pro-Kuchma, not pro-Ukraine.

### **Pragmatic Nationalism**

British experts on Russia were the first to describe its leaders under President Boris Yeltsin as "pragmatic nationalists" who supported cooperation with, but not integration into, the West.<sup>6</sup> What these experts understood as pragmatic nationalism was *derzhavnyky*, a position that state leaders adopt in any "normal" state. Such a definition is even more applicable to Russia since 2000 under Vladimir Putin, because he has removed the oligarchs from running the state and, like U.S.

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president George W. Bush, is a pragmatic nationalist.

During Kuchma's second term, there was a growing reassertion of pragmatic nationalism vis-à-vis the outside world. Just as he and his advisers were not interested in sharing power domestically with the opposition, so too did they oppose integration eastwards or westwards, as this would have entailed some loss of sovereignty.

Kuchma and his allies saw the West as demanding much from Ukraine but not delivering on its promises. This was exemplified by the failure of the Group of Seven (G7) nations to provide compensation when the Chernobyl nuclear plant was closed. Compensation was not forthcoming, Kuchma believed, because they did not respect Ukraine: "It is because they are 'big' and we are small!"<sup>7</sup>

After Viktor Yanukovich became prime minister in November 2002, and the end of the Kuchma era drew near, there were increasing signs that Ukraine was developing its own pragmatic nationalism. Viktor Nebozhenko, a sociologist, described the 2004 elections as a contest between "two representatives of nationalism: Yushchenko's historical-cultural nationalism and Yanukovich's economic nationalism. And both want the best for Ukraine, but from different perspectives."<sup>8</sup>

Pragmatic nationalism seeks to rely upon Ukraine's own forces and choose its "own way," a view that many Ukrainians find appealing. It refuses to "blindly copy" Europe or the West and instead, so argued Kuchma and Parliamentary Speaker Voldymyr Lytvyn, wishes to develop in accordance with Ukrainian traditions. As Kuchma told the Central European Initiative, "Ukrainians have to learn to rely in the first instance upon our own resources."

Both Kuchma and Yanukovich held that Ukraine was "not ready" to integrate into the EU or NATO. Yanukovich maintained that "Ukraine should build its own national security system" because it has its own "strategic interests" to defend.

Ukraine's pragmatic nationalism derived from deep feelings of postcolonial insecurity. In the 1990s, Ukraine attempted to deal with its inferiority complex vis-à-vis Russia, which at that time was not treating it as a serious state but only as a temporary aberration. During Kuchma's second term, the inferiority-complex emphasis shifted its focus toward the West. As the head of the Presidential Administration, Viktor Medvedchuk, angrily asserted, centrist pragmatic nationalists refused to "kneel" before the West. Ukraine would not integrate into Europe as a "younger sister. We have already gone through this," Kuchma said. Yanukovich added, "Ukraine will

never agree to be anyone's younger brother. We must never allow Ukraine to be humiliated anywhere." Both Kuchma and Yanukovich rejected out of hand the allegedly "disrespectful" tone of Western criticism of Ukraine's undemocratic practices. Anatoliy Halchynsky, director of the National Institute Strategic Studies, criticized the Yushchenko camp as favoring "To Europe at any price." He disliked this position because it will mean integrating into Europe as a "younger sister."

The threat changed during Kuchma's two terms in office. In the 1990s, Ukraine's centrist elites were threatened by Russia because Moscow refused to recognize Ukraine's borders or sovereignty. This was largely resolved by February 1999, when Russia's upper house ratified the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, only eight months before the end of Kuchma's first term. During Kuchma's second term, the threat changed from Russia to the West. Ukraine's ruling elites were well established and Russia recognized Ukraine's sovereignty and borders. The West's demands to hold free and fair elections, permit independent media, and improve democratic conditions became the main threat to the centrist ruling elites.

Centrists like Yanukovich did not support integration with *either* Russia or the EU and NATO. Integration of whatever type would deprive them of monopolistic power (i.e., sovereignty). The use of pragmatic nationalism to legitimize their rule was clearly seen in the privatization of Kryvorizhstal, Ukraine's largest steel mill, in June 2004. The head of the State Property Fund, Mykhailo Chechetov, described its purchase by Ukrainian investors as a "patriotic" act. Such views are reminiscent of the postcolonial nationalists in the nonaligned movement who championed "national capital." Even a former prime minister, Anatoliy Kinakh (a Yushchenko ally in round two of the 2004 elections), described his position as one of "economic nationalism."

This concept is very different from the views held by political leaders on the left and the right. Both of these groups share a desire to integrate—either with Russia and the CIS (the left) or with the EU and NATO (national democrats). Integration in any direction automatically requires the giving up of sovereignty, a move that both the left and national democrats would agree to take. Of the two leading presidential candidates, Yushchenko was more interested in EU and NATO integration and thus may be forced to give up some Ukrainian sovereignty. In other words, Yushchenko will no longer just voice rhetoric in support of integration, as was the case previously.

Ukraine's new state-economic nationalism felt more

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at home aligned with Russia than with the West. One major reason is that Moscow does not make political demands of Ukraine's elites. At the same time, Ukraine's pragmatic nationalists are not pro-Russian, just as they were never pro-Western during the 1990s. Ultimately, they did not seek to integrate fully with either Russia and the CIS or with the EU and NATO. Integration in any direction was a threat to their total monopolization of power.

Kuchma and Prime Minister Yanukovich expressed their support for "constructive Euro-integration," which slowed down Ukraine's drive to quickly join the EU or NATO.<sup>9</sup> This represented a retreat from Kuchma's May 2002 "European Choice" program, which had outlined three stages for Ukraine to eventually join the EU by 2011. Constructive Euro-integration was typically vague and linked to an undefined Ukrainian path that focused upon domestic changes that would "take into account the risks and threats of forced Euro-integration." Kuchma added, "Haste here is absolutely not required."<sup>10</sup>

Defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk backed up this position by claiming that membership in NATO would not be possible until 2015 at the earliest (itself a retreat from the year before when Marchuk had talked of 2010). Lieutenant General Yaroslav Skalko, commander of Ukraine's air force, similarly declared, "We should not rush to join NATO."<sup>11</sup> Yanukovich compounded the confusion by claiming it made no difference whether Ukraine became a member of the EU or not. The "strategic aim," he said, was to "increase the standards of living of Ukrainians to European levels."<sup>12</sup>

## Road to Nowhere: Disinterest in Integration East or West

In April 2004, a presidential decree was issued entitled "On the Strategy for Economic and Social Development of Ukraine: Through the Path of European Integration between 2004 and 2015." Such grandiose programs were nothing new in Ukrainian security policy. They reflected the deep-seated Soviet political culture of the ruling elites under Kuchma, a cadre that preferred programs modeled on the elusive Soviet five-year plans.

Confusion was also the hallmark of security policy. It was not clear how the program related to a December 2003 decree, "On the State Program on Questions of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine between 2004 and 2007." In January 2003 another decree created and outlined "The Aims and Objectives of the State Council for European and Euro-Atlantic Integra-

tion of Ukraine." This body was established to coordinate state institutions in their efforts to realize the goals of EU and NATO membership. In reality, it merely duplicated the National Security and Defense Council.

Western governments would have welcomed these steps if they had been backed up by domestic policies that promoted Ukraine's security policy goals of Euro-Atlantic integration. In reality, despite their grandiose titles, these decrees, according to a high-ranking Ukrainian foreign policy official, meant very little because "Nobody in the West believes such pronouncements and no one in Ukraine does either."<sup>13</sup>

In November 2003, a decree "On Steps to Improve the Effectiveness of Foreign Policy Activity of the State" placed the Foreign Ministry under the direct supervision of the Presidential Administration. It was unclear what role the State Council for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine would have after the Foreign Ministry was directly subordinated to the executive.

The impossibility of the Presidential Administration's fulfilling the tasks assigned it in these four decrees (January, November, and December 2003 plus April 2004) was evident from its foreign policy orientations. Viktor Medvedchuk, who was then the head of the Presidential Administration, also led Ukraine's most pro-Russian centrist party, the Social Democratic Party-United (SDPUo).<sup>14</sup>

During Kuchma's second term, Ukrainian commentators and policymakers increasingly pointed to a conspiracy within the executive against Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic drive. Yushchenko lambasted Kuchma's record, pointing to various undemocratic antics by the Presidential Administration, often on the eve of visits to Ukraine by high-ranking U.S., NATO, or EU officials. According to Yushchenko, "This gives reasons to believe that there is a group among this country's top leadership that openly seeks to make impossible even the slightest progress in Ukraine's European integration bid."

These four decrees in favor of Euro-Atlantic integration therefore masked the real aims of Ukraine's security policy under Kuchma. The April 2004 decree was issued solely for the purpose of deflecting domestic and international criticism after Ukraine signed the CIS Single Economic Space (CIS SES) agreement with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan that same month. Domestic and international criticism centered on two issues. First, the CIS SES seemed to indicate that Ukraine saw its future in Eurasia, not in Europe. Second, if Ukraine was serious about Euro-Atlantic integration, then it could only go as far as step 1 in the CIS

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United Economic Space (i.e., a free-trade zone), because steps 2 and 3 (a customs union followed by monetary union), which the other three signatory states sought, would rule out future EU integration.

Kuchma attempted to get around this conundrum by differentiating between the “tactical” purpose of the CIS Single Economic Space and the “strategic” goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. That there was also a tactical purpose is undoubtedly true. However, this had less to do with security policy than with the 2004 presidential elections. The CIS SES was a political project to boost the candidacy of Prime Minister Yanukovich.<sup>15</sup> This tactic sought to replicate Kuchma’s successful strategy in the second round of the 1994 presidential elections, when he defeated the incumbent Kravchuk by appealing to pro-Russian sentiment in eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile, placing Euro-Atlantic integration as a strategic objective for the long term masked Kuchma and Medvedchuk’s lack of interest in this goal.

## **Election Rhetoric Versus Actual Security Policies**

In the 1994 elections, Kuchma ran on a pro-Russian platform juxtaposed against the “nationalist” Kravchuk. A year later Kuchma shifted to a pro-American and pro-NATO stance. Centrists had not yet emerged as a political force, so he could not ignore the national-democratic constituency as a support base. In addition, his pro-Russian platform had not led to a rapid breakthrough in Ukraine’s relations with Russia, and another three years passed before President Boris Yeltsin arrived in Kyiv in May 1997 to sign an interstate treaty. Ukraine had to wait until nearly the end of Kuchma’s first term for both houses of the Russian parliament to ratify the treaty.

The delay in recognizing Ukraine’s border was accompanied by numerous Russian territorial claims against the Crimea and Sevastopol. The combination of the domestic threat from the relegalized Communist Party (which had the largest factions in the 1994–98 and 1998–2002 parliaments) and the external threat from Russia influenced the 180-degree turn in Ukraine’s multi-vector foreign policy from pro-Russian to pro-Western.

In the 1999 presidential race, Kuchma was elected on a pro-European integration platform. By the fall of 2000, when he fired Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk, his stance had turned around yet again toward a pro-Russian and CIS orientation. Two events left Kuchma an international outcast. The Kuchmagate crisis began when an audiotape fragment pointed to his possible in-

volvement in the murder of the journalist Heorhiy Gongadze. His authorization of the sale of Kolchuga radars to Iraq became public in 2002. Kuchma’s isolation was made worse by the changing international environment. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush reoriented U.S. foreign policy away from the U.S.-Ukrainian “strategic partnership” championed by President Bill Clinton and toward Russia as an ally in the global campaign against terrorism.

Kuchma could flip-flop on Ukrainian foreign policy for two reasons.

First, he and the ruling elites were not driven by ideology. The centrist camp in Ukraine is ideologically amorphous and does not have strong views in favor of either Euro-Atlantic integration or integration with Russia and the CIS. Ideologically driven political parties in Ukraine only exist on the left and right.

Second, Ukraine’s oligarchs changed their perceptions of Russia over the course of Kuchma’s two terms in office. During his first term, they were defensive vis-à-vis Russia because their capital base was smaller, Ukraine’s process of capital accumulation began later than Russia’s, and was far less advanced. Ukraine’s leading businessmen therefore supported national protectionist measures and sought to block Russian investment. During Kuchma’s second term, Ukraine’s newly emerged oligarchs became more positive toward Russia because they were more self-confident. They no longer saw their Russian counterparts as an economic threat and now looked upon Russia as an ally in the consolidation of their power in post-Kuchma Ukraine. Russia reciprocated by throwing all of its weight behind the Yanukovich candidacy backed by Kuchma and his centrist allies during the 2004 elections.<sup>16</sup>

These two factors have played a far more important role in determining Ukrainian security policy than any supposed domestic influences. The influence of public opinion on Ukrainian security policy has been minimal.<sup>17</sup>

## **Kuchma I (1994–99)**

During Kuchma’s first term, his pro-Russian platform was unworkable. Russia did not come to terms with an independent Ukraine until 1999, when the State Duma ratified the 1997 bilateral friendship treaty. Kuchma also had few real allies during his first term, because there were no centrist parties until around 1998–2002. This meant that he had to rely on national democrats for political support, a factor that limited his ability to be overtly pro-Russian.

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During the course of his first term, Ukraine weathered a domestic threat from the Ukrainian Communist Party, which had the largest factions in the 1994–98 and 1998–2002 parliaments. This threat was accentuated by an external Russian threat and a Russian-backed Crimean separatist movement.

Kyiv adapted by shifting Ukrainian security policy to a pro-U.S. and pro-NATO orientation. Ukraine joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994 and became its most active member from the CIS. During the Clinton era, Presidents Kravchuk and Kuchma both made state visits to Washington, President Clinton undertook three visits to Ukraine (the last being in May 2000), and the Gore-Kuchma Commission was established. During the 1990s, Ukraine became the third-largest recipient of U.S. assistance, after Israel and Egypt.<sup>18</sup>

## Kuchma II (1999–2004)

In 1999–2000 Kuchma's security policy shifted from the pro-Western platform upon which he had been elected to one that was pro-Russian. Three factors led to Kuchma's international isolation.

The first was the way he dealt with the Kuchmagate scandal. Kuchma denied any responsibility for the accusations on the audiotapes secretly made in his office by a presidential security guard. These ranged from high-level corruption to state-sanctioned violence against journalists and opponents, money laundering, and trafficking in narcotics and weapons.

Second, his unwillingness to resolve the murder of opposition journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, who was found beheaded in November 2000. The Kuchmagate tapes include a conversation where Kuchma orders Gongadze to be "dealt with."

Third, after 9/11, Russia eclipsed Ukraine in U.S. security policy.

Once he was isolated from the West, Kuchma turned eastward and expanded cooperation with Russia and the CIS. Kuchma's security policy increasingly resembled the proposal by some centrists to "return to Europe with Russia." Interest in the pro-Western regional GUUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) within the CIS declined.<sup>19</sup>

Kuchma agreed to become an observer in the CIS alternative to the EU, the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC). The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry denied that Ukraine was contemplating membership in the EEC, as this would have contradicted its declared goal of joining the EU. However, Kuchma did not believe that developing and expanding relations with Russia and the

CIS contradicted integration into the EU: "On the contrary, it is a major component of that policy." It was not difficult for Kuchma to move from the EEC to the CIS SES. Ukraine also increased its military cooperation with the CIS within the Air Defense Agreement and the Anti-Terrorist Center.

## Toward the Post-Kuchma Era

During Kuchma's first term, Ukraine adopted the strategic goal of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. This foreign policy was formally continued in Kuchma's second term, but by then built-in contradictions between domestic and security policies—and also between allegedly different tactical and strategic aspects of Ukraine's security policy—had become evident.

Kuchma's disinterest in ensuring that his chosen successor would continue Euro-Atlantic integration was evident in his designation of Yanukovych as his heir apparent. Yanukovych claimed that he supported membership in the EU but differed from the opposition in that they "only see a different path to Europe, than that which the authorities are proposing."<sup>20</sup> In reality, although Yanukovych became prime minister in November 2002, five months after Ukraine declared its intention to seek NATO membership, he was opposed to this step. As to EU membership, Yanukovych and his centrist allies saw it as only a long-term prospect and distanced themselves from "Euro-romantics" (i.e., Yushchenko) who seek to achieve this goal within a shorter period.

By the end of the Kuchma era, what was initially seen as a positive ability to adjust Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy had become a liability. Ukraine fatigue dominated Western views about the incompatibility of Ukraine's declared foreign policy objectives of Euro-Atlantic integration and its domestic policies.<sup>21</sup>

In 1998–99 oligarchs appeared for the first time in Ukraine's parliament, and they backed Kuchma's reelection for a second term. The rise of the oligarchic class took longer than in Russia because Ukraine did not launch economic reforms until after 1994–95. The rise of the oligarchs created a new power base for Kuchma during his second term. The interests of the new oligarchic class in the foreign arena rested on close economic ties with Russia and in the domestic upon an authoritarian regime.

These two interests (close foreign ties to Russia and authoritarianism) divided centrist oligarchs and national democrats. The split was worsened by the Kuchmagate crisis, which began one year into Kuchma's second term

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in November 2000. This led to a redivision of Ukraine's political spectrum, with the national democrats allying themselves with the left in opposition to the centrists.

The split weakened Ukraine's strategic foreign policy goal of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. This

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*Manifestations of anti-Americanism during Kuchma's second term and in Yanukovich's election campaign contradicted Ukraine's goal of Euro-Atlantic integration and its policy of supplying the fourth-largest contingent of troops to the U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq.*

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goal was henceforth only really backed by national democrats who were removed from government positions. The left had always been lukewarm or hostile toward integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. For the pro-presidential center, integration remained at the level of empty rhetoric, because the domestic policies required to fulfill this goal contradicted their goal to consolidate an authoritarian regime in the post-Kuchma era.

After the Kuchmagate crisis began, the issue of immunity for Kuchma and the oligarchs became a central factor in Ukrainian politics. Mutual fear about their fate pushed the executive and oligarchs into an even closer alliance to consolidate an authoritarian regime. Important aims of this alliance included blocking Yushchenko from being elected and ensuring that a loyalist succeeded Kuchma.

Under Kravchuk and Kuchma, the ruling elites were able to change Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy because they did not back integration either with the Euro-Atlantic community or with Russia and the CIS. Their rhetoric in support of integration in both directions never translated into ideological support for integration in either direction, which can only come from the right or left of Ukraine's political spectrum. President Aleksandr Lukashenka of Belarus is ideologically committed to integration with Russia, as is the Communist Party of Ukraine. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Yushchenko-Tymoshenko camp is ideologically committed to Euro-Atlantic integration.<sup>22</sup>

Although twenty-three candidates fought the 2004 presidential elections, the race was primarily a contest between Yanukovich and Yushchenko. Foreign policy was not a major issue in the campaign, but the candidates represented two competing civilizational outlooks.

Yanukovich's campaign was dominated by six security policy issues:

- Soviet-style distrust of the United States
- Opposition to NATO membership<sup>23</sup>
- Integration into the WTO and EU together with Russia
- Disillusionment with integration into the EU and Ukraine's acceptance in Europe
- Strong support for the CIS Single Economic Space
- Russianization of Ukrainian security policy

This was essentially the security policy that had developed during the Kuchma era, but with the trends deepened and more intense. Anti-Americanism had grown as a consequence of the reorientation to Moscow during Kuchma's second term and the influence of Russian "political technologists" working for the Yanukovich election campaign.<sup>24</sup> Anti-Americanism contradicted Ukraine's goal of Euro-Atlantic integration and its policy of supplying the fourth-largest contingent of troops to the U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq. Contradictions, however, were nothing new in the domestic and security policies espoused by the centrists during Kuchma's two terms.<sup>25</sup>

Disillusionment with Europe was the Kuchma-Yanukovich camp's response to the West's pervasive Ukraine fatigue. Kuchma had expressed a similar disillusionment during his 1994 election campaign. This translated into the *de facto* Russianization of Ukrainian security policy. If Yanukovich had won the 2004 elections, it would have given Russia an ally holding similar views on not pursuing NATO or EU membership. During the Kuchma era, the security policies of Ukraine and Russia were differentiated by the fact that Moscow was not seeking EU or NATO membership, whereas Kyiv, at the level of rhetoric, sought to join them.

The election of Yanukovich would have meant a continued lack of ideology driving Ukraine's security policy. The Party of Regions, which Yanukovich leads, is the most ideologically amorphous of Ukraine's centrist parties.

The greater Russianization of security policy would have led to Ukraine's moderating its reservations about greater integration into the CIS while continuing its skepticism about integration into Europe. Greater coordination between Ukraine and Russia on security issues, a long-term Russian objective, would have been tantamount to the status of Russia's younger brother in international affairs. Russia would have gained a second vote alongside Belarus in international organi-

zations. In the summer of 2004, evidence of this trend could be seen in Ukraine's backing of Russia's demands that the OSCE tone down its election monitoring and human rights activities and focus instead on security issues.

In 2004, Yushchenko represented an ideologically driven alternative to Yanukovich. The Yushchenko camp was dedicated to introducing substance into Ukraine's hitherto-empty rhetoric about Euro-Atlantic integration under Kuchma. With Yushchenko's electoral victory, he and his associates understand that the primary onus upon them is to follow through on domestic reforms that will make Ukraine eligible for Euro-Atlantic integration. This differs significantly from the approach taken by Kuchma, who demanded that the EU first send a signal that would allegedly give Ukraine an incentive to pursue domestic reform.

The Yushchenko camp's more ideologically determined position on security policy is buttressed by support from the younger generation. The Orange Revolution represented the coming to power of the middle generation in alliance with young people.<sup>26</sup> Both of these generations are less Sovietized and more pro-European than the older generation represented by the Kravchuk–Kuchma camp, which was also dominated by cynicism and nepotism. The world outlook of the Kravchuk–Kuchma generation was influenced by the Leonid Brezhnev “era of stagnation” during which they made their careers.

## Conclusion

The Kuchma decade was characterized by a confusing, contradictory, and vague multi-vector security policy. Multivectorism was not the product of domestic influences or public opinion—it came about because Ukraine's security policy was being shaped to suit the political objectives of the president and his allies. Ukraine's security policy was vague because of the ideological amorphousness of the centrist camp. Kuchma was not interested in Euro-Atlantic or Russian integration, regardless of the rhetoric he adopted at different times in his decade-long rule.

Kuchma and his allies attributed the security policy crisis to the West, accusing it of applying a double standard to adjust Ukraine's time frame for Euro-Atlantic membership. The pro-Western opposition, along with Western governments and international organizations, blamed Kuchma's domestic policies, seeing them, as Yushchenko put it, as “contradict[ing] basic European values.”<sup>27</sup>

The election of Yushchenko moves Ukraine to a more ideologically driven security policy focused on adopting the domestic reforms that will move Ukraine beyond the empty rhetoric of the Kuchma era and closer to the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. The gulf between domestic and security policy objectives that existed under Kuchma will therefore close, and Ukraine fatigue, hopefully, will become a thing of the past.

## Notes

1. For a bibliography of scholars who have discussed the role of domestic influences on Ukrainian security policy, see [www.taraskuzio.net/ukrainian/16.html#2/](http://www.taraskuzio.net/ukrainian/16.html#2/).

2. See Andrew Wilson, “Ukraine's New Virtual Politics,” *East European Constitutional Review* 10, nos. 2/3 (spring/summer 2001): 60–66; Taras Kuzio, “Virtual Reform in a Virtual State,” *Kyiv Post* (May 8, 2003).

3. See Taras Kuzio, “Ukraine's ‘Velvet Revolution’ Gathers Speed,” *RFE/RL Newline* (September 17, 2002); idem, “Could Georgia's ‘Velvet Revolution’ Be Repeated in Ukraine?” *RFE/RL Newline* (December 2, 2003); idem, “The Next Revolution?” *Transitions Online* (December 12, 2003). [www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=53&NrSection=3&NrArticle=11300&search=search&SearchKeywords=the+next+revolution&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0/](http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=53&NrSection=3&NrArticle=11300&search=search&SearchKeywords=the+next+revolution&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0/); idem, “Stratfor Report Suggests Democratic Revolution Possible in Ukraine,” *Eurasian Daily Monitor* (September 9, 2004).

4. When the government declared Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich the victor in the flawed November 21, 2004, presidential run-off, supporters of Viktor Yushchenko took to the streets. Since Yushchenko's campaign materials used the color orange, this popular movement was soon labeled the “Orange Revolution.” See Lucan A. Way, “Kuchma's Failed Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (April 2005): 131–45; Taras Kuzio, “Ukraine's Orange Revolution: The Opposition's Road to Success,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (April 2005): 117–30; idem, “Kuchma to Yushchenko: Ukraine's 2004 Elections and ‘Orange Revolution,’” *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 2 (March/April 2005): 29–44.

5. Paul Kubicek, “Delegative Democracy in Russia and Ukraine,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 27, no. 4 (December 1994): 423–41; Taras Kuzio, “Regime Politics in Ukraine Under Kuchma,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2005), pp. 167–90. Lucan Way describes Ukraine as a “competitive authoritarian” regime. See his “The Sources and Dynamics of Competitive Authoritarianism in Ukraine,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20, no. 1 (March 2004): 143–61.

6. Neil Malcolm, Margo Light, Alex Pravda, and Roy Allison, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

7. This section draws upon my article in *Kyiv Weekly* (October 1, 2004).

8. Hromadske Radio (September 8, 2004).

9. UNIAN (April 29, 2004).

10. *Ukrayinska pravda* (May 15, 2004).

11. UNIAN (May 14, 2004).

12. *Ukrayinska pravda* (April 26, 2004).

13. Interview with Ukrainian foreign policy official, Kyiv, August 2004.

14. See Tor Bukkvoll, “Private Interests, Public Policy: Ukraine and the Common Economic Space Agreement,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 11–22.

15. View of Anders Åslund, head of Russia and Eurasian division, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The comment was made at a conference on the Orange Revolution in Kyiv, March 2005.

16. See Rosaria Puglisi, “Clashing Agendas? Economic Interests, Elite Coalitions and Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and Ukraine,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 6 (September 2003): 827–45.

17. See Victor Chudovsky and Taras Kuzio, “Does Public Opinion

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Matter? The Case of Foreign Policy in Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 35, no. 3 (September 2003): 273–90.

18. See Taras Kuzio, "Ukraine's Relations with the West: Disinterest, Partnership, Disillusionment," *European Security* 12, no. 2 (summer 2003): 21–44.

19. Taras Kuzio, "Geopolitical Pluralism in the CIS: The Emergence of GUUAM," *European Security* 9, no. 2 (summer 2000): 81–114.

20. *Ukrayinska pravda* (April 18, 2005).

21. Ukraine has been seeking EU membership since 1999 and NATO membership since 2002.

22. See Taras Kuzio, "National Identities and Virtual Foreign Policies Among the Eastern Slavs," *Nationalities Papers* 31, no. 4 (December 2003): 431–52.

23. Yanukovych was therefore campaigning against his own government's policy of seeking NATO membership, which was first introduced in a July 2002 presidential decree.

24. Taras Kuzio, "Large Scale Anti-American Campaign Planned in Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (October 8, 2004).

25. Taras Kuzio, "Will Contradictions Undermine Viktor Yanukovych's Election Campaign?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (July 8, 2004); idem, "Deep Contradictions Cloud Yanukovych's Foreign Policy," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (November 12, 2004).

26. Taras Kuzio, "Profound Generation Shift Follows Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (February 9, 2005).

27. *Ukrayinska pravda* (May 3, 2004).

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