

The Specter of Integration in Russia

Lessons for the West and Ukraine

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Nearly 150 years ago, in 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* about the specter of communism wandering around Europe, scaring the bourgeoisie and encouraging the proletariat to revolt. The end of the Cold War, German reunification, and dissolution of the Soviet Union, all warmly welcomed in the West, seemingly coincided with the end of communism and the instability in Europe that caused the two world wars.

Unfortunately, the end of the Cold War did not bring about the end of communism, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn unsuccessfully tried to show in his pamphlet *How To Rearrange [obustroit] Russia* (1990). As the results of the December 1995 parliamentary elections in Russia (and earlier in some East European countries) have shown, the Communist idea is still alive in Russia and in major states of the former Soviet Union. Only now it is dressed in moral and juridical clothes.

On 15 March 1996 the Communists in the Russian Duma voted (250-98) for a nonbinding resolution abolishing as “illegal” the 12 December 1991 ratification of the Belaya Vezha agreement, which dissolved the USSR and created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In so doing, they sent a mighty appeal to the traditional moral and psycho-emotional sentiments of the Russian populace, to its primordial feeling of *sobornost* (common will).

What is the CIS in reality? What is the essence of neo-integrationism in Russia? What will come after the CIS and what are the lessons that this emerging geopolitical and philosophical reality brings to the West and to Ukraine?

After a brief discussion of the legality of the CIS, an analysis of some basic documents constituting the background of the neo-integrationist wave in Russia and Belarus will be given, as well as sociological poll data on perception of it by the Ukrainian population. I will end with a discussion of some challenges that the recent tendency of neo-integration in the former Soviet Union (FSU) presents to both the West and Ukraine.

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The CIS and Legality

The recent decision by the Russian Duma has attracted public attention to a question obviously forgotten in post-Soviet Russia: What is the CIS? Did the treaty creating it correspond to the body of laws in existence at the time in the USSR, or was it a radical breakup aimed at creating new laws corresponding to world practice?

Several arguments have been put forward by supporters of the CIS treaty:

- *The time argument:* St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, speaking at the 12 December 1991 Supreme Soviet session claimed: “The country’s economic and political situation today is such that we can no longer allow ourselves to waste time on endless debates about our future. . . . The agreement concluded does not at all cancel the possibility of creating a renewed union.”¹

- *The structural argument:* The old union structure ceased to exist after the declarations of independence by Ukraine, Belarus, and other republics in the aftermath of the August 1991 *putsch*. In order to “bring order to the chaotic disintegration of this Union,” as Ruslan Khasbulatov noted, the CIS was created.² According to Boris Yeltsin, the main result of the treaty in Belaya Vezha was that “three republics, founders of the USSR, have halted a process of a spontaneous and anarchic disintegration of the common space inhabited by our people.”³

- *The military argument:* Andrei Kozyrev, then Russia’s minister of foreign affairs, maintained that “one of the reasons this Commonwealth of Independent States has been formed is to put a final end to the presence of Russian and other soldiers on territories which no longer recognize their being under the flag of the USSR.”⁴ This aim was never implemented and, since 1993, Russia has made the presence of its troops on the territories of CIS countries one of its principal goals.

- *The constitutional/legal argument:* Mr. Yeltsin, trying to prove the constitutionality of the CIS’s creation, contended that in forming the union in 1922, the founders did not lose their state sovereignty and their status and responsibility as founders of the union. This was enshrined in all Union constitutions, including the last one (1977). He assumed that the Belaya Vezha treaty could have been arrived at by the republics even within the framework of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR. He concluded that “all charges that this step is unconstitutional are unfounded and pursue either political aims which are essentially destructive or openly personal selfish interests.”⁵ He also indicted attempts to cast doubt on the legality of the accords as “simply immoral” and stressed that “to torpedo it at present is tantamount to entering into direct confrontation with those who made their choice, including at the Union referendum.”⁶

The opponents of the treaty, e.g., the USSR Constitutional Oversight Committee, asserted that the Treaty’s major statement—“The USSR as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality has ceased to exist”—can be regarded only as a political assessment of the situation and has no legal force. The com-

mittee stressed that individual republics cannot take it upon themselves to resolve questions affecting the rights and interests of others and, therefore, the agreements provision on the cessation of activity of organs of the FSU on the territory of the CIS states also has no legal force.⁷

This analysis shows that the supporters of the treaty capitalized mostly on situational arguments of political expediency over those of a purely legal nature. The opponents of the treaty stressed mostly its “illegal” nature and the nonbinding character of the documents signed in Belaya Vezha. However, no serious public hearings or academic conferences devoted to the problem of justifying the legality of the CIS’s creation have ever been conducted, either in Russia or in the West.

Therefore, the treaty itself started to be interpreted in different ways by its signatories. For Ukraine, it was a civilized means of “divorce” from the USSR; for Russia it was a means of neo-integrationist aspirations; and for “underdog” Belarus it was a means of joining the “top dog,” Russia, thus avoiding responsibility for its deep political and economic crisis. This fact also prevented CIS legal bodies from enacting significant laws that would be respected and implemented by all member-states.

As soon as the political expediency arguments for the CIS’s creation came under increasing fire from the victorious Communist opposition, the weakness of the CIS’s legal basis became especially obvious. This explains the relative ease with which the Communists managed to revoke, on their first attempt, the 12 December 1991 decision of the Supreme Soviet of Russia. They used the same set of arguments (“illegality” and “immorality”) with which Yeltsin had tried to prove the legality of the Belaya Vezha treaty in 1991. This switching of sides has only reinforced the ambiguity of the neo-integrationist tendencies in Russia, all started after 1993, and suggests that the Communists have only driven the spirit of Yeltsin’s “real” integration to its logical conclusion.

The Temptation of Neo-Integrationism

The dissolution of the USSR and emergence of the new independent states, and especially Ukraine, has caused several blows to the Russian national identity. First, the emergence of Ukraine as an independent state designated Kievan Rus as the starting point of the new independent Ukraine rather than Russia. This compelled Russia to search for its historical roots and to ponder whether these should be attributed to Europe, Asia, or Eurasia. It also focused attention on the fact that, historically, Russia and Ukraine existed as two different nations with complex relations rather than as a single brotherly people.

The loss of Ukraine in 1991 signified Russia’s physical removal from the European mainstream, a blow to the Russian self-image necessitating a search for new strategic partners in the region. Thus, Russia’s interest in Belarus as its number-one strategic partner emerged at that time. The eventual removal from power of democratic-minded Stanislau Shushkevich, one of the signatories of the Belaya Vezha Treaty, and the accession to the presidency of Alyaksandr Lukashenka (January 1994), an ardent proponent of neo-integrationist ideas, apparently coin-

cided with the efforts of the Russian special service to mastermind a plan for new integration.

After the forceful dissolution of the Russian parliament in October 1993, Mr. Yeltsin expressed the main idea of this plan in a vague fashion in a speech on 23 October 1993 in Yaroslavl—one of the historical pillars of Russian statehood. He spoke about Yaroslavl's significance as a city of Russian glory and focused on the necessity of "gathering all Russian lands" around Russia proper.

The victory of the nationalists and the Communists in the election to the Russian Duma in December 1993 compelled the presidential administration to strike first. On 27 May 1994, the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy⁸ released a document titled "The Strategy for Russia." This Council had close contacts with President Yeltsin and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. It was headed by Sergei Karaganov, deputy director of the Europe Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and its recommendations constituted the basis of the major documents on "integration" analyzed below.

In May 1994, Karaganov's group stated that the West had failed to support Russia's reformist endeavors and its efforts aimed at preventing crises in the post-Soviet space.⁹ It stressed the "inadmissibility" of NATO expansion and the necessity of "broadening" dialogue with NATO, which would make its enlargement unlikely without Russia's participation.

The council came to a "preliminary" conclusion that almost all of the new, independent countries were "proving their incapacity as totally independent states without closest cooperation with Russia."¹⁰ This statement, which at the time went unnoticed, constituted the basis of the whole concept of integration. Its basis was the idea "strong Russia—weak partners." Therefore, along with the thesis of the "inborn" weakness of the newly independent states, Karaganov's group proposed shifting the focus of Russia's relations within the CIS from multilateral to bilateral ties.

It is within the framework of bilateral contacts (rather than within the CIS) that Russia could maintain "stronger" positions in its dealings with the "near abroad" countries. The council determined the ultimate philosophy of such a policy to be "leadership instead of direct control," stressing the creation around Russia of a number of "friendly" regimes providing unlimited Russian access to their markets.

This idea constituted the core of the "educated egoism" policy, i.e., the assertion that Russia should support only that kind of integration that would be beneficial to Russia and the Russians.¹¹ At that time, the restoration of the USSR, in any form or fashion, was flatly rejected by Karaganov's Council.

In September 1994, the External Intelligence Service of Russia (SVR), headed by Yevgeny Primakov, prepared a document "Russia-CIS: Does the Position of the West Need to be Corrected?" This document concentrated on two major ideas: reintegration of the CIS countries had been deemed "objective" and inevitable; and the West was warned against interfering in it.¹² In reality it was a weaker version of Karaganov's earlier paper with an increase in anti-Western sentiments. However, this document was primarily of a consultative nature and did not contain direct recommendations to the executive bodies.

On 14 September 1995, Yeltsin issued Edict 940 entitled “The Strategic Course of Russia with the States of the CIS,” which contained directives to state institutions such as the Foreign Ministry, Defense Ministry, and the Ministry on Cooperation with the Countries of the CIS. Edict 940 declared the CIS countries the principal target of Russia’s geopolitical ambitions because there “are concentrated our [Russian] vital interests in the domain of economics, defense, security, protection of the rights of Russians (Rossiyan), the guarantee of which constitutes the basis of the country’s national security.”¹³ The document contained a broad range of measures limiting and eventually eliminating their independence and equality—words that are totally omitted in the text of the edict. The economic part of the forthcoming

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integration presupposes the following measures: enlargement of the Customs Union through the involvement of the members of the CIS Economic Union; integration of national economic systems with the help of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS states; enhancement of the Payments Union with the aim of using the ruble as a “reserve” currency; and creation of juridical and economic conditions for “joint property” in the CIS countries.

The military part of the document presupposes: establishment of a system of collective security on the basis of the 15 May 1992 Treaty on Mutual Security of the CIS Countries; establishment of Russian (only) military bases in CIS countries; creation of a joint system for CIS border protection and legal guarantees for the presence of Russian border troops in these countries; introduction of joint peacekeeping activities; and notification to “third countries” and international organizations involved in peacekeeping operations that “this region is the zone of Russia’s interests.”

Therefore, the game-plan is as follows: a Customs Union, “joint property,” Russian military bases for its protection, and Russia’s border troops for combating “foreign influence” with the participation of the Russian Security Service. The final aim of this plan is to create a new confederation that would include Russia and three of the other twelve former Soviet republics Belarus, Kazakstan, and Kyrgyzstan (all members of the CIS). As long ago as 1991, then first vice premier of Russia Gennady Burbulis deemed the formula for the confederative state contained in Gorbachev’s version of a new Union Treaty “hypocritical.”¹⁴ During presidential elections in 1996, both the Communist and Yeltsin versions of CIS “reintegration” supported a “voluntary” union. The difference between them was purely verbal—the Communists openly called this union the USSR (i.e., sticking to ideological motives), whereas Yeltsin’s team preferred such words as “real union,” “new confederation,” “profound integration”¹⁵ (i.e., clinging to the Great Power policy). Leaving aside the economic costs of such a “confederation” for Russia (i.e., the basic idea of Karaganov’s initial 1994 project), the hectic moves

of both the Communists and Yeltsin's team reflected the fact that the idea of renewed grandeur, implied in a Soviet revival, had a mighty psycho-emotional appeal to vast segments of the Russian electorate. It looked like both competitive parties connected their electoral success to the matter of who will be the first to actually revive some sort of a union inside (or instead of) the CIS.

Sergei Karaganov's group came out again with a strategy diametrically opposite in its main parameters to that proposed in 1994. While the "Strategy for Russia" rejected the idea of restoration of the USSR, the newly-released draft document titled "Will the (Soviet) Union Revive by 2005?" discusses it as a major possibility for the near decade. Taking into consideration the close contacts between the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and Yevgeny Primakov, former head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and now Russia's foreign minister, one cannot help but regard any document prepared by this Council most seriously as it directly concerns the West and Ukraine.

Main Focus of the "2005" Document

The document stresses that the word "Soviet" in connection with the "Union" is used in a non-political sense and only for designation of a future state, the historical successor to the FSU, which could emerge in the form of confederation, union, or federation on the territory of the FSU. The possibility of the creation of such a state is the major focus of the document.

Why 2005? According to the authors, it is intuitively clear that this threshold will be the key to the development of the integration processes in post-Soviet space. After this date the processes of either integration or disintegration will take final shape. The struggle between these two tendencies will end within the next ten years.¹⁶

Some of the participants at numerous CIS summits in Moscow openly manifested claims about the impossibility of the recreation of the USSR and objected to the very intention of such a recreation. The document stresses that these declarations were of a "purely political" nature, caused by the results of the elections to the Russian State Duma and the forthcoming presidential elections in Russia. Moreover, these claims came from states "that are only on the stage of creation of independent sovereign states from the remnants of the FSU."¹⁷ According to this logic, those states of the CIS (excluding, probably, Russia) that capitalized on the impossibility of the re-creation of the USSR (first of all Ukraine) have practically no attributes of their own statehood. Therefore, they should search for reintegration with that political body that does possess a statehood, i.e., with Russia. The mere fact of objection does not change the "objective" nature of the reintegration process. The connection with the analogous statement of Primakov's earlier document "Russia-CIS" is evident in this point.

The Context of the Discussion

Could it happen at all? And if yes, then with what probability? The problem of the restoration of the USSR in the near future is one of the most global and acute problems of the contemporary epoch, stresses the document. The context of its discussion is global. It concerns Russia, the whole post-Soviet space, Asia, the

United States, part of Canada, some African countries (Arab countries first and foremost), and Latin America. Only Australia has escaped this honor. A positive answer to this question would be perceived as political drama by a major part of these areas. Therefore, only the Communists are speaking about this perspective, which is “indirect evidence of the possibility of recreation of the (Soviet) Union.”

Factors Impeding the Revival of the USSR

The factors impeding the revival of the Soviet Union are as follows:

- The liquidation of the USSR was legally sound and confirmed by national referenda;
- The former states of the USSR have become members of the UN and other international organizations;
- The West has reached a “near consensus” concerning the undesirability of the restoration of the USSR as a “strong neighbor.” The Western countries are much more stable now than they were when the USSR emerged in 1922;
- The contemporary situation practically excludes the use of coercive methods of restoration, particularly in Central Asia, where such actions would be opposed resolutely by the United States, China, and Turkey;
- Economic and political development of the countries of the FSU is uneven and different. Russia proper lacks the political will for the resolution of this problem and the foreign policy mechanism to pursue the goal of restoration;
- In the future, Russia will deal with the problems of its own survival and internal restructuring and will be incapable of paying for the restoration, which for most of the population is associated with the return of the old Communist *nomenklatura* to power and the abolition of private property;
- New national political elites will resist any encroachments on their state sovereignty;
- One of the major obstacles is that, during the existence of the USSR, the countries of the FSU acquired all the formal and informal attributes of independent states, as well as the economic bases for a relatively independent existence. With the exception of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, these attributes and bases were practically absent before.

Factors Accelerating the Revival of the USSR

These factors are not as numerous as those impeding the restoration of the USSR. However, they are more fundamental by nature and each centrifugal factor has its opposite.

- The act of dissolution of the USSR was illegal, as it was done secretly by the parliaments of the republics of the FSU and the acting president;
- The stability of the Western states is volatile and the Atlantic model of democracy is withering away. The twenty-first century could demonstrate political instability in these states;
- The population of the FSU is suffering because of the rapid breakup of the

USSR. The success of economic reforms in Russia could make her again the center of gravity. The imperial consciousness of a certain part of the Russian political elites will gradually decrease and the traditional Russian desire (though arrogant) to make the weaker nations happier could increase;

- The Russian diaspora in FSU countries is more technologically advanced and more rapidly acquiring market behavior.
- The fact that the Russian language was formerly the all-Union one could also facilitate the restoration of the USSR;
- The United States is getting weaker being the only existing superpower;
- The Slav (or historical) unity of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine is a strong centripetal factor;
- The threat of the disintegration of the new independent states (Ukraine, Kazakstan, and Georgia; the Central Asian states that are doomed to dissolution upon withdrawal of Russian troops from Tajikistan), as well as the problem of “unnatural borders” and “disputed territories” could also push for restoration;
- New local conflicts look almost inevitable in Central Asia, where the fall of the political regime in Tajikistan will inevitably push Kazakstan toward Moscow;
- The expansion of NATO, via Poland, to the borders of the FSU almost instantly puts Belarus under Russia’s protectorate.¹⁸ This heralds the restoration of the USSR and the pressure on Ukraine will inevitably increase;
- Many of the problems unresolved in current conditions (Crimea, Transnistria, Eastern Ukraine, the Black Sea Fleet, Kaliningrad) could be resolved upon restoration of the Union;
- One has a feeling that some of the new independent states are not very interested in becoming (or cannot objectively become) really sovereign. The following dilemma could emerge for their elites—either return to Russia voluntarily or to be absorbed by the other states.

Therefore, the coming decade will be crucial for answering the question “Will the (Soviet) Union Revive in the Near Future?” If the answer is not found by 2005, it will never be found at all. The next five years are crucial for addressing two main points—will Russia’s economic rise be sustained, and will the West commit some major mistake causing the revival of the USSR.¹⁹

The document “2005” purports that by 2000 the new Federation will emerge with the following chances for the states—Russia, Belarus, Kazakstan, Armenia (very likely); Ukraine (wholly, or in part), Georgia, Kyrgyzstan (with great, but not decisive likelihood); Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (even with smaller likelihood); Azerbaijan, Moldova (whose destiny will depend on the fate of their neighbors; Azerbaijan’s will relate to the situation of the Caucasus region, and Moldova’s hinges on that of Ukraine); Latvia (less likely but possible); Estonia and Lithuania (practically unlikely). Having recognized that a single answer to the question on restoration does not exist, Karaganov’s group proposed a long term strategy aimed at revival of a USSR beneficent to Russia. They put forward a whole range of actions:

- The reform of the Russian foreign policy mechanism, namely, to create inside the Foreign Ministry a special “ministry” in charge of the CIS and FSU (i.e., of the Balts);
- To elaborate a set of directives on Russia’s policy to each country of the CIS, as well as the FSU;
- To shift the focus of activities within the CIS from signing treaties to projects of contacts in social and economic spheres, such as the creation of financial-industrial groups; debt-property exchanges; common banks; and customs and credit unions aimed at opening corresponding markets to Russia’s penetration. A special role in this regard is given to the Russian language and its usage in the territory of the FSU. The strategy for the restoration of the USSR capitalizes on further reinforcement of Russia vis à vis the rest of the countries of the CIS. It also stresses the need to create a wide network of both formal and informal contacts with political, economic, and cultural elites in the CIS. For this purpose the establishment of the semi-governmental CIS Fund as well as the CIS Institute is foreseen.

The results of the 1996 presidential elections in Russia could be crucial for the prospect of the recreation (or withering away) of the (Soviet) Union. One could purport that the earlier version of Russia’s “integrationist” policy, reflected in the Karaganov group’s document *Strategiya dlya Rossii* and Primakov’s *Rossiia—SNG* document capitalized on the “confederation” concept of future integration. On the other hand, Yeltsin’s Edict 940 and the latest Karaganov document “USSR-2005” contain a tacit (and sometimes direct) authoritarian and even hegemonic message. After a strong showing by the Communists (with their main thesis of restoration of the USSR appealing to wounded national pride) in the December 1995 parliamentary elections, the Yeltsin administration simply incorporated some basic tenets of the Communists program.²⁰

Post-CIS—Confederation or Hegemony?

It is as if the CIS is repeating the fate of the Soviet Union now, when the specter of the USSR and “new confederation” are both on track. The signing of the “union” between Russia and Belarus on 2 April 1996 could lead to the creation of at least three geopolitical configurations on the territory of the FSU bringing into question the validity and mere existence of the CIS.

The first is the Baltic states, which do not belong to the CIS and will not join any “confederations.” Their aim is to join the Euro-Atlantic structures (such as NATO and the European Union) as soon as possible.

The second is the CIS, which is destined to be split when some member countries become “more equal than others” due to their involvement in a “real union” with Russia. This measure will turn the CIS into an “illusory union” (which it is in practice) and make its further existence meaningless.

The third is the “new union/confederation” with a preservation of a contrived sovereignty and governance through the supranational bodies under Russia’s dominance. The prototype of such government was released by Aleksandr Lukashenka after his talks in Moscow with Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin on 22-23

March 1996—a joint Supreme Council made up of presidents, prime ministers, and legislative chiefs from each state, and an inter-parliamentary congress drawn from each legislature.

The participation of some CIS countries in the proposed “confederation” or community would give them certain possibilities to obtain credits for common programs and would relieve such “basket cases” as Belarus and Tajikistan of responsibility for political and economic crises. For Moscow, entering a post-CIS space is a means of asserting its role as a regional hegemon, of soothing the psycho-emotional pain of its populace caused by the disintegration of the Soviet empire, and of combating plans for NATO expansion eastward. However, the coexistence of one “top dog,” Russia, with several underdogs within the framework of a “new confederation,” contains the potential threat of turning this body into a sort of “benign hegemony,” established peacefully and “voluntarily,” in which the military and economic capabilities of one member exceed many times those of the remaining members combined.

“ . . . the benign hegemony emerging on the territory of the former Soviet Union. . . . leads to the creation of democracy by appearance and authoritarianism by essence.”

The problem is rather not *how* the post-CIS union will be created—peacefully or in a coercive manner²¹—but *what* it is in essence—democratic or hegemonic, authoritarian. One could assume that the “benign hegemony” emerging on the territory of the FSU poses potentially the biggest threat to democracy. It leads to the creation of democracy by appearance and authoritarianism by essence, quasi-state bodies with an obscure understanding of legality, unclear mechanisms for the creation of ruling organs of power, and substitution of the principle of representative democracy with a simple appointment procedure—a clear sign of authoritarian structures.

This is what happened to the ruling bodies of the new “union” of Russia and Belarus. According to the treaty between Belarus and Russia “on deepening of integration and comprehensive rapprochement,” the ruling bodies are as follows—the Union Council (representative body), the Integration Committee (executive body), and the Interparliamentary Congress (legislative body formed of fifteen members from each parliament). According to Article 13 of the treaty, the head of the Integration Committee is appointed by the heads of member-states (the Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, is the head of this committee), and the personal staff representing each state in the Interparliamentary Congress is appointed by the head of the corresponding member-state.²²

This is what one could refer to as “benign hegemony,” when supranational organs created non-democratically are endowed with the power to adopt decisions concerning ruling organs in the republics, which have been elected democratically. It means that the constituent parts of a social unity voluntarily renounce a part of their democratic authority and/or consciously turn a blind eye to the violation of democracy and national sovereignty, and pass their power to suprana-

tional bodies where the leading role is played by a “natural hegemon.” This hegemon rules due to the conditions that emerged or uses its advantages in economic, political, and military spheres, as well as demographic factors, to its own benefit. The West is facing such complex quasi-state structures on the territory of the FSU, with Russia playing the role of such a hegemon. So far, the West has not found proper answers to the challenges posed by the non-traditional geopolitical configurations there.

Public Perception of Integration and Statehood in Ukraine

A people’s national identity is important to their sense of statehood. When asked to describe themselves to foreigners,²³ 30 to 60 percent would say “I am a citizen of Ukraine” while 43 percent would identify themselves as residents of Ukraine or members of a national group.

However, 67 percent would describe themselves as Slavs, far more than would say they were Europeans (7 percent), although nearly 11 percent would use both terms. Ethnic Ukrainians (65 percent) and Russians (75 percent) are similar in Slavic self-identification.²⁴ This could lead to a trend detrimental to the very existence of a Ukrainian independent state—the majority (59 percent) think Ukraine’s interests would be best served if the government “sought confederation with Russia, Kazakstan, Belarus, and other former Soviet republics.”

Only half as many (31 percent) think “remaining sovereign and independent” would better serve national interests. Support for confederation with Russia and other FSU republics is highest among ethnic Russians (80 percent), the over-50 generation (62 percent), in Crimea (88 percent), and in the eastern (87 percent), northeastern (67 percent), and southern (66 percent) regions.²⁵ The lack of popular confidence in national government and political parties designed to represent people’s interests, reinforced by the vision of themselves as “Slavs” rather than “Europeans,” brings about positive sentiments toward a possible “Slavs plus Kazakstan” confederation and decreases the support for an independent state. Taking into account the tendency toward “real” integration in Russia, Belarus, Kazakstan, and Kyrgyzstan and the almost complete energy dependence of Ukraine on Russia, one could consider these two factors combined as the biggest threat to

Ukrainian independence. Moreover, the majority would seek closer links with Russia (in particular), Europe, the United States, or a balance of the three. Support for closer ties is greatest among ethnic Russians, the older generation, and in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine.

In assessing Russian policy toward the Ukrainian state, about half (53 percent) believe Russia “is seeking to have Ukraine unify again with Russia in a single state,” more than think Rus-

TABLE 1
Respondents Desiring Closer
Relations with Other Countries
(in percentages)

	Economic	Security
Russia	43	43
Europe	17	18
U.S.	4	3
Balance	31	29

TABLE 2
Popularity of Countries in Ukraine (percent)

	Germany	U.S.	Russia	Turkey	Romania
Favorable opinion	84	83	77	63	5
Unfavorable opinion	6	7	17	14	24

Source: *USIA Opinion Analysis*. "Ukraine Opinion of U.S., Russia, Foreign Aid," 14 March 1996. M-52-96, 4.

sia respects Ukraine's independence (21 percent) or is neutral to Ukrainian independence (14 percent). Belief that Russia seeks Ukraine's integration is greatest in the western regions of Ukraine, including Kiev (68 percent).²⁶

To withstand this negative trend, the government should create a special program aimed at reinforcing an independent Ukrainian state. It should include a complex of educational, political, and economic measures, especially for Russian speakers and elderly, as well as among the youth, where the market-oriented culture has acquired the strongest backing. The "integrationist" trend indicated above is balanced somehow with a positive vision of the United States and Germany as possible guarantors of Ukrainian statehood and promoters of financial aid for reforms.

Fast adoption of the Ukrainian Constitution is considered vital for further development of Ukrainian statehood. A majority of those polled chose a Western European model of a welfare state and a democratic government as most appropriate for Ukraine, which contradicts somehow the widespread self-identification as Slavs rather than Europeans.²⁷ The public also disclosed a strong understanding of the need for guarantees of civil rights in a new constitution. Almost 90 percent agree on five issues they feel must be included in Ukraine's constitution: guaranteeing personal liberties and freedoms for all citizens, guaranteeing political freedoms for all citizens, protecting the rights of national minorities, creating a separate judiciary branch, and guaranteeing the right of private property.²⁸

Lessons for the West

For the West, the emergence of a post-CIS geopolitical reality contains several lessons:

- Having said "no going back to the USSR"²⁹ as a union based on violence and lawlessness, one cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that a post-CIS amalgamation could turn into a sort of "benign" hegemony.
- Attempts to justify the creation of the new "union" with analogies to the integration processes in the European Union have only a remote relation to reality. First, the EU member-states spent decades prior to their integration on public debates of each following step. The creation of the "union" between Belarus and Russia, on the contrary, resembled a bad detective story where everything was

known in advance, but the chief participants tried at any price to avoid publicity. Second, the EU is based on strict economic principles concerning possible budget deficits and the public debts of member-states. The new Russian-Belarus "union" only plans to discuss these questions in the future. Meanwhile, one-third of Russia's budget deficit for FY96 is subsidized by loans from foreign financial institutions. Therefore, one can assume that the new Belarus-Russian amalgamation pursues mostly military-political rather than economic tasks.

- Russia should not feel isolated from the processes of European integration into which its former satellites are more and more actively involved. However, the West should capitalize on the idea that the post-CIS configuration cannot, in any way, be treated by Russia as a barrier to certain countries joining Euro-Atlantic structures. It also should be made clear that, of the "three Europes"—Western, Central, and Eastern—about which Secretary of State Warren Christopher spoke in Prague on 20 March 1996, Russia's path to Western European structures lies through the development of free and equal contacts with the countries of Central Europe, rather than by establishing "exclusive" relations either with NATO or the EU.

- The West should be ready for non-traditional forms of interference in the affairs of sovereign nations by Russia. These activities, such as creeping cultural expansion (including educational and informational expansionism), language policy, and "ethnic" foreign policy issues, could entail a redefinition of the mere notion of "interference."

- The West should also be ready to deal with the three geopolitical configurations on the territory of the FSU, with their different aims and visions of the West, and with their different actions;

- Of these three configurations, the Baltic states and Ukraine are the most important states for the West, and especially for the United States, for limiting any Russian effort (voluntary or otherwise) to reassert dominance in Eastern Europe. Traveling to Kiev shortly after the Duma vote on restoration of the USSR, Secretary of State Warren Christopher stressed that "Ukraine is a very important partner of the United States," an independent and sovereign state, and any unilateral attempt to change its status "should be rejected by the international community."³⁰

Lessons for Ukraine

During his meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher on 19 March 1996, President Leonid Kuchma stressed that "Ukraine needs political stability more than ever."³¹ From this stem several important lessons for Ukraine:

- The future of Ukraine's political stability is connected to countries that respect written laws and change them only in a legal way, rather than by the dictum of political whim.

- Ukrainian political stability also depends on its relations with those countries that would not consider Ukraine's reinforcement as a challenge.

- From this it follows that Russia cannot be the major strategic and political partner for Ukraine. So far, Russia—as the recent decision by the Duma and the

intention to create a new union inside the CIS showed—is not at ease with the observance of written laws and changes them as political considerations dictate. Any reinforcement of the political, economic, or cultural standing of Ukraine will be considered a challenge to Russia's own national self-image. The political future of Ukraine is in Europe, with those states and structures that could facilitate an emergence of market democracy there rather than with Russia or vague "Eurasian" space. At the same time, Russia could be regarded as a major economic partner for Ukraine until it develops its own internationally competitive high-tech industry.

- The strategic loss of Belarus to Russia, both by the West and Ukraine, must draw their attention to those countries that, together with Ukraine, could withstand any Russian effort to reestablish dominance in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Ukraine's contacts with the Baltic states and the Scandinavian countries, as well as the countries of the Visegrad group, turn into a top strategic priority in the region.

- Within the trend toward reintegration of the CIS countries that, since October 1993 (forceful dissolution of the Russian parliament), has become a dominant line of both the Kremlin and the opposition, Ukraine is regarded in the second tier of countries constituting the new confederation (a prologue to the union) by the year 2000. The Russian strategic planners do not exclude the scenario of Ukraine's disintegration, with one part (probably the Eastern Ukraine) joining the confederation. Russia is very interested in this scenario, regarding it as a test ground for eventual secession based on language and cultural factors. It would provide the opportunity (as stated in the "USSR-2005" document) to resolve the problems of the Black Sea Fleet (i.e., to put Sevastopol under its jurisdiction) and Crimea. Eastern Ukraine, where the major part of the Ukrainian economic potential is concentrated, is a juicy piece for the rapidly expanding Russian companies and financial-industrial groups. The following are foreseen as preliminary steps to this expansion and eventual annexation of Eastern Ukraine: development of debt-property agreements (the Russian monopoly Gazprom acquired parts of Belarus gas processing facilities for its debts), establishment of a common customs union, and the biggest possible opening of the Ukrainian markets to the penetration of Russian goods unable to compete internationally.

- The loss of Ukrainian economic sovereignty is considered by Russian strategists as a key prerequisite to the "Belarus" scenario. As Ukraine stands as a major part of any Russian attempt to restore the (Soviet) Union, all efforts will now be concentrated on further increasing Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia, with corresponding language and cultural expansion. Ukraine now faces a choice—either follow the path of the Eastern European countries, that managed to reduce their dependence on Russia, reorient their trade to the West, and are looking for integration into the EU and NATO; or to follow the path of Belarus—this tragicomic example of colonization at the end of the twentieth century.

- To withstand the last tendency, fraught with the loss of political independence, Ukraine would need to study and implement the decolonization experience acquired by such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, and even Albania. All these countries have per capita levels of foreign direct investments dozens of times higher than Ukraine's (\$600-650 in Hungary vs. \$12-

15 in Ukraine). It means that, in Ukraine, the place of the Western economic advisers, who do not understand the mentality of post *homo sovieticus*, should be occupied by decolonization experts from Eastern European countries and the Baltic states. They know perfectly well the psychological peculiarities of market reforms in post-totalitarian countries and could expand the Ukrainian strategy of gradual transition, first, to the level of the most advanced Eastern European countries and then—within ten to fifteen years—to the level of Greece and Spain. Any attempt to repeat the Russian model of economic reforms would inevitably lead the Ukrainian Communists to power with all its consequences. The intensity of the Russian strategic planners' efforts to restore the (Soviet) Union by the year 2005 or a confederation by 2000, poses the need for Ukraine to reevaluate its strategic priorities in economic and foreign policy.

The results of the nationwide polls showed that popular trust of the government is crucial for conducting reformist processes. The success of any reforms is in direct proportion to the level of trust in the government. Conversely, the greater the gap between the deeds of the authorities and the popular understanding of them, the smaller are the chances for social change. The relations between the people and the government in Ukraine should improve at all levels—economic, political, and social.

The government now faces the crucial task of persuading people that economic modernization can bring benefits to everybody rather than to the new elite. Otherwise, the old Soviet dichotomy between “we” and “they” will persist, undermining any reformist attempts.

Politically, the civil rights and freedoms of individuals should be unconditionally protected by special constitutional provisions. In the Soviet system everybody was an underling of the “nanny” state. In Ukraine everybody should feel oneself a free citizen whose rights are guaranteed by the state. This would help the government to reduce the “neo-integrationist” expectations of the populace, stemming mostly from economic impoverishment and frustration with the government.

Socially, a thoroughly elaborated government program aimed at supporting and developing Ukrainian national identity and statehood is needed. This program would develop values such as civil society as a mediator between the state and individual, respect for written laws (civil code and real estate laws) and constitutional principles (beginning from elementary school), and promote the values of the social contract between the citizen and the state.

NOTES

1. “St. Petersburg Mayor Comments,” trans. in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report—Central Eurasia* (hereafter appearing as FBIS-SOV), 91-240, 13 December 1991, 41.
2. “Khasbulatov Addresses Deputies,” trans. *Ibid.*, 39-40.
3. “Yeltsin Addresses Presidium,” trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-239, 12 December 1991, 39.
4. “Kozyrev Answers Questions,” trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-240, 13 December 1991, 40.
5. “Yeltsin Addresses,” 39.
6. *Ibid.*, 40.

7. "Constitutional Committee Issues Statement," trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-241, 16 December 1991, 17.

8. Besides Sergei Karaganov, the members of the council were: Yury Boldyrev, deputy of the Federation Council of Russia; Lev Vainberg, the president of the Association of Joint Ventures, International Amalgamations and Organizations; Alexander Vladislavlev, vice president of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs; Igor Malashenko, general director of NTV (Independent television); Mark Masarsky, the president of the Association of Enterprises Managers; Irina Khakamada, deputy of the State Duma; Sergei Yushenkov, head of the Defense Committee of the State Duma; Evgeny Kozhokin, director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies and many other politicians and academics.

9. "Strategiya dlya Rossii: Tezisy Soveta po vneshnei i oboronnoi politike," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 May 1994, 4.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. "Sluzhba vneshnei razvedki Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Rossiia—SNG: nuzhdaetsya li v korrektyrovke pozitsiya Zapada?* (Moscow, 1994), 6, 10.

13. Edict 940, *Strategicheskyy kurs Rossii s gosudarstvami-uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nezavisimyykh Gosudarstv*, 14 September 1995, 1.

14. "Leaders Brief Deputies on Minsk Accord," FBIS-SOV-91-240, 13 December 1991, 39.

15. Lee Hockstader, "Prospects of New USSR Is Russian Election Issue," *Washington Post*, 15 March 1996.

16. *Vozrodit'sya li (Sovetskiy) Soyuz v 2005 godu?* Tezisy Soveta po vneshnei i oboronnoi politike, 1996, 1.

17. Ibid.

18. On 13 May 1996, the major Russian TV information program, *Vremya*, discussed the possible deployment of Russian middle-range cruise missiles in the Kaliningrad district and Belarusian President Alexandr Lukashenka's remark that Belarus "could suspend" the withdrawal of its nuclear missiles to Russia in case NATO adopts a decision giving its future members full status within the alliance (including art. No. 5). During the meeting of the collegiums of the Russian and Belarusian Defense Ministries on 13–14 May 1996 in Moscow, the Russian defense minister Pavel Grachev, while denying that current Russian-Belarusian military cooperation is aimed against NATO, nevertheless stated that the two countries are prepared to take certain countermeasures if the alliance expands. Grachev declared that the deployment of "a powerful Russian-Belarusian military force" had not been ruled out as one possible response to NATO enlargement and that Polish and Lithuanian membership in NATO would isolate the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. See *OMRI Daily Digest*, 15 May 1995, 2. One cannot but notice that while the discussion on NATO enlargement so far is purely theoretical, Russia has made a real practical step to enlargement of its territory by concluding a treaty on reunion with Belarus on 2 April 1996 with obvious military purposes.

19. *Vozrodit'sya li (Sovetskii) Soyuz*, 9.

20. This fact was noted by Aleksei Podberezkin, Zyuganov's aide on foreign policy and deputy chairman of the Duma International Affairs Committee, when stressing the similarities in Yeltsin's and Zyuganov's foreign policy positions. Mentioning that Zyuganov had advocated this policy since 1989, while for others it was merely a "loud declaration," Podberezkin said that Yeltsin had already co-opted much of Zyuganov's foreign policy program, especially with regard to accelerating CIS integration. *OMRI Russian Presidential Election Survey*, 3, 16 May 1996, 2.

21. The Communists stressed that the USSR should be restored only in a peaceful fashion. The USSR, according to its 1977 Constitution, was a "voluntary union" of free republics, open to other countries. However, in reality the USSR was a totalitarian empire.

22. *Dogovor mezhdru respublikoi Belarus i Rossiiskoi Federatsiei ob uglublenii integratsii i vsestoronnem sblizhenii*, 2 April 1996, Art. 13, 6.

23. The nationwide survey was commissioned by USIA and fielded by the Kiev-based polling firm SOCIS-Gallup. Personal interviews were conducted between 19 December 1995 and 10 January 1996, with a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adults (18 years and older). The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent.

24. *USIA Opinion Analysis*. "Growing Pains in Ukraine's Political Culture," 14 March 1996. M-48-96, 2.

25. *USIA Opinion Analysis*. "Ukraine Opinion of U.S., Russia, Foreign Aid," 14 March 1996. M-52-96, 3.

26. *Ibid.*, 4.

27. "Growing Pains," 3.

28. *Ibid.*, 3.

29. "No Going Back to the U.S.S.R.," *Washington Post* editorial, 21 March 1996, A16.

30. *USIA Transcript EUR203, 03/19/96: Christopher, Kuchma Press Availability in Kiev*.

31. *Ibid.*

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