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MASTER'S THESIS

**THE IMPACT OF UKRAINIAN CRISIS ON
RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE CIS
COUNTRIES**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I elaborated this Master's Thesis independently using the cited literature.

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ABSTRACT

The Master's Thesis focuses on the impact of the Ukraine political crisis of 2013 – 2014 on Russia's relations with the CIS countries. The crisis was triggered by Ukrainian government when it suspended plans of closer ties with the European Union, and has since spurred escalating tensions between Russia and Western powers. The tense situation in Ukraine and Russia's policies is one of the central affairs in international relations today and this makes this topic especially actual.

The Thesis examines impact of Ukrainian events of 2013-2014 on the Eurasian integration led by Russia. Integration projects in the post-Soviet space are a high priority for Russia and a tool, how the country articulates its interests in the region.

The work provides a look at the development of Russia's foreign policy since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and considers factors and ideological aspects that affected it. Selected integration projects and Russia's policies towards the Eurasian integration are described. The final part is devoted to the origins of Ukrainian crisis and Russia's attitude to it. Current, as well as potential impact of Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with the CIS states is derived from the analysis.

KEYWORDS

Russian Federation, Russian Foreign Policy, Ukraine, Commonwealth of Independent States, Ukraine Crisis, Eurasian Integration, Belarus, Kazakhstan.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the major topics on the field of international relations today is a deep ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The crisis significantly affects not only Ukraine itself, but also Russia and the countries of post-Soviet space. The Thesis brings into focus an impact of Ukrainian crisis of 2013-2014 on Russian relations with the CIS countries. These relations play an important role in Russian foreign policy as through different integration projects Russia articulates its interests in the region.

The political crisis in Kiev started in November 2013, when mass protests on Kiev's Maidan square began. The reason that initiated unrests was Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to withdraw its association agreement with the European Union. Earlier Ukraine was forced by Moscow not to sign the agreement. Yanukovich's decision led to growing unrest in parts of Ukraine, souring the relationship between Russia and the West. Further escalation of the crisis already occurred and put Ukraine in a state of civil war. The Ukraine crisis itself is not a subject of the Thesis. Its analysis is highly problematic because the crisis has ongoing character and there is a lack of academic resources. However, it is important to understand the nature of the conflict and to evaluate the impact it could have on Russia's relations with the CIS countries. The current crisis in Ukraine became a subject of engagement of the international community and can be considered as one of the most important affairs in terms of its influence on the development of bilateral relations in the world today.

The main reason, why I have chosen this topic is that Russian foreign policy in general was a subject of my special interest during the studies. The current crisis in Ukraine now dominates the Russian foreign and even domestic policy. It affects Russia's relations with the West and

with the post-Soviet countries. These were the reasons that led me to choose the topic for a deeper research.

The main aim of the Thesis is to evaluate the impact of the Ukrainian political crisis of 2013 – 2014 on the Russian relation with the CIS countries. The crisis is still ongoing, so it is important to set a timeframe. I deal with the events that occurred since November 2013 till mid-2014, therefore including the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation.

Three research questions are formulated for the Thesis. In the first chapter I search for factors and ideological concepts that influenced Russian foreign policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The main question for the second chapter is: What is the state and purpose of regional integration of the CIS countries? The final question asks for the possible impact of the Ukraine crisis on Russia's relations with the selected CIS countries (Belarus and Kazakhstan).

The structure of the Thesis corresponds with the set order of the research questions. The work contains three main chapters besides introduction and conclusion. The chapters are further divided into subchapters. The first chapter focuses on the development of the Russian foreign policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. I assume that better understanding of Russian foreign policy today requires looking back at the past developments. The main factors that affected foreign policy's course of the country are identified in the chapter. Among these factors are the dissolution of the Soviet Union, question of the Soviet legacy and a factor of national identity. Ideological courses, such as Westernism and Euroasianism, appeared in Russian foreign policy debate of that time, are analyzed as a factor that played an important role in a policy outcome. The period from 1991 to 2014 is chronologically divided

according to Russian leaders' presidential terms. This is because traditionally in Russia, it is a President who identifies foreign policy direction and influences it the most. To characterize periods of the country's foreign policy I base on the actual official documents, primarily the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation from 1993, 2000, 2008 and 2012. The Foreign Policy Concepts are not only described but also compared with each other to refer to the change or continuity in the foreign policy.

In the second chapter I study the role of the post-Soviet countries in Russian foreign policy and the development of integration projects in the CIS area, which developed after 1991.

Thus, the second chapter deals mainly with the post-Soviet region. The last Concept of the Russian foreign policy determines the region as a strategically important for the country.

Therefore, I tried to identify Russia's interests in the post-Soviet space from economic and geopolitical perspective. A special attention is attributed to the integration projects, in which Russia plays a leading role. Through the integration projects Russia intends not only to deepen the relations with the post-Soviet states, but also to strengthen the influence in the region and to articulate its interests. Among analyzed integration projects are the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. At the final part of the second chapter I summarize the main findings of the relations between Russia and the CIS states and define the current state and future prospects of integration in the region.

The third chapter is a core part of the work. It firstly provides a look at the Ukraine crisis, its background and geopolitical aspects. These aspects, as well as Russia's policy during the crisis is essential for evaluation of the impact of Ukraine crisis on Russia's relations with the CIS states. First reactions and official stances of some post-Soviet states on the key events of

the crisis in the first months will be analyzed. The current as well as potential impact of the Ukrainian crisis on integration projects stems is derived from the analysis.

I chose empirical – analytical approach to work on the Thesis. Defined aims and research questions are analyzed on the base of this approach. Today the empirical-analytical approach is predominant in political science and international relations and is the most commonly used in similarly structured works on the issues of the Russian foreign policy. Czech professor of political sciences Blanka Říhová summarizes that the empirical-analytical approach puts an emphasis on neutral attitude towards the researched subject and favors statements, which are not affected by a priory judgments, ideological foundations or subjective attitudes. Empirical-analytic approach highlights neutrality, professional critic and the need to verify the achieved knowledge (Říhová, 2000).

Generally, a lot of foreign and Russian academic sources on the topic of Russian foreign policy can be found. However, it was problematic to find coherent, deep and settled academic publications devoted to Ukraine crisis of 2013-2014. This is due to ongoing character of the crisis and the fact that it started just at the end of 2013.

During working on the Thesis I used academic publications, as well as analytical articles from different internet databases and websites. Primary sources, such as official documents, concepts, agreements were available on the official websites of Russian authorities, mainly the official website of the President of Russian Federation and Russian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (www.kremlin.ru and www.mid.ru). During research of integration projects I relied on the information provided by an official websites of the selected organizations: the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Common

Security Treaty Organization (<http://www.e-cis.info/>, <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/>, <http://www.odkb-csto.org/>). Official statements on the Ukrainian crisis from Belarus and Kazakhstan were found on the authorized internet portals of the Presidents of these states (<http://president.gov.by/en/> and <http://www.akorda.kz/en/mainpage>).

A few monographs were especially helpful for me during work on the Thesis. Among the monographs devoted to the Russian foreign policy must be mentioned a publication from Geoffrey Mankoff “Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics”, a book from Richard Sakwa “Putin: Russia's choice”, and Bobo Lo’s text “Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking”. A very important source for me was a monograph from Andrew Wilson “The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation”. In the book the author focuses on the complex relations between Ukraine and Russia and provides a comprehensive overview of the Ukrainian history.

During working on the first chapter, I found very useful the monograph by Geoffrey Mankoff, a deputy director and fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. Mankoff provides a complex and balanced examination of the development of the Russian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. I also relied on a number of articles by different academics. In particular, I want to mention the articles focused on Russia’s national identity of political scientists Igor Zevelev, a director of The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Russia and of Ilya Prizel, a professor of Political science and History at the University of Pittsburg.

The second chapter was focused on the relations between Russia and the post-Soviet states through the optics of various integration projects. I gathered information from the official

internet portals of the selected organizations, where I could find primary sources: treaties, agreements and official governmental statements. When analyzing the economic aspects of the integration, the report of the Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Viktor Khristenko “Eurasian Economic Integration: facts and figures” was a key for me.

Working on the third chapter was complicated by the lack of coherent academic sources due to the “freshness” of the conflict. Therefore, when analyzing the Ukraine crisis and its implications, I primarily relied on the available analytic articles. I would like to highlight three of them: “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault” by John Mearsheimer, a theorist of offensive neorealism, “the Ukrainian Crisis and the Resumption of Great-power Rivalry” by Dmitry Trenin from Moscow Carnegie Center, and „Kazakhstan’s attitude towards integration with Russia: less love, more fear” by Aleksandra Jarosiewicz from the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw. The sources mentioned above helped me to look comprehensively at the Ukraine crisis, which is very complex, critical and continuous.

1. RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER 1991

For the first chapter of this work my goal is to describe the general tendencies in Russian foreign policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. To do this I will first pay attention to main factors that influenced foreign policy of the country and then I will try to describe individual phases of Russian foreign policy, divided chronologically according to Russian president served after 1991. Individual phases are given to demonstrate general lines of Russia's foreign policy.

As well as the foreign policies of other countries, Russian foreign policy is affected by wide range of factors, internal and external, which influence policy's creation and implementation. For this thesis's purpose only the most significant factors were selected. Among these factors are the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the question of the soviet legacy, and a factor of national identity. Ideological courses, such as Westernism and Euroasianism, appeared in Russian foreign policy debate of that time, will be analyzed as a factor that played an important role in a policy outcome.

To describe general development of country's foreign policy, the chapter will be chronologically divided according Russian Presidents served after 1991: Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Country's Foreign Policy objectives and interests will be analyzed through the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation from 1993, 2000, 2008 and 2012.

I analyze all relevant official foreign policy doctrines that articulate Russian foreign policy interests, which are then reflected in the relations with the CIS countries and international projects.

Examining of changing ideological concepts in various periods of Russia's foreign policy and the factors that influenced it is needed to understand current Russia's foreign policy towards specific subjects of international law, in our case, to the countries of post-Soviet space and Ukraine.

1.1 DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND SOVIET LEGACY

In this part it is important to understand, what the Soviet Union meant for Russia and what impact the collapse of the Soviet imperium had on the forming of new Russian state and its foreign policy. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a state existed between 1922 and 1991 and governed by Communist Party. It was a Union of 15 subnational Soviet republics, which government and economy were highly centralized. The capital of the state was in Moscow and Russian Soviet Socialistic Republic was a "core" of the state (Zevelev, 2002). The Soviet Union was nominally a federation, but in different sources is often characterized as an Empire. There are different academic studies that examine the theory of federation and discuss nature of empire in relation to the Soviet Union. One of these studies is a work of Tania Raffass "The Soviet Union – Federation or Empire". The author does not give a clear answer if the Soviet Union was more a federation state or Empire, however, argues that the Soviet attitude to federal units was complicated, wrestling, but quite similar to many other

states in a situation when social and ethno-cultural questions should have been delivered in a political unit formed by different states (Raffas, 2012).

Other researcher, Michael Doyle defines an Empire as a formal or informal relationship, in which one state controls political sovereignty of another political society (Doyle, 1986).

According to Doyle, Empire always has a core and periphery. Core serves as a base of imperial state and a ruling elite and a periphery is a “home” for the local administration and external elites. If we use a description of empire given by Michael Doyle, we can say that the Soviet Union fulfilled the definition of Empire: Moscow and Russia was a core of this empire, and other union republics were a periphery. If the Soviet Union was an empire, its fall meant for Russia the loss of Empire. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Russian Federation became an independent country. Because of the fact that Russia was the largest of the fifteen republics that made up the Soviet Union and accounting for over 60% of the GDP and over 50% of the Soviet population, the country was widely accepted as the Soviet Union's successor state in diplomatic affairs (Malyshev, 2001). End of the Soviet Union meant for Russia a significant loss of not only raw materials and natural resources, but also nuclear and military equipment, which was located on the territory of the other independent successor states. Except the loss of natural resources and military equipment, Russia lost a considerable part of the territory, which was very important from economic, secure and strategic point of view. The new formed successor states became formally foreign countries for Russia, but in fact they remained strongly connected with Russia through sharing common historical past, cultural, ethnic, and economic ties.

Among other important consequences of the Soviet Union's dissolution for Russia was a massive displacement of population in the former Soviet Republics, which was connected

with the newly established state borders. Millions of ethnic Russians all of a sudden found themselves outside their homeland and created a large diaspora outside the Russian Federation (Jackson, 2003). The existence of this diaspora helped Russia to maintain certain level of influence in the region.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought for Russia the loss of strategically important military bases, which became a property of newly established post-Soviet states. Despite all these losses, which were of course painful for Russia, the country took over 80% of the Soviet territory and around 60% of the Soviet population (Jackson, 2003). Thus in 1991 Russia was the largest country in the world in terms of size and the fifth largest world's population. The country was accepted by international community as a successor state and inherited the permanent membership in UN Security Council with veto power.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought not only the loss of material aspects, but also psychological aspects should not be ignored. It will take time to recognize all the wounds - political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological – the disintegration of the Soviet Union has caused to Russia and its people. It will also take time to fully understand what the Soviet Union was and was not in the history of the Russian state.

1.2 SEARCHING FOR A NEW RUSSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the early 90s Russia had to cope with main global changes: the end of the Cold War and with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country faced with a difficult task to redefine itself, its position on the global scale.

Nation's foreign policy is to a large extent related to a self - determination of the country.

Bobo Lo recognizes Western, Slavic and Eurasian national identity (Lo, 2002). According to him, establishment of a new state's national identity was an urgent task, which Yeltsin's administration faced in its early years of existence.

After the end of the USSR, Russia as a state, for the first time in centuries, was weaker than major world powers. At that period there was a question whether Russia intended to stand alone, align with the West or would become a "member" of anti-American alliance with China and some other states in Asia and the Middle East. (Trenin, et al., 2002) The absence of clear answer to this question made Moscow's foreign policy highly unpredictable, plus Russia's international behavior changed several times during the 90s. There were periods when Russia tried to integrate into multipolar West as well as periods of counter-balancing US hegemony and NATO expansion. Putin's reaction on the events of September, 11 made many observers consider that he seeks closer cooperation with the West and intends to reconstruct Russia's identity and foreign policy. Putin's rhetoric of that period was more about European and global integration (Zevelev, 2002). However, changes in Putin's rhetoric and foreign policy conduct changed quickly. One of the reasons of these changes was the raising level of perception that Russia is not taken by the West as an equal partner in international affairs with a legal right to have geopolitical interests. Very soon Vladimir Putin made it clear that such issue as accession of the former Soviet-bloc nations into the European Union and plans for possible NATO expansion is highly undesirable for Moscow.

But let's go back to the question of national identity. Russia serves an example of a state, in which question of national identity is highly connected with the foreign policy. This was particularly evident in the 90s. From the Western point of view, Russia's behavior in its

foreign policy sometimes appears inconsistent and illogical, and this makes Russian foreign policy quite unpredictable. If we accept that foreign policy is based on a human decision making process, psychological aspects become very important and thus should be included in interpretation of Russian foreign policy (Heller, 2010). Heller explains that understanding Russia's behavior in international relations can be found in different irrational factors such as honor, recognition, perceptions, images and historic experience (Heller, 2010). Andrei Tsygankov in his book "Honor in International Relations: Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin" argues that sense of national honor determines Russia's behavior as international actor (Tsygankov, 2010). An eminent Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn defended the concept that national identity in case of Russia is not determined by blood or geographical boundaries, but rather by spirit of consciousness, and whoever belongs to such spirit are Russians (Moulikova, 2011). Given examples provide notions of Russian national identity from psychological - moral point of view.

Other scholars give more objective characteristics for understanding Russia's policy. A very complex explanation offers Ilya Prizel in his book "National Identity and Foreign Policy". Prizel advocates the idea that foreign policy of any country is deeply influenced by national identity (Prizel, 1998). Prizel complexly analyzes several important categories. The first one is the notion that Russia is an empire. This evolves two conflicting views. The first one argues that Russia will not keep its integrity without at least partial rebirth of its empire. The second one states that the end of the empire had a liberating effect on Russia and that now the country will have only national interests but not imperialistic demands (Prizel, 1998).

Russia has a long imperial history, which began in the 16. Century, when Tsar Ivan the Terrible seized Tatar city Kazan and then Astrakhan and integrated these territories and

people into Russia. Those people didn't share same religion nor didn't speak Russian language. Then in the following centuries Russian has acquired new territories and constantly built and Empire. As a result of this a number of different ethnic groups with distinct languages, cultures and religions were incorporated to Russia. This fact further complicated the definition of Russian identity. At the same time, when we talk about Russia as an Empire and country's expansionist aspirations, we should bear in mind a position of some scholars, who argue that historically Russia was almost in a constant state of war, since it was invaded more often than other countries. Therefore the country was forced to expand its territories (Prizel, 1998).

Conflicting Russia's identity, possible scenarios of Russia's future and its place in the world was examined by three major schools of thought: Westernizers, Slavophiles and Eurasianists (Prizel, 1998). What are the ideological distinctions between them? Westernizers believe that Russia is an integral part of Western civilization, which is, according to them, the most progressive civilization in the world. The school emphasizes Russia's deep cultural connection and similarity with the West in terms of core values. For Westernizers those core values are individual freedom, legal accountability in government, greater interconnection with the outside world through international trade. As main opponents of Westernizers we can name Slavophiles, who see Russia as a unique civilization.

The second aspect analyzed by Prizel is Russia's very complicated identification with East and West. This comes from country's geopolitical location that combines both Eastern and

Western parts of Eurasia, which means two different cultural and political worlds. We also shouldn't forget the fact that country was under the rule of Mongol-Tatar Empire for the centuries, which affected Russia both culturally and politically. In addition, many ethnic groups that live in Russia today come from the East (the Tatars, the Bashkirs, etc.) This Asian element further contributed to the nature of Russian identity.

As we can see authors who study Russian foreign policy have slightly different understanding of the concept of Russian national identity. In summary, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union Russia had to answer the question: What kind of State it should be – global power, regional power or only “ordinary” state? The answer to this question was not easy to find as there was not a consensus among the political elites. Some politicians expressed interest in recreating the Soviet Union on the base of imperial identity; others saw Russia's future in cooperation with the Western world. But if we make a connection between the intensive searches of the national identity in the 90s and the Russian Foreign policy of today, what concept revealed as the most steady and actual for current state of Russia's foreign policy? An answer to this question is offered by prominent Russian political scientist Igor Zevelev in his article “After the Crimea: a new Russian Foreign Policy”. Zevelev argues that among wide range of concepts emerged in the intellectual discourse about post – soviet Russia's identity in the last 20 years, finally were selected those concepts that seemed most appropriate for the legitimization of the regime and strengthening of independence, power and influence of the Russian state. Zevelev primarily talks about two concepts. First one is the idea that Russia should be a strong independent great power serving as a stronghold of all conservative forces fighting against revolutions, chaos and liberal ideas, encouraged by the United States and Europe. Second one is the idea of the existence of a large Russian World and Russian

civilization, which is different from the Western one and exceeding the borders of the Russian Federation (Zevelev, 2014).

1.3 PHASES OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY 1991 – 2014

In the previous subchapters we focused on Russian foreign policy in terms of factors that has affected it. The influence of these factors is evident even today. In the following subchapter my goal will be to analyze the content and general tendencies of country's foreign policy after the fall of the Soviet Union till year 2014. Analysis of the single phases of foreign policy will be organized according to the periods in office of Russian presidents, who served after 1991. Thus, we will mention foreign policy course of Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Main ideological streams that played an important role in Russian foreign policy forming will be also briefly introduced.

1.3.1 YELTSIN'S FOREIGN POLICY, 1991 - 1999

The beginnings of Russian foreign policy after the fall of the Soviet Union were marked by efforts to establish cooperation with the West and overcoming the Cold War hostility between the United States and newly formed Russian Federation. The first Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who served 1991 – 1999, was the symbol of these efforts. However a deep economic crisis in Russia busted in the 90s contributed to the loss of illusions about mutually beneficial cooperation with the West.

Foreign policy of Boris Yeltsin was at the first stage influenced by so called *Atlantism*. Since this concept will be often used in analysis of Russian foreign policy, I consider as necessary to introduce this concept. Atlantism is a foreign policy direction, whose proponents believed that Russia historically and culturally “belongs” to Western countries and therefore their ideas advocated efforts to build a strong cooperation with the western states (Moulikova, 2011).

The first phase of a searching for a new foreign policy concept carried out under the spirit of Atlantism. At that time western- oriented Russian politicians tried to approach the western countries, establishing new business relationships and overcoming the Soviet-era past. Among the main proponents of this line were prominent Russian economist and politician Yegor Gaidar¹ and the first Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev². (Sergunin, 2004). Thus, at the early 90s pro-western foreign policy clearly dominated. However, it is important to emphasize that Yeltsin’s attempt to cooperate with the West had not only socio-cultural explanation, but also purely pragmatic and economic aspect played an important role as for Yeltsin’s government cooperation with the West and especially with the United States promised necessary assistance in conducting economic reforms. The aim of this policy was to deal with the consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to build stable relations with the Western nations and to establish participation in international organizations.

Atlantism as a prevailing direction of Russian foreign policy existed within the period of 1991-1992. In 1992 belief of the political elites that Atlantism is the only correct direction for Russian foreign policy has been weakening. Quite logically Russia started to go in the other

¹ Yegor Gaidar served as an acting Prime-Minister 1992 - 1994

² Andrey Kozyrev served as a foreign minister of Russia 1991 - 1996

direction, which considered as more appropriate for the country since the concept of Atlantism did not expect close cooperation with the post-Soviet states. Therefore, Russian foreign policy turned to more realistic direction, based on the concept of *Euroasianism*. The concept assumes that Russia has a unique geographic position between Asia and Europe and should use this geographic advantage in its foreign relations (Moulikova, 2011). Unlike Atlantism, that requires cooperation with the West, Euroasianism stresses the importance of cooperation within the post-Soviet space and establishment of good relations with the Eastern partners, such as China and India. As was already mentioned the concept of Atlantism began to lose its influence in 1992 and pro-Western forces within the Yeltsin government were undermined. In 1993 new Russian foreign policy doctrine was adopted. The doctrine did not support Atlantism as a prior country's foreign policy direction but declared that Russia's objective is to maintain cooperation with the Western nations. According to the official document, the crucial aspect for the country was to restore its great power status and to strengthen Russia's influence in the "near abroad", which was a term, popularized by Andrei Kozyrev and refers to the newly independent republics which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. (Bogaturov, 2013). After 1993, Russian foreign policy became, not hostile to the West, but colder towards it. The doctrine, among other things, illustrated that Euroasianism gained its place in Russian foreign policy of that period. However, the doctrine from 1993 should not be understood as an unconditional diversion from pro-western orientation, but rather as sober reflection of a current state of international affairs and as a pragmatic step from liberal idealism, established by the atlantists at the early stages of a formation of the Russian foreign policy and perceived within Russian society as a too radical turnover (Holzer, 2001).

Yeltsin started the second term of Presidency in 1996 when he defended the position of Russian President. At the same year, Yevgeny Primakov was appointed as a new foreign minister of Russia and served in this function from 1996 to 1998. He became a significant figure in Russian political scene and gained respect for his tough but pragmatic support of Russia's national interests and as an opponent of NATO's expansion into the former Eastern bloc. Although Yevgeny Primakov and his predecessor Andrei Kozyrev both served under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin, each of them performed different foreign policy and represented different ideological lines (Hodáč & Strejček, 2008). According to Hodáč and Strejček, the prior points of Primakov policy were the question of increasing international debt of Russia, so he had to negotiate further loans from international institutions and search for financial guaranties (Hodáč & Strejček, 2008). Foreign policy of Yevgeny Primakov inclined to defend Russia's political interests, establishing cooperation with China and India and strengthening the lost influence in a post-Soviet space. At the same time Primakov openly expressed the disapproval with the NATO expansion towards Russian borders. This fact, among others, supports the opinion that Primakov's political vision was based on realistic concept. In international relations he advocated a concept of multilateralism as an alternative to the US's global hegemony following the end of the Cold War. Yevgeny Primakov later became the Prime Minister of Russia and as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs was replaced by Igor Ivanov (Tsygankov, 2010).

Summarizing policy of Boris Yeltsin, we can say that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union Russian foreign policy shifter considerably. Russia gradually withdrew from its global military and political role to focus its foreign policy on the transformation of the former superpower relationship with the United States and Europe. At the same time there were

NATO expansion and new Europe Union memberships were being made among nations of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, which was perceived by Russia as a security threat. Initial enthusiasm about cooperation with the Western nations, inclusion into the international economic organizations and sudden severing of ties with the post-Soviet states later turned as inappropriate way. Yeltsin's era was marked by the initial enthusiasm, subsequent disillusionment and deep economic crisis in Russia, which culminated in devaluation, occurred in 1998.

1.3.2 PUTIN'S FOREIGN POLICY, 2000 – 2008

After Vladimir Putin took the office of the President of Russian Federation, the functions of Ministry of Foreign affairs have become less influential. The new presidential administration changed the previous rules and took into their own hands greater decision-making powers in matters of the foreign policy. Boris Yeltsin was involved rather in domestic politics, but his successor Vladimir Putin saw his main role in the sphere of creation and execution of the foreign policy (Bogaturov, 2013).

On the field of domestic policy Vladimir Putin seek to establish a clear hierarchy in governance and to return decision-making powers in most important areas to the hands of the central government. In terms of his foreign policy, according to Kuchyková and Šmíd, Putin combines nationalism, realism and slight elements of liberalism (Kuchynkova & Šmíd, 2006). Putin's aim was to strengthen patriotism and social solidarity. An important milestone was an adoption of the Concept of Russian foreign policy of 2000, which set out the security issues and need for economic development for Russia. Furthermore, this concept expressed concern

about the hegemonic position of the United States in the international arena and therefore the need to build a multipolar world. Key points of this concept were an international security, a new structure in international relations, respect for human rights and building economic relations (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2000). Petra Kuchynková emphasizes, that one of the features, which new Russian President Putin brought in foreign policy, was pragmatism and an absence of ideological background in contrast with Atlantism of early 90s (Kuchynkova & Šmíd, 2006). Thus, we can see Putin's turnover from Yeltsin's Atlantism towards foreign policy with elements of Euroasianism, which was briefly discussed above. Sakwa defines Putin's presidency as a new realism in Russian foreign policy (Sakwa, 2008). He uses 7 important aspects to describe the concept of a new realism:

- *Economization* of Russian foreign policy in order to bring country into the world economy,
- *Europeism* – this point is advocated by Putin's assertion that Russia was, is and will be a European country due to its location, culture and attitude to economic integration,
- *Securitization* – this point is related for example, to Chechen campaigns and terrorist attacks in 2001. There is an emphasis on the Russian position in addressing security threats not only inside the country but also in the world,
- *Autonomy* – the point expresses that Russia is independent actor in the world affairs, but not rival to the West,
- *Bilateralism* – the fifth point of the concept emphasizes that Russia prioritizes bilateral relations with the partners to multilateral,
- *Limitation of other players' power* – the point responds to the presence of the United States in Central Asia and other regions,

- *Normalization* – by this term Sakwa means normalization of Russian relations with the West.

Another Putin's achievement was the adoption of the Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation of 2000. The concept formulated Russian foreign-political interests. The document is to a large extent consistent with the above points from Richard Sakwa's publication. Thus, for example, Russia's integration into the world economic community is presented as a fundamental priority for country's policy. The concept of Russian foreign policy from 2000 to some extent responds to the Concept of 1993, mentioned earlier, but modernizing it, updates and reflects the current situation. Among the aims of the Concept from 2000 belongs:

- National security, the protection of the state, and strengthening sovereignty,
- Building of the country's strong position in the world,
- To make Russia a world power,
- Building strong cross-border relations with the post-Soviet states,
- Plan to protect Russian citizens outside Russia (The Foreign Policy Concept of The Russian Federation, 2000).

For the Thesis it is important to note that the Concept of 2000 identifies the Commonwealth of independent states as one of the Russian regional interest.

Although the Concept criticized the US plans to build a missile defense in the East Europe, shortly afterwards there was a rapprochement between the Russian Federation and the United states, caused by events of September, 11. The fight against terrorism in Central Asia became the common goal for both countries, and the United States perceived Russian help as significant. As a result of this, the NATO – Russia Council was created in May, 2002

(Bogaturov, 2013). The result of this cooperation was, among other things, the agreement between Russia and the USA to reduce the amount of strategic weapons.

1.3.3 MEDVEDEV'S FOREIGN POLICY, 2008-2012

In 2008 Dmitry Medvedev replaced Vladimir Putin as President of the Russian Federation.

Shortly after his appointment he declared that his foreign policy target is to conduct balanced foreign policy, defending country's national interests in a non-confrontational manner.

Medvedev further rather vaguely claimed that Russia has to protect its international interests, but at the same time it is important for the country to participate collectively at the

international space (Bovt, 2011). However, even though Medvedev was perceived as a more liberally-oriented politician than his predecessor, he simply could not reverse the trends and

the framework adopted during Putin's rule. Plus the fact that during Medvedev's presidency

Vladimir Putin served as a Prime-Minister of the state, made not very clear for Russian and international observers whether it was Medvedev who took all the decisions in foreign policy.

During his presidency Medvedev issued several strategic documents that defined the direction

of the foreign policy. One of them was the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation adopted in 2008. It was designed to replace the previous strategy, signed by Putin in 2000. At

the very beginning of a new Concept, it is said that it only "develops and amends" the

previous doctrine (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008). The political

course remained continuous. Bovt in his analysis of the foreign policy concept says that

Russia's confidence in its own strength has multiplied since 2000. Thus, during the

presidency of Vladimir Putin, the struggle against monopolar world was almost the leading motive of the Russian foreign policy. Now, according to the strategy, this goal has been almost achieved as the West lost its monopoly over the globalization processes (Bovt, 2011). The Concept further assumes that Russia achieved great power status, and that the country has ambitions to maintain security on the post-Soviet space, except the Baltic States. The region is defined as the most important for the country (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008). At the same time Medvedev's foreign policy concept identifies NATO enlargement toward Russian borders as a threat to country's security, especially possible Ukrainian and Georgian accession to the alliance is regarded as the most significant geopolitical threat.

One of the most important events during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev was Russo-Georgian war that took place in August, 2008. Soon after the war Russia unilaterally recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which led to the diplomatic confrontation with the United States and the European Union. As a reaction to the conflict, President Medvedev announced new aspects of his foreign policy. Among these aspects was a demand for multipolar world, protection of the Russian citizens abroad, and, the most important – proclamation that there are areas, in which Russia has privileged interests (Bovt, 2011). By this declaration Medvedev made it clear that Russia does not accept the activities of the US in areas of Russia's "near abroad" and that Russia does not agree with the current international system governed by the hegemonic policy of the United States. Russia wants to see the post-Soviet space as its integral sphere of interest and is prepared to take appropriate measures if these interests are threatened. Summarizing Medvedev's foreign policy, we can observe a clear disapproval of the Russian Federation with the activities of the United States,

which could have disrupted Russian position on the post-Soviet area, which was unambiguously articulated as country's sphere of interests. At the same time Russia pointed out that it is willing to assert its interests by military methods.

1.3.4 PUTIN'S RETURN AND THE CURRENT SITUATION

In the final part of the first chapter we will consider some aspects of the current foreign policy of Russia. The timeframe of this period is limited from 2012 to mid - 2014 when, as a result of ongoing political crisis in Ukraine, the Crimea was included into the Russian federation as a federal subject. From political point of view this period is associated with the presidency of Vladimir Putin, who was reelected in 2012 for the third time as a head of the Russian state.

According to Dmitri Trenin from Moscow Carnegie Center, the return of Vladimir Putin meant certain modification of the Foreign policy. This was not because of the change of a leader, as during the Medvedev's presidency Putin stayed in the politics serving as a prime-minister, but due to the changes inside and outside Russia (Trenin, 2013). We can connect certain tendencies of Russian foreign policy with the serving of particular presidents. Thus, when Putin started his first presidential term in 2000 he tried to establish strong partnership with the United States and the European Union. However, by the middle of the decade Russia became put itself more in opposition to the US in main international issues. The highest level of this confrontation was reached at famous Munich Security Conference in 2007 when Putin's strongly criticized the United States for undermining global stability by its plans for

the NATO expansion and an attempt for global domination. Subsequently, the war with Georgia in 2008 proved the confrontation line of the Kremlin.

Dmitri Trenin claims that further cooling of Russian relationship with the West was connected with the domestic political situation, specifically with the protest actions that took place in Moscow and other big cities in 2011- 2012. Protestors mainly reacted on the State Duma elections results and demanded their annulment. Russian authorities immediately responded to the protests declaring that the protest movement is a product of the activities of the West, primarily of the United States. The opposition was portrayed as a Western fifth column that wanted to weaken Russia as much as possible. As a result of this certain laws were adopted to neutralize any potential sources of the foreign influence on Russia's political situation.

Among these laws, for example, an act that requires Russian foreign-funded non-governmental organizations to register as foreign agents (Trenin, 2013). The other unfriendly step of Moscow was a law that banned the adoption of Russian orphans by U.S. citizens. This mobilized a portion of the U.S. public against Russia, while anti-American rhetoric in Russia became one of the pillars underpinning official patriotism. This led to increase of criticism of Russia's domestic policy on the West. For their part, the Russian authorities had for the first time since 1991 said that they did not fully share contemporary European values, including those related to human rights, and would steer their own course (Trenin, 2013).

A core document that identifies the foreign policy direction today is the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation; ratified by president Putin in February 2013 (Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2012). The Concept offers an important insight into how Russia views an international environment that has changed considerably since 2008. Understanding a current Foreign policy concept is important for us as may help to

explain Russian activities on the post-Soviet space and country's involvement in Ukrainian political crisis of 2013 – 2014. Comparing the current concept with the previous ones from 2000 and 2008, we can say that there is a strong sense of continuity in the new document as it preserved the key principals set out in 2008 version. Therefore, the current Concept highlights the focus on the central role of the United Nations in international affairs and the overall apparent hierarchy of regional prioritization in which the post-Soviet space remains the top priority. As in previous versions, document notes the power shift to the Asia-Pacific region and the necessity to develop friendly relations with China and India as the most important direction of the foreign policy (Monaghan, 2013).

Despite obvious continuity in the Foreign policy concepts, certain differences can be found. Monaghan in his analysis of the document states that a new Concept gives a greater emphasis on the integration within BRICS and this proves Russian determination to make this institution more comprehensive and cooperative. The other important aspect is that The Eurasian Economic Union now features in the Concept as a priority for Russian foreign policy (Monaghan, 2013). Below are listed further important conceptual assumptions that Andrew Monaghan mentions in his work.

- Western influence declines as there is a transition to a polycentric world, which is turbulent and extremely competitive,
- Greater emphasis on the world's civilization diversity, competition over values and the negative impact of re-ideologization of international affairs,
- Emphasis on the importance of the tools of “soft power” as a completely new aspect in the Foreign policy concept (Monaghan, 2013).

For this thesis we should note that Russian foreign policy today, according to the official documents and practical steps, gives a special priority to the post-Soviet countries and organizations, created after the fall of the Soviet Union under the leading role of Russia.

These organizations will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Since 2013 Russia's foreign policy is marked by a deep ongoing crisis in relations with the Western countries. The crisis is connected to the current political situation in Ukraine and Russia's approach to these events. Situation in Ukraine and Russia's involvement in these events will be discussed from geopolitical perspective in the following chapter.

2. RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE CIS COUNTRIES AND INTEGRATION PROJECTS

The main goal of the Thesis is to evaluate the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with "near abroad". Evaluation is possible only after understanding of what relations Russia has with the CIS countries today, what is the basis of these relations and what political determination Russia invests in these relations. Analysis of these aspects is the aim of the second chapter. The term "CIS countries" is often used in the text, so I deem as necessary to explain it. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization, whose participating countries are former Soviet Republics, formed after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Talking about Russian foreign policy in the previous text, we could conclude that one of the main trends in Russian foreign policy today is to strengthen country's influence and ties in the region and to minimize the role of other great powers. An official approach of Russian authorities confirms that from geopolitical and economic perspective, integration within CIS area is vitally important for the country.

Over the past 20 years Russia has gained significant negative and positive experience in the implementation of integration projects in the post-Soviet space. Introductory part of the chapter will discuss interests of the Russian federation, which affected the integration processes and the relations with the post-Soviet countries. Factors that determine and influence integration will be also explained. The core part of the chapter will be devoted to selected integration institutions – to their establishment, organization and functioning. Except

understanding of Russia's leading role in these processes, it will be important to demonstrate the position of other states towards the projects. In the end of the chapter I will summarize, to what extent the integration within the post-Soviet space is successful and what are the future prospects.

2.1 RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN THE CIS AREA

Interests of the Russian Federation in the CIS region are mainly given by the common history in the Soviet Union. In Russia the area is often called "near abroad" and refers to the newly independent republics which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As we already demonstrated, the "near abroad" appears in various Russian foreign policy documents as an area of a special interest. It would have seem that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and other successor republics should retain good friendly relations, mainly due to common history, similar cultural and political values and significant Russian minority in the post-Soviet countries. Reality however was quite different –the 90s were marked by certain distancing, search for new partners and implementing reforms. On the basis of analysis of official foreign policy documents, Vladimir Pereboev identifies three main stages of Russian policy towards the CIS:

- The first stage, which lasted from 1991 to the beginning of the 2000s, is a period when Russia began to accumulate integration experience. In this time the first integration initiatives appeared within the CIS format – most of them, however, remained unfinished, showing certain unwillingness of the CIS states to develop integration. During the early years of presidency of Boris Yeltsin, the region has not played a big

role in the country's foreign policy. Yeltsin's administration was interested mainly in development of relations with the West, but due to economic and political circumstances, this policy has shortly become a utopian way.

- On the second stage, since the 2000s Russia has focused on the improving of integration with a limited number of states of the CIS region, which demonstrated greater interest in mutual rapprochement within the narrow format subregional associations with the Russian Federation. However certain events, such as increasing economic differentiation of states, global financial crisis and the Russian – Georgian conflict have increased regional fragmentation and blocked the integration.
- The third stage, which occurred around 2010 and lasting till now, we can witness a “new” Russia's attempt to force the projects of economic integration (Pereboev, 2012).

Generally we can say that since the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidency, post – Soviet space gradually has becoming the center of Russia's foreign policy attention.

Russia's interests in the post-Soviet space can be summarized in the following points:

- *Large Russian minority* in the former Soviet republics. Significant minorities are presented mainly in the Central Asian republics. Protection of Russian minorities is declared as a country's priority on the Russian foreign policy concept from 2008 (Monaghan, 2013).
- *Energy interests* and strengthening of dependency on Russian sources. Post-Soviet space for Russia is not only a market for its energy sources but also a transit route to Europe. As noted in the Energy strategy of Russia for the period up to 2030, “Russia has considerable reserves of energy resources, which is a base of the economy and a

tool of conducting internal and foreign policies. The role of the country on the world energy markets determines its geopolitical influence in many ways” (Energy Strategy of Russia for the period up to 2030, 2010).

- Penetration of other major powers in the post-Soviet space can weaken the influence of the Russian Federation in the region – this is linked to *geostrategic interest*. The loss of influence in the near abroad would be strategically disadvantageous for Russia not only in terms of above-mentioned energy interests, but also due to the possible loss of so-called *buffer zone*. Some might argue that China conducts quite active policy in the region, and this Russia accepts so far. Relations between both states are quite friendly at the moment – countries cooperate within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, through which powers can “control” mutual competitive potential. (Pereboev, 2012). Here I would like to mention Medvedev’s speech for Russian television, in which he said: "Russia, just like other countries in the world, has regions where it has its privileged interests. In these regions, there are countries with which we have traditionally had friendly cordial relations, historically special relations. We will work very attentively in these regions and develop these friendly relations with these states, with our close neighbors." Asked if these "priority regions" were those that bordered on Russia he replied: "Certainly the regions bordering [on Russia], but not only them." (Economist, 2008). Russia has a permanent interest in strengthening relations with the CIS republics, as it is important to preserve country’s influence and stability in the region.

In order to achieve its interests, Russia uses several options. Among determining country’s objectives and strategies towards post-Soviet space through official foreign policy documents,

Russia articulates its interests through specialized regional institutions, which will be described in the next chapters.

2.2 FACTORS OF INTEGRATION: POLITICAL, SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC

Disintegration of one geopolitical entity gave an impulse for new geopolitical processes. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the gradual political, economic and socio-cultural disintegration, a new platform for cooperation emerged. In this part factors of integration will be discussed from political, socio-cultural and economic perspective. Political factor of integration within the CIS was probably the less influential, as political integration never happened in the region, even though it was planned. The main reason is that integration on a political level means certain transfer of national sovereignty and transfer of power, which was unreal possibility for all states within the CIS.

After the end of the USSR, initiators of political cooperation were mainly Central Asian republics: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Traditionally in these republics the influence of the President is very strong. An objective of this cooperation should have become a creation of some kind of counterweight to the European Union. This counterweight, according to the initial plans, could have become the Eurasian Union (Nichol, 1995).

A strong proponent of the integration was Kazakhstan's president Nursultan Nazarbayev. In 1994 he suggested the idea of creating a regional block and setting cooperation among

member states in many areas, including the military (Nazarbayev, 1997). However modern-day Kazakhstan insists on purely economic integration in the region, as it seeks to keep sovereignty and independence. Thus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan initially welcomed the opportunity to expand the cooperation across the region, especially because of their weak economies and the assumption that political integration could improve their economic situation. The remain countries of the Central Asia – Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, on the contrary, refused integration projects, especially Turkmenistan, which became isolated country under the presidency of Saparmurat Niyazov. This approach is partially connected with the policy of neutrality declared by Turkmenistan in 1995 (Horák, 2008). Considerable reluctance to integrate of Uzbekistan can be explained by country's unstable foreign policy and relations with the Western countries. Thus, Uzbekistan has benefited from its status of prominent US ally in the war against terrorism (Horák, 2008).

Socio – cultural motivation for integration was connected to the common Soviet history. Over the years ethnic Russians rooted practically all over the Soviet Union. The logical outcome of this situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union was numerous Russian diasporas in many post-Soviet republics. However, already in the 80s ethnic tensions occurred in many regions.

After the end of the Soviet state, socio – cultural factors of cooperation (social contacts, interpersonal relations, large Russian minority in the entire post – Soviet space) have been the platform, where the attempts to integrate were especially intensive. It was given by the fact that ties between families and communities are not easy to sever as in case of state borders (Webber, 1996). However, the new governments in the post-Soviet republics supported the nationalist wave, which was associated, for example, with the diversion from wide use of Russian language towards the local language. This language disintegration led not only to

deepening of language barriers in the area, but also to the creation of multilingual areas with certain conflict potential (Horák, 2008). Speaking about socio-economic factors, I would like to quote Slavomír Horák, who studied integration processes in the post-Soviet space: “After eighteen years since the collapse of the USSR there was a considerable alienation in the sphere of social contacts between individual nations and countries, moreover, there was a strengthening of mutual negative stereotypes. This was reflected in difficult relations between the countries and in less willingness towards integration” (Horák, 2008).

Economic factors of integration are very important as pure economy can become a real motor of cooperation within CIS. In the Soviet times economy of all Union republics was very interrelated and there was de-facto one economic area. Due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, economic ties were severed not only between Moscow and the successor states, but between the republics itself. Each of them started to look for new economic relations and business partners, which resulted in a significant loss of economic exchanges between the countries. Significant disintegration aspect is that post-Soviet states have very unequal economic potential - there is a fundamental issue of the asymmetry between Russia and the other CIS economies. Other problematic aspect is that most economic integration issues in the CIS arise due to the fact that CIS member countries are both partners and, simultaneously, competitors (Pogrebinsky, 2011). Speaking about the future of the CIS space, many analytics see the economic component of integration as central.

We mentioned three aspects of integration within the CIS region: political, social – cultural and economic. There is an obvious will from Russia’s side to enhance the integration, however still there are many obstacles. Dubien notes: „Certain post-Soviet republics are reluctant to expand political or economic relations with Russia or other CIS members,

preferring integration with the European Union or other supranational alliances. One such state is Turkmenistan, with its “neutrality” policy. Ukraine also tends to distance itself from the CIS in many subtle ways, obviously fearing that further integration with Russia might affect its planned rapprochement with the EU. Therefore, the political factors hindering economic integration within the CIS are still out there. There are other technical and economic factors that constrain economic cooperation between the CIS member states. Countries in the region all have different paces of development and are also on different trajectories. Their economic integration will not be easy in these circumstances” (Dubien, 2011).

2.3 COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

On December 8, 1991 the presidents of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine met at Belovezhskaya Pushcha in Belarus and signed an agreement establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Thus, the establishment of the CIS has the same date as the day of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The agreement was endorsed by other former Soviet republics in Alma-Ata on December 21, 1991 (CIS, 2011). In this treaty countries agreed to collaborate in developing common economic space and set up principles of cooperation through coordinated institutions. The goals were to create a common economic space based on a free trade area, and to sustain and develop economic and humanitarian cooperation (Khristenko, 2013). The CIS performs its activities on the basis of the Charter, adopted by the Council of Heads of States on 22 January 1993, which specifies the goals and principles of the Commonwealth,

and rights and obligations of the countries (Libman, 2011). During the functioning of the CIS, number of member states has being changed. This, related, for example, to Turkmenistan, which has not ratified the charter and changed its CIS status standing to associate member as of August 2005 in order to be consistent with its UN-recognized international neutrality policy. Along with Turkmenistan, the charter was not ratified by Ukraine, although the country was a founding state of the CIS. Currently Ukraine has an associate membership in the organization. Georgia stopped being a member of the CIS in August 2009 as a response to Russo – Georgian war in August, 2008 (Khristenko, 2013). Currently there are nine full member states of the CIS. They are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (Khristenko, 2013).

The above-mentioned charter of the CIS also sets the institutional structure of the organization. The Charter Bodies of the CIS are: the Council of the Heads of States, the Council of the Heads of Governments, the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Defense Ministers, the Council of Commanders-in-Chief of Frontier Troops, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, and the Economic Court. The CIS is not a supranational entity and it functions on voluntary basis.

We have discussed the theoretical aspects of functioning of the CIS, its organizational structures and officially declared aims. But what is the real weight of the organization and how successful it is in terms of practical outcomes?

The CIS as an integration entity already exists over 20 years. Since the beginning of its existence, the CIS was viewed more as a tool of the dissolution of a previously existed political entity, than a regional union supporting the closer cooperation of its members. This

assessment was also expressed by Vladimir Putin, who said that the CIS was created for a “civilized divorce” and, the CIS itself cannot help serious economic integration. According to Putin, the CIS should be remained as an important tool for a dialogue between member states, but real economic integration can be achieved through organizations such as Eurasian Economic Community and the Single Economic Area (Libman, 2011). Organization initially declared substantial cooperation and integration of countries within CIS framework, however, already at the first stage, it was not entirely clear, whether the CIS would become a permanent institution or just a temporary measure to reduce the costs of the collapse of the USSR (Hedenskog, et al., 2013).

Despite of ambitious goals that were announced at the beginning of the CIS and later, many political analysts tend to think that *Commonwealth of Independent States is currently just a loose alliance of several countries united by regular meetings of their leadership, several infrastructural projects and humanitarian cooperation* (Libman, 2011). The CIS has become more formal and inactive organization. Although it may seem like the organization is currently inefficient, the CIS remains a platform for cooperation and plays an important role in shaping new integration organizations on its basis (Libman, 2011).

An importance of regular consultations and exchange of opinions on different levels should not be underestimated in foreign policy. Probably the most important practical outcome of the functioning of the CIS is a free trade agreement (CISFTA) signed on 2011 among nine CIS members: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Armenia and Uzbekistan. As of 2013, it has been ratified by Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Armenia, and currently is in force only between those states – other states are intended to join the agreements after all necessary domestic procedures of ratification (Khristenko, 2013). The

aim of the CISFTA is to eliminate gradually tariffs, import quotas and preferences on most goods and services traded between the member states.

2.4 EURASIAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (EAEC), CUSTOMS UNION AND COMMON ECONOMIC SPACE

The Eurasian Economic Community originated from the Commonwealth of Independent States. The EAEC was established in 2000, and at the moment is often treated as a key initiative by the leading former Soviet Union countries. Unlike the CIS, which was established directly on the basis of the collapse of the USSR, the EAEC was created as a regional project set up by independent nations. Also unlike the CIS, which had among economy, strong political – military objectives, the EAEC from the very beginning had a very clear focus on economic agenda (Libman, 2011). *The EAEC was created primarily for an effective promotion of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia and the Common Economic Space.* Among other goals belongs deepening of integration in economic and humanitarian fields (Libman, 2011).

The Eurasian Economic Community is associated with two important integration projects: The Customs Union and Common Economic Space. Let's briefly define it.

The Treaty of the establishment of the Customs Union was signed in 2007 by the Presidents of Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan. In 2010 the Customs Union began its functioning. Establishment of the Customs Union can be regarded as a second stage of economic integration between the post-Soviet countries. At the first stage of integration a Free Trade

Area (CISFTA) is formed, enabling the free movement of goods in the member states (Khristenko, 2013). The Free Trade Area was created under the umbrella of the CIS. The main target of the Customs Union is to remove all customs duties or economic restrictions applied to reciprocal trade within the territory. A lot of technical procedures and measures should have been taken to enable the functioning of the Customs Union. The establishment of the Customs Union has created a single market of 170 million consumers, a unified customs code, a unified customs tariff, unified foreign trade and customs regulations, and a unified legal framework of technical regulations. According to Viktor Kchristenko, who is currently a Chairman of the Board of Eurasian Economic Commission, the benefits of the Customs Union are already being felt (Khristenko, 2013). Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan not only unified in a Customs Union but also created a Common Economic Space (CES).

Common economic space (or Single Economic Space) is a third stage of economic integration between Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan. This means achieving “four freedoms” - the free movement of goods, capital, services and people within the SES. Proper functioning of the SES requires that member states should pursue coordinated policies in key areas of the economy’s sectors: macroeconomics, the financial sector, transportation, energy, trade, industry, agribusiness etc. Agreement on the establishment of the CES came into effect as of January, 2012 (Khristenko, 2013). The supreme regulatory body of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space is the Eurasian Economic Commission. In the Eurasian Economic Commission all the member states have equal number of votes (Khristenko, 2013). Because the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space were the priority projects of the Eurasian Economic Community, it was necessary to define them. Now let’s go back to the structure of the EAEC.

Currently the EAEC includes five members-states: Russia, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan was a member of the EAEC since 2006; however in 2008 the country cancelled its membership in the organization. Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine have a status of observer, which means that the observer has a right to attend public meetings of the EAEC, to obtain public documents and decisions taken by the Community. Taking part in decision – making at the meetings of the Eurasian Economic Community is not allowed for the observers. The supreme body of the organization is the Intestate Council, which composed of the heads of states and the heads of governments of the EAEC countries. At the “heads of states” level the Council regularly meets at least once a year, at the “heads of governments” level – at least two times a year. The aim of these meetings is to determine the key directions of the development of the EAEC. The decisions of the Council are obligatory and have to be implemented by national legislation bodies of the member-states. Among other organs which are included in the institutional framework of the EAEC are:

- Integration Committee
- Secretariat
- Commission of Permanent Representatives,
- Interparliamentary Assembly
- Community’s Court of Justice (Khristenko, 2013).

The EAEC decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority. Every member state has a certain number of votes. Logically Russia has the biggest amount of votes due to its economic capacity comparing with the other members. This fact supports views of certain analytics that due to economic supremacy of Russia, implementation of integration projects can be unilaterally dictated by Moscow (Libman, 2011).

If we summarize the results of functioning of the EAEC, we can say that unlike the CIS, the organization demonstrates more significant potential. There are two the most important achievements: Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have united in a Customs Union and created a Common Economic Space. On October, 2014 during a session of the Interstate Council of the EAEC, the presidents of Russia, Belorussia, and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the termination of the Eurasian Economic Community. The organization will cease to exist on January 2015 in connection with the start of *Eurasian Economic Union*. Four states will participate in the Union: Russia, Belorussia, Kazakhstan and Armenia. Kyrgyzstan has also expressed interest in joining the organization and plans to take the necessary steps. After signing the agreement establishing the Eurasian Economic Union, President Putin said, "Today we are creating a powerful, attractive center of economic development, a big regional market that unites more than 170 million people." (MacFarquhar, 2014). The head of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev added that the Eurasian Union will be a purely economic organization, not a political block (MacFarquhar, 2014). Establishment of economic integration projects show that Russia currently emphasizes the economic dimension of the cooperation.

2.5 COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANIZATION (CSTO)

The CSTO grew out of the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The CIS Collective Security Treaty was signed in 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 1993 Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belorussia entered the Organization. The Treaty took effect in 1994. Five years later, all states except

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan agreed to renew the treaty for five more years, and in 2002 those six formally agreed to create the Collective Security Treaty Organization as a military alliance. Current member states of the CSTO are Armenia, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The Republic of Serbia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have a status of observer. The Organization's supreme ruling body is the CSTO Council, comprised of the leaders of the six member states (CSTO, n.d.).

The purpose of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is to strengthen peace and international and regional security and to ensure collective protection of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states, in the attainment of which member states should give priority to political means. The CSTO has established joint rapid-deployment forces, is developing a united air defense, promotes equipment collaboration, and has anti-drug and counterterrorism policies (CSTO, n.d.).

The Russia-led CSTO is often regarded as tool of promoting Russia's interests in the region. Far from being a traditionally military alliance, which only defends members from aggression, the CSTO is supposed to build further connections between the member states on issues of military, economic, political security as well as tackle region-wide problems. The CSTO contingents are mandated to provide collective defense against an outside aggressor force (Bodner, 2014).

The Collective Security Treaty Organization is the military organization Russia can potentially use in order to maintain its influence in the post-Soviet states. Out of all the former Soviet states, Russia is the most militarily and economically powerful and these factors do give it primacy in the CSTO. It is important to note that except regular common military

exercises, the *CSTO has never taken part in any military conflict as a united block* (Gorodetsky, 2004). However, in future this possibility cannot be excluded as according to some military analysts, Russia's military has moved to make the CSTO a more coherent organization (Bodner, 2014). This is supported by the fact that in September 2014 Russian President Vladimir Putin asked Russian lawmakers to ratify an agreement to strengthen the CSTO's unified command structure, augmenting it with new administrative and information protection agencies. Russia is also meanwhile strengthening its military infrastructure in CSTO member states under the guise of protecting them from a potential threat from NATO (Bodner, 2014).

In conclusion we can say that with a regard to the current situation in the World, NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan and Russia's interests in the region, *Moscow will probably seek to make the Common Security Treaty Organization a more coherent organization*. The CSTO is definitely a Russia-dominated organization and can be used as a tool of promoting its interests in the region. One of these interests is to minimize the presence of the United States and China on the post-Soviet space. To fulfill this national interest Russia won the right to veto the establishment of new foreign military bases in the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Bodner, 2014).

2.6 EVALUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF INTEGRATION

In the last part of the chapter I will summarize the findings from the analysis of Russia's relations with the CIS countries and integration aspects.

Russian Federation holds a unique position in the Euro-Pacific Area, bordering various separate regions in the former Soviet Space, i.e. Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine), the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia plus disconnected Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Despite many differences country-to-country, the states share many common economic, political and cultural characteristics and have a generation of people that remember the common state (Kramer, 2008).

Russia's foreign policy concepts and practical steps towards integration show that *the CIS should remain Russian Federation's significant foreign policy priority*. Relations between Russia and the independent states emerged on the breakup of the Soviet Union and due to geographical proximity, ethnic and cultural commonality, close historical links will likely to maintain its particular character. However, the exclusiveness in relations between Russia and the former Soviet republics will continue to diminish. (Trenin, 2013). The region is vitally important for Russia not because of its imperial ambitions or gathering the territories around Moscow, but pragmatic interests and needs related primarily to economy and security and geopolitical competition with the USA, China and European Union.

The political reintegration of the CIS appears unreal and will not become a reality in any form. Russia's closest partners – Belorussia and Kazakhstan, are not ready to give up their independence. Even the partial transfer of sovereignty to a supranational body and the distribution of shares in the common government appear the most complicated aspects of the integration (Dragneva & Wolczuk , 2012). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that The Eurasian Union will become a federation or a super-state. On the other hand, the Eurasian Union as a confederation in which the different participants have unequal roles but equal rights is

unlikely to suit Russia, which is by far the biggest partner demographically, politically and militarily (Trenin, 2013). Despite political reintegration is utopian, further political rapprochement with Russia's closest partners within the CIS is required and is already underway – Astana, Minsk and Moscow are intensively developing common interests and policy coordination. Economic integration between the countries is on track, which is proved by practical steps such as the existence of Customs Union and Common Economic Space. Kazakhstan and Belorussia entered the Russian market, which is ten to fifteen times larger than either's national market. Russia also receives significant benefits through access to assets in partner's countries' territory (Trenin, 2013). Economic integration currently covers Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan. After 2015 Armenia will participate in the Eurasian Economic Union. Even though Ukrainian involvement in integration projects was highly desirable for Moscow, it remains almost impossible due to the political events in Ukraine, which will be discussed in the third chapter of this work.

Integration on security issues will likely to proceed through the Common Security Treaty Organization. Latest development of the Organization shows that Moscow tries to transform the CSTO into the workable security organization (Gorodetsky, 2004).

According to Bordachev and Skriba, current Russia's policy towards the CIS can be summarized in the following points:

- The creation of new institutions that give proper weight to Russian interests and make Russia's partners respect concluded agreements.
- An emphasis on the economic dimension of cooperation.

- Adherence to the principle of equality. In the Eurasian Economic Commission – the supreme regulatory body of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space – all the member states have equal number of votes. There is no guarantee though that with the deepening of integration this principle will not be altered.
- Preserving subsidies and other economic and commercial preferences for the countries participating in Eurasian integration, in exchange for reciprocal economic, diplomatic or military concessions.
- Placing economic pressure on states that adopted an anti-Russian stance (‘energy wars’ with Ukraine in 2008-2009, limited trade with Georgia from 2008-2013) or that refused to participate in Eurasian integration (trade limitations for Ukraine in 2013, Kyrgyzstan in 2009). Prices for Russian resources to these countries have been increased to market level, while their access to the Russian market was limited and tightened (Bordachev & Skriba, 2014).

3. UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND ITS EFFECT ON RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE CIS COUNTRIES

The third chapter is a key part of this work. During working on this chapter I relied on the findings from the two previous parts. There are many different opinions about the future of integration in the post – Soviet region, both optimistic and pessimistic. In the following chapter we will try to find out what effect the ongoing Ukrainian crisis may have on Russia's relations with the CIS countries, especially with Belarus and Kazakhstan. Will this political crisis be an obstacle for further integration or it will not have a significant effect?

The third chapter has the following structure. Firstly, we will have a look on the origins of the conflict and its main reasons. It is important to discuss the role of Russia in the conflict as well as the geopolitical component of the crisis. We will evaluate the reactions of some post-Soviet countries on Russia's policies during the crisis. Finally, the impact of Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with the CIS countries will be derived from analysis.

3.1 ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS

The situation in Ukraine is constantly evolving. The following subchapter provides a description of the key events of Ukraine crisis and its background. The timeframe of events we deal with is November 2013 – mid-2014.

The crisis began when Ukrainian government decree suddenly suspended political and economic association agreement with the European Union that Kiev had been due to sign in

the fall of 2013. This was not only a limited trade agreement, but also a political agreement that committed Ukraine to follow certain European values and principles. Ukrainian government announced that decision to drop the agreement was caused by significant decrease in Ukrainian industrial production and worsening relations with CIS, which are not compensated by European market. Previously Russia, that opposed Ukrainian associated agreement with the EU, changed its customs regulations on imports by Ukraine stopping all goods coming from the country. This action was viewed as a beginning of a trade war against Ukraine to prevent it from signing a trade agreement (Interfax, 2013). Later in December 2013 Viktor Yanukovich and Vladimir Putin signed an agreement according which Russia would buy a \$15 billion of Ukrainian Eurobonds and that the cost of Russian natural gas supplied to Ukraine would be lower (Trenin, 2014). The decision not to sign the association agreement with the EU and the acceptance of generous economic package from Putin's Russia led to mass protests against President Yanukovich in central Kiev and other regions across the country. Ukraine's internal division of population should be taken into account while speaking about nature of the conflict: while Eastern Ukraine is predominantly Russia-oriented with Russian being the native language of a major part of the population, people from Western Ukraine traditionally insisted on a Ukrainian national identity that was inimical for Russia and more oriented towards the European Union (Trenin, 2014). Mass protests became a catalyst for the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine and soon developed into a turmoil during which hundreds were injured and more than 100 people killed. Protesters had different political orientation. Most of them were ordinary people who suffered from poverty and were angry because of high level of widespread corruption in the country. Those people viewed the association agreement as a way out of this undignified situation, and the abrupt

and unexpected closure of that door provoked a painful and powerful shock. However the crucial role in violent phase of protests belonged to different nationalist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic groups hailing mainly from western Ukraine, such as the “Right Sector” and “Svoboda” parties, who joined essentially civic protests. (Economist, 2014). During the protests EU officials and US representatives expressed support and sympathies for the protesters and had meetings with opposition leaders. According to Director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, Dmitri Trenin, the United States had long supported pro-Western movements in Ukraine for ideological and geopolitical reasons and took a mistrustful position on Kremlin attempts at Eurasian integration. For Washington the idea of Ukraine becoming part of the Russian sphere of influence was unacceptable, thus the United States actively worked on helping pro-Western opposition leaders hold on to power in Kiev (Trenin, 2014).

February 2013 brought the escalation of violence in Kiev. A capable fighting force was built around a nationalist organization “Right Sector”. Yanukovich had to open talks with the opposition leaders. The negotiations ended on February, 21, 2014 when President Yanukovich and opposition leaders signed an agreement on the settlement of crisis in Ukraine. The agreement meant the President’s de-facto capitulation, which was to be delayed by a few months. The foreign ministers of EU member states France, Germany and Poland co-signed an agreement as witnesses. However, the deal was rejected by radical members of opposition and the “Right Sector” party who demanded the president’s immediate resignation. Later this day, on February, 21 Yanukovich fled from Kiev. The following day, February, 22 Ukrainian Parliament voted to remove Yanukovich from office on the grounds that he was unable to fulfill his duties (Trenin, 2014). However, the legislative removal of Yanukovich lacked the number of votes required by Ukrainian constitution.

During the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich from 2010 to 2014, Ukraine itself was maneuvering between Russia and the European Union, always in search of a better deal.

Viktor Yanukovich, due to domestic political reasons, raised hopes for cooperation with the European Union; however it was clear that closer economic cooperation with the EU was not able to compensate the losses of Ukrainian economy and industry would have due to severing ties with Russia, at least at short-time perspective. Because of the presidential elections originally in early 2015, Yanukovich did not want to risk the economic situation in the country. At the same time Yanukovich was under pressure from Russian side. This pressure was first exercised by implementation of trade barriers on Ukrainian goods, and then by generous aid package given under condition that Ukraine would make a “right” choice. As a result of these pressuring factors, Yanukovich suddenly suspended a political and economic association agreement with the EU (Trenin, 2014).

Soon after Yanukovich overthrow, Crimea’s pro-Russian elements took control over the local government, parliament and infrastructure of peninsula. Later pro-Russian forces held a referendum on political status of peninsula and pursued a campaign in favor of Crimea’s reunification with Russia. The referendum asked the people of Crimea whether they wanted to join Russia as a federal subject, or if they wanted to restore the 1992 Crimean constitution and Crimea's status as a part of Ukraine. Referendum showed that absolute majority of voters supported joining Russia. Following the referendum, Crimea and Sevastopol city declared independence and requested to join Russian federation. Russia officially recognized the results of referendum and the sovereignty of Crimea. All the European Union member states and the United States regarded the referendum as illegitimate claiming that its outcomes would not be recognized (Marxsen, 2014).

On March, 18, a treaty was signed in Moscow to incorporate Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into Russia in the form of two federal subjects. Currently Ukraine and the majority of the international community consider Crimea and Sevastopol as administrative divisions of Ukraine, whereas Russia and some other countries consider both to be under a Russian federal district (Marxsen, 2014).

In connection with the recent developments in Ukraine I would like to mention two important aspects, which might seem to be unrelated to each other, however should be taken into account when speaking about the nature of Ukraine crisis. First aspect is that *Ukraine is a deeply divided country, for historical and linguistic reasons and over current policy*. There is no absolute boundary, which separates the generally pro-Western Ukrainian-speakers, who tend to vote for closer ties with the European Union, from the more pro-Russian speakers in the East of the country, who gave support for Viktor Yanukovich. Opinion about Ukrainian membership in the EU is divided and the popularity of the EU tends to decrease among easterners and Russian-speakers. The results of an International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) survey, published in December, 2013 shows that 37 % of Ukrainians were in favor of joining the EU while 33% were in favor of joining the Russian-led Customs Union. But regional differences are much starker. In the west of Ukraine 73% of people express support for the EU and only 5% - for the Customs Union. The situation in the South was almost reversed with 62% for the EU and 14% for the Customs Union. The east of Ukraine showed results 46% versus 20%. Ukrainian opinion of all political leaders was fairly negative in the IFES poll, having little or no confidence in even new government (Smith & Harari, 2014). Numbers shown above enable us to say that *Ukrainians are divided on European Union but mostly disappointed with their leaders*.

The second aspect relates to the Ukrainian state of economy. Country's economy in 2012, 2013 was very weak with growth of 0, 2% and 0, 0% respectively. Large budget and current account deficits remain a key problem. The economy experiences structural problems as it is dependent on heavy industries. The industrial capitals stock is old and deteriorating, indicating greater levels of investments needed. Moreover, the economic situation differs in terms of internal regions. The economy of the highly-populated east of the country, particularly around Donetsk, has a high concentration of industry, while the West is more agriculture-based. National growth was traditionally driven by Kiev and the industrial regions of the East (Smith & Harari, 2014).

3.2 RUSSIA'S POLICIES

What were the dramatic developments in Ukraine from Moscow's perspective and why there was such a reaction? Dmitri Trenin states: "From a Russian perspective, Ukraine had for two decades been a weak, fragile, and often unreliable state, chronically creating problems for Russian energy giant Gazprom's transit to Europe. However, to most Russians, the country was anything but foreign. Now, Ukraine was suddenly turning into a country led by a coalition of pro-Western elites in Kiev and anti-Russian western Ukrainian nationalists. This shift, in the Kremlin's eyes, carried a dual danger of Kiev clamping down on the Russian language, culture and identity inside Ukraine and of the country itself joining NATO in short order. Putin reacted immediately by apparently putting in motion contingency plans that

Moscow had drafted for the eventuality of Kiev seeking membership in the Atlantic alliance” (Trenin, 2014).

According to Trenin, after the beginning of the Crisis, Moscow followed 2 aims. The first was to make Crimea off limits to the new post-Yanukovych authorities in Kiev. This was executed relatively fast by encouraging referendum on the peninsula and then by incorporation Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to Russia. The second objective was to achieve a federal settlement in Ukraine, which would complete the execution of power by Kiev and domination of the Western Ukraine. This would made any movements towards NATO membership structurally very difficult or even impossible (Trenin, 2014).

In connection with Crimean crisis, it is necessary to outline the legal side of Russia’s policies towards Ukraine. As was already mentioned Western community accused Russia of the illegal intervention on Crimea and of its annexation. First of all, legal obligations between Russia and Ukraine with regard on territorial integrity are contained in a number of bi- and multilateral agreements. The principal of territorial integrity is expressed in Article 2 of United Nations Charta, and in the Helsinki Final Act. The 1994 Budapest memorandum was concluded to provide Ukraine security assurances for agreeing to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon state. For giving up Soviet nuclear-weapons, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia committed to respect the Independence and Sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine. In addition to this the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and Russia again affirmed the inviolability of the borders between both states and provided that both parties agreed that they will build their mutual relations on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for their sovereign equality, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, peaceful

resolution of disputes, non-use of force or the threat of force, including economic and other means of pressure (Marxsen, 2014). With a reference on these documents, majority of Western countries stated about Russia's intervention and aggression in Crimea.

Russia claims that there are two international legal concepts that justify legality of the country's actions: the protection of nationals abroad and intervention upon invitation.

According to the chairwoman of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko, intervention is justified in order to protect the Russian minority that lives on Ukrainian territory.

Matviyenko justified the necessity of military action under reference to "a real threat to the life and security of Russian citizens living in Ukraine. There is a threat to our military in Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet, and I think that Russia should not be a bystander"

(Marxsen, 2014). However, Russia did not provide any concrete evidence, that violations against Russian minority took place in Ukraine (Marxsen, 2014). The aim to protect Russian citizens as expressed by the Russian Council's chairwoman is therefore irrelevant in terms of international law. Thus, the absence of any severe human rights violations against the Russian-speaking population gives no justification for an intervention for humanitarian reasons (Marxsen, 2014).

In case of principle of the intervention under invitation, here Russia proclaimed that after Yanukovich fled the country he had issued a letter in which he invited Russia to intervene on Ukraine territory as a countermeasure against what Russia perceives as the takeover by nationalist and anti-Semitic Maidan protesters. Russia regarded Yanukovich's removal from office was not in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution and therefore Viktor Yanukovich should have been regarded as the legitimate President of Ukraine who is in the position to invite foreign troops to intervene. However the fact that Yanukovich fled the

country and lost all internal support, especially by police and military forces made him unentitled under international law to invite Russia to intervene (Marxsen, 2014). Therefore, the presence of Russian troops in Crimea cannot be justified by the Yanukovych's invitation to intervene and can be regarded as unlawful use of force and a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

3.3 GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Previously we have mentioned Russia's strategic interests in the CIS area. One of the core interests is to ensure country's security by preventing further NATO enlargement in the CIS region.

We also outlined that Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. Erupted political crisis of 2013-2014 seriously affected not only Russian-Ukrainian relations, but also Russia's relations with the West. The crisis opened a new period of intensive rivalry, even confrontation between the former Cold War adversaries. According to many experts, the Ukraine crisis is preceded by competition between the EU and Russian for the future geopolitical and economic orientation of Ukraine. Therefore, it is important to look at the events in Ukraine through the optics of geopolitics, which is still relevant in the international relations. Trenin says that "the roots of the crisis lie in the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, which ended the prospect of enlargement of the NATO for both Georgia and Ukraine" (Trenin, 2014). After these events, the EU and Russia drew different conclusions. The European Union through the Eastern Partnership program intended to associate Ukraine, along with five other former Soviet states. Russia, for its part, tried to

involve Ukraine into a Russian-led community in Eurasia that would give Russia certain economic benefits and a better condition with regard to the country's big continental neighbors – the EU to the west and China to the east (Trenin, 2014).

Currently the western assessments on the Kremlin's political course towards Ukraine are predominantly critical. On the West, Vladimir Putin's current policies are portrayed as a solid evidence of Russia's imperialistic ambitions and as a desire to restore the former Soviet Empire. However I suppose it is important to look at the events and their consequences from the Russia's side. To do this I will refer to the article written by John J. Mearsheimer – famous American professor of political science. In the article "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault" Mearsheimer states that the United States and their European allies share the responsibility for the crisis. Russia by taking Crimea responded to the Western larger strategy to move Ukraine out of the Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West, which would threaten Russia's core strategic interests in the region (Mearsheimer, 2014). Mearsheimer offers the analysis of the situation which strongly differs from the official position of the USA and the EU. He covers history of the conflict and tries to explain Russia's reaction from geopolitical perspective. Along with this, Mearsheimer does not contest the illegality of Russia's actions towards Crimea from the perspective of international law. The points below summarize Mearsheimer's thoughts:

- The taproot of the crisis is NATO enlargement eastward which was strongly opposed by Russia since the mid 90-s.
- The crisis shows that realism in international relations remains relevant.

- Among from NATO's massive expansion since the end 1990 – s, the block conducted bombing campaign against civilians in Serbia. The campaign was intensely opposed by Russia and brought serious concerns about real NATO's intentions and its "peaceful" nature.
- Despite many concerns, regularly articulated by Russia – the block did not search for acceptable compromise and continued work on further expansion – in 2008 the alliance considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine. Even though the formal process leading to admission did not begin, the declarations from NATO's officials: "These countries will become members of NATO" were painful for Russia.
- Russia's war with Georgia was a clear signal from Moscow that the country is determined to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. However this signal was ignored by NATO and Western community.
- "The West's triple package of policies - NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion" lead to the crisis, which came in November, 2013.
- The full extent of U.S. involvement remains unclear, but it is obvious that Washington backed the coup. American politicians participated in antigovernment demonstrations and advocated the regime change. No wonder that Russian elites of all persuasions thought the West played a role in Yanukovich's ouster.
- Putin's hard actions during the Ukraine crisis should be easy to comprehend - no Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance near country's home territory (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Not only Mearsheimer criticized NATO expansion towards Russia's borders. American diplomat and a main strategist of the Soviet Union's containment during the Cold War George

F. Kennan predicted in 1998 that NATO expansion towards the East was a strategic mistake and would bring a harsh reaction from Russia. When Kennan was asked to comment NATO plans to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1998, he responded:” I think it is the beginning of a new cold war. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. It shows so little understanding of Russian history and Soviet history. Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia (Warren, 2014).

3.4 REACTION OF THE CIS STATES ON THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

The conflict in Ukraine has implications for the post-Soviet regions. However it will be possible to assess concrete practical impact of the crisis only after certain period of time. Currently we can only make a prognosis on the basis of reactions of certain CIS countries on Ukraine events and Russia’s policies.

CIS countries do not have a coordinated view on foreign policy, as it absences any supranational body that deals with the common foreign policy. Therefore there is no any united opinion on the Ukraine crisis. Reaction of the most members of the Commonwealth of Independent States can be described as neutral or in some cases unambiguous. Probably the most anti-Kremlin stance on Ukraine events was taken by Kyrgyzstan. Country’s foreign ministry released a statement condemning “all acts aimed at destabilizing the situation in Ukraine”. Kyrgyzstan, contrary to Russia’s official position, refused to recognize Viktor Yanukovich as a President of Ukraine after his escape from the country. Even though

Kyrgyzstan's position was anti-Russian, in 23 December the country signed a Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union accession. The treaty is expected to come in force by May 2015. This fact can be interpreted as that Ukraine crisis does not have an impact on Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan and the country's desire to participate in Eurasian Union (Farber, 2014). Along with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan adopted a negative stance on Russia's policies in Ukraine and supported territorial integrity of the country.

Even though Azerbaijan did not adopt a formal position on the Ukraine crisis, the government of the country expressed concerns over the future of Crimean Tatars and about the way the referendum was organized (Farber, 2014).

Armenia was a country who supported Russia's policy in Crimea. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan stated that referendum was justified and serves as model for the realization of self-determination. Armenia also was among the states which rejected the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 on "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" (Farber, 2014).

Summarizing, we can say that most members of the CIS remained neutral or ambiguous towards the Ukraine events. Their official positions have been largely shaped by the need to keep their various strategic partnerships with Russia (Farber, 2014).

On the following text I will mainly focus on the reactions of Belarus and Kazakhstan during the Ukraine crisis as these countries are the main Russia's partners in the integration projects. Reactions of these states were far more complex. The future of integration within the CIS is very dependent on the way how Belarus and Kazakhstan perceived the crisis and what conclusions they would draw. For Moscow it was especially important to gain support for Russia's policies in Ukraine from its closest allies, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

3.4.1 POSITION OF BELARUS

Belarussian authorities observed developments in Ukraine very closely from the beginning of confrontation in Kiev. This interest is because of the two factors: the close neighborhood with Ukraine and the fact that Ukraine's choice is an important factor of the future scenarios of Eurasian integration (Melyantsou, 2014).

Belarus position during the crisis can be described as balancing the European Union and Russia. However maneuvering policy of Belarus is not something new as it was characteristic for the country even before the Ukraine crisis.

First of all, let's outline how the Ukrainian crisis was seen by the Belarussian leadership. A question, whether something similar can happen in Belarus made concerns to Belarussian politicians. If we follow all the official reactions on Ukrainian events, we see that often they are very conflicting. Thus, commenting protests in Kiev, Belarussian President Lukashenko was negative about Euromaidan, as a phenomenon of instability and disturbance, which undermines the fundamentals of statehood. He stated on 21 January 2014: "Events in Ukraine are a nightmare, a disaster. No revolutions, please. Do we need a massacre such as they have in Ukraine? Come on, we are civilize people" (Lukashenko, 2014). According to Belarussian President, top level corruption caused the Ukraine disturbances: "Ukraine is such a lovely country with lovely people. But the so-called open market has brought this mess, with clans dividing the country. This is what you get as a result. It is a bad sign when you see the President's children starting their own businesses. It is a bad sign when you see wives and girlfriends with crowns on" (Lukashenko, 2014). This means that Lukashenko expressed solidarity with the protesters, but at the same time stressed stability and social justice in

Belarus. He assured Belarussians that Ukraine scenario is impossible in the country: “We did not steal anything, nor have we acquired any luxuries at the expense of others. In Ukraine, they drove people to a terrible state, and people decided: it could not get any worse than this anyways” (Smok, 2014). Lukashenko stressed that Belarus has very capable armed forces and police will ensure order and prevent anarchy and a crisis like in Ukraine (Smok, 2014). The statements show that President Lukashenko will make every effort to ensure that Euromaidan will never happen under his rule. Lukashenko also criticized the escape of Yanukovich and recognized a new Kiev’s government with a reference to the former President’s self-elimination (Lukashenko, 2014).

In terms of Belarussian stance on Crimea, here again we can witness Lukashenko’s maneuvering policy. Belarussian leadership publicly stressed the importance of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and did not express support for Putin’s actions in Crimea. Minsk also recognized new Kiev’s authorities. However, at the United Nations Belarus opposed the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on the territorial integrity of Ukraine declaring Crimea’s recent secession vote invalid (Trenin, 2014). On 23 March Lukashenko stated that “de-facto, Crimea is a part of the Russian Federation today. One can accept it or reject it, but nothing changes” (Melyantsou, 2014). Therefore, we can see that even though Minsk verbally supported Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and determination to remain in contact with the new Ukrainian government, Belarus was among the few states supporting Russia in the United Nations and voting for international legitimization of Russia’s actions in Crimea. Generally Belarus’ reactions were confusingly ambiguous in its stance on the Ukrainian crisis, and political analysts are divided on Lukashenko’s endgame.

According to Melyantsou, during the Ukraine conflict Lukashenko followed three aims:

- To confirm Belorussia's status as Russia's closest ally without direct involvement in the conflict.
- To maintain relations with Ukraine as an important economic partner with a significant volume of trade and with close intercultural ties.
- To search for gains and to stress the country's independent status of player capable of its own role and sharing a goal with Europeans to prevent further destabilization in the region (Melyantsou, 2014).

Speaking about position of Belarus on Ukraine crisis, we should mention that Belorussian economy and energy sphere is highly dependent on Russia. This fact is one of the reasons why Lukashenko follows Russia's general course towards the West. The dependency can be seen both in amount of loans and subsidies received from Russia and in the structure of Belorussian balance of trade: in 2011 more than 35 % of county's exports went to Russia, while about 60 % of its imports came from the Russian market (Farber, 2014).

The crisis in Ukraine decreased the trust in Belarus-Russian relations, which can be seen in Lukashenko's statements made during the crisis in Ukraine, in which he strengthens the sovereignty of the country. However, so far Belorussian concerns about Russia's policies did not have any negative implications in terms of Eurasian integration, on the contrary, in May 2014 along with Russia and Kazakhstan, Belarus signed a Treaty on establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union – a project highly prioritized by Moscow. However, it is too early to judge, how effective will be the functioning of the Eurasian Union, taking into account Lukashenko's ability to conduct maneuvering and bargaining policies.

3.4.2 POSITION OF KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan is Moscow's strategic partner. Both countries have close trade links and both are trying to develop a common market. Countries effectively collaborate in a number of fields.

After events in Crimea and consequent Russia's incorporation of the peninsula, many analysts were quick to suggest that the crisis has implications for Kazakhstan – a country with a significant number of ethnic Russians and one of the main Russia's allies. The reason for such suggestions was a fact that Russia intervened in Crimea to protect ethnic Russians, thus the large ethnic Russian community in Kazakhstan could serve as a tool to legitimize intervention here. However assumptions that Ukrainian scenario can play out in Kazakhstan have important counter arguments:

- Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev pursued a balanced multi-vector foreign policy. The country cooperated with Russia, the United States, the European Union and China. Kazakhstan is a member of a Collective Security Treaty Organization, which indicates that the country is not even near NATO. Kazakhstan is also a member of a Customs Union and the Eurasian Community, which means that it has strong economic ties with Russia.
- According to a survey, the majority of Russians living in Kazakhstan is comfortable with their living conditions and do not feel discriminated by Kazakh population. Unlike as it was with Crimea in Ukraine, Kazakhstan does not have autonomous regions, ethnic Russians live all around Kazakhstan, the majority of them live in the North and the East (Kirbassov, 2014).

To support the assumption that Kazakhstan will not face with a military conflict with Russia, we should understand two Russia's recent military actions: Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Russia intervened in Georgia and Ukraine after the new leadership came to power through the revolutions accompanied by the strong pro-Western rhetoric. After the revolutions new governments in those countries brought fundamental changes in the foreign policies, especially in the security sphere – both Ukraine and Georgia intended to join NATO, which was perceived by Russia as a significant threat to its security, given that both countries are bordering Russia. That means that as long as Kazakhstan pursues balanced multi-vectored foreign policy, the possibility of a conflict with Russia remains low (Kirbassov, 2014).

Kazakhstan is linked institutionally to Russia in economic and strategic spheres. From the Russia's perspective, Kazakhstan is stable and "safe" as long as it follows the current political course which is guaranteed by its founding President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who rules the country since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the power transition, which may happen in the next few years due to the age of Nazarbayev, could become a very sensitive issue for Russia (Trenin, 2014).

Astana adopted a cautious neutral position when discussing events in Ukraine. The same as in case of Belarus, statements of Kazakhstan leaderships are not always unambiguous. Thus, President Nazarbayev expressed support to Vladimir Putin saying that he understands Russia's position on protection of the rights of national minorities in Ukraine and its security interests. At the same time Nazarbayev stressed the need to peaceful regulation of the crisis in Ukraine on the basis of preservation of Ukraine's sovereignty with the norms of international law. Unlike Belarus, Kazakhstan abstained in the United Nations General Assembly vote on Crimea. Astana did not officially supported Russia's activities in Ukraine and its neutral

official statements show that the country is rather ambivalent regarding the Ukrainian crisis. However it would not be correct to say that Russia's response to Ukraine revolution does not trouble Kazakhstan at all. Nazarbayev said after Crimean events: "Ukraine's fate awaits Kazakhstan in the case of an overreach on the issue of language" (Malashenko, 2014). In other words Kazakhstan leader understands that neglect of the Russian language in the country with a significant Russia's majority may become a threat to Kazakhstan stability and even sovereignty. Until very recently Kazakhstan had pursued quite aggressive policy of having Kazakh displace Russian as the language of government and had refused to give Russian official status even though a significant portion of the country's population speaks it. But now in the wake of Crimea, President Nazarbayev slowed down if not entirely stopped his efforts to require all officials in the country to speak the national language (Malashenko, 2014). This fact can be viewed as a consequence of the Ukraine Crisis on Kazakhstan's domestic policy.

During the events in Ukraine, Kazakhstan followed the tradition of a multi-vector foreign policy, remaining in contact with all sides of the conflict – with Russia, Ukraine, the European Union and with the United States. Astana did not express an open support for neither side, staying neutral or irresolute. *However, Russia's policy in Ukraine and Crimea gave Kazakhs cause for concerns and betrayed fissures in Russo-Kazakh relations due to Moscow's violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of one of the post-Soviet country.* The lesson to be learned by both Belarus and Kazakhstan is that Russia is ready and able to defend its interests by tough measures even in "brotherly nations".

3.5 PROSPECTS OF INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINE CRISIS

What impact the crisis in Ukraine will have on the Eurasian integration and especially on its the most ambitious project, the Eurasian Union? Discussing integration projects on the post-Soviet area in the second chapter, we concluded that development integration in the region is Russia's foreign policy priority. At present, the integration between some post-Soviet countries should be continued with the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union on January 1, 2015. According to Russian political scientist, Gleb Pavlovsky, the Eurasian Union is a very important project for Putin. He sees it not only as a trading block but also as a counterbalance to China, the European Union and the United States (Pavlovsky, 2013).

Immediately after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis and then after Russia's incorporation of Crimea, there were a lot of predictions that due to these circumstances the project of the Eurasian Union will be buried or postponed due to the fears of Belarus and Kazakhstan about Russia's tough policy in Ukraine. But despite damage to Russia's reputation caused by the crisis in Crimea, Moscow consistently pushed forward the project of regional integration. In May 2014 after several rounds of difficult negotiations, the Eurasian Union founding Treaty was signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The treaty will come into force since January 1, 2015. The signing of the Treaty proves that the member states are ready to integrate with Russia even despite of the Ukrainian events. Moreover, two other post-Soviet states, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan also signed a treaty of accession to the Eurasian Union in 2014 (FAYOS, 2014). This could be viewed as positive sign for the future of integration. However, it is important to note that the creation of the Eurasian Union itself does not immediately

guarantee its bright future, especially with a regard to unpredictable situation in Ukraine. The overall construction of the Eurasian Union will take over one or two decades, as the member states have to coordinate and integrate policies of transport, industry, agriculture, finance, energy, etc. Among ambitious plans within the Eurasian Union is an establishment of common hydrocarbons market by 2025 and common electricity market by 2016 (FAYOS, 2014). The success of these plans is uncertain and will be depend on the attitude of the member states.

Even though crisis in Ukraine did not become an obstacle to the launch of the Eurasian Union, it had an impact on Belarus's and Kazakhstan's attitude towards Russia's led integration. Both countries expressed concerns over possible threat to their national sovereignty.

Reactions of Belarus and Kazakhstan on Ukraine crisis show that former Soviet republics are uncomfortable with any breach of national sovereignty. Therefore, president Nazarbayev stressed that Eurasian Union is purely economic organization with no political nature. Furthermore, the founding treaty was edited on the Kazakhstan's request: common citizenship, common foreign policy, border management and combating illegal migration had been deleted from the text of the treaty (FAYOS, 2014). This request could be explained by Kazakhstan's concerns over Russia's policy in Ukraine and Crimea. Nazarbayev also remarked that "Kazakhstan always reserves the right to leave the Eurasian Economic Union if it poses a threat to the country's independence" (Malashenko, 2014). Such statement clearly demonstrates that Astana vies the Eurasian Union exclusively as an economic project and rejects Russia's political ambitions within the Union.

Belorussian President Lukashenko also expressed certain dissatisfaction about the final treaty. He said: “This is not the treaty Belarus was counting on and not the one our partners originally declared, primarily the Russian Federation” (FAYOS, 2014). During the final stage of negotiations, Belarus gained important Russian concessions maintaining some exceptions and limitations in trade provisions.

We can conclude that Belarus and Kazakhstan are ready to participate in the Eurasian Union as long as it is compatible with their own interests. Both countries wary about renewed Russia’s assertiveness. The 2014 events in Ukraine gave them reason to be concerned, which will not have a positive impact on their relations with Russia as the level of trust suffered due to Russia’s policy in Ukraine.

The next roadblock to Eurasian integration could be an economic decline in Russia caused by Ukrainian crisis. Painful macroeconomic effects of the crisis are already obvious in Russia’s economic development. Even though Russian economy was slowing down before the outbreak of the events in Ukraine, the crisis exacerbated this negative trend. GDP growth slowed to just 1, 3 % in 2013, down from around 4 % in in 2012, and considerably lower than the 1999-2007 average of over 7 %. Capital outflows intensified in the beginning of 2014, reaching a total of over \$50bn in the first quarter. This was accompanied by the steady depreciation of the ruble that began in the summer of 2013 as the Central Bank implemented a more relaxed attitude to exchange rate fluctuations (Connolly, 2014). The World Bank economic outlook for Russia for 2015 is not optimistic as well: real GDP is projected to grow only by 0, 7 % (Connolly, 2014). In this situation neighboring economies reliant on trade with Moscow will also be hit by fallout from the crisis. Russia’s partner in the Eurasian Union, Kazakhstan, has already seen itself buffeted by the currency and economic turmoil coming

from Russia. Reliant on oil prices, both economies are sensitive to commodity fluctuations. In February, the National Bank of Kazakhstan already surprised financial markets with an announcement of a devaluation of the national currency tenge. This came on the heels of Russia's own fairly sudden depreciation of the ruble. In this situation the member states of the Eurasian Union might be more sensitive about closer economic ties with Moscow, fearing that problems in Russia may trigger economic instability in their own countries. That highlights how difficult deeper integration can be for the Eurasian Union.

CONCLUSION

The Thesis dealt with the Russian foreign policy towards the CIS states in the context of the Ukrainian crisis of 2013-2014. In the particular chapters I analyzed the development of Russia's foreign policy since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the state of integrational projects in the CIS region, and finally the Ukraine crisis and its implications on Russia's relations with the CIS countries, particularly with Russia's main allies within the Commonwealth of Independent States – Republic of Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Three research questions were formulated in the Thesis. The first question was: What factors and ideological concepts influenced Russian foreign policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union? Answering this question I demonstrated that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Soviet legacy had a strong impact on the Russian Federation, because Russia was a core entity of the Soviet Empire and after its collapse became a successor state. The country had to cope with the legacy of the Soviet Union and problems that aroused after its break-up (loss of superpower status, territory, raw materials, production facilities, military bases, etc.). Russia did not fully cope with the loss of territories after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and therefore tried to maintain “near abroad” space as an economic, culturally and security integrated area, in which Moscow would have a leading role. Loss of national identity, which was associated with the Soviet Russia's identity, was the next important factor that affected Russia's foreign policy. I described two ideological concepts that affected Russia's policy on different stages of its development: Atlantism and Euroasianism. However, current Russia's foreign policy is not built on ideological concepts as was in the case of the Soviet Union, but it is based on the pragmatic approach, which means pursuing national interests of the country.

At the same time Euroasianist ideas retained a strong position within the Russian post-Soviet foreign policy.

The second research question asks for the state and purpose of regional integration of the CIS countries. Currently several integration projects exist in the post-Soviet region. The process of its development was complicated and their effectiveness is arguable. However, certain achievements in economic sphere are obvious. For Russia, the pursuing of integration is a key priority of the foreign policy as through integration, Russia gains an opportunity to promote its interests in the region. Analysis of different integration institutions enables us to say that Russia and its allies put an emphasis on the economic dimension of the cooperation. Despite of the crisis in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on creating a Eurasian Union, which means that integration on the post-Soviet space is ongoing.

The answer on the third research question, i.e. what is the possible impact of the Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with the CIS states, is not easy to be found today. Reactions to Ukraine crisis from Belorussia's and Kazakhstan's side show that Russia's policies toward Ukraine and Crimean incorporation brought certain level of distrust in Russia's relations with those states. Belarus and Kazakhstan share the fears due to the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's role in the conflict. The distrust in relations may have a practical impact on Kremlin's integration plans, which were focused on creating a Eurasian Union in order to incorporate Russia's economy with those of post-Soviet members. Even though the Moscow's primary goal by launching the Eurasian Union was achieved, the future of this project remains uncertain. I demonstrated that after the Ukrainian events Belarus and Kazakhstan consistently stressed the sanctity of their sovereignty declaring that Eurasian Union can be a purely economic structure without any political nature. We can assume that due to Ukrainian crisis,

the political integration within the CIS region is becoming utopian, while the economic integration has chances to become successful and beneficial for all sides. Given that the Ukrainian crisis is still ongoing, the impact of it on Russia's relations with the CIS countries is hard to evaluate today. It will also depend on further Russia's policies towards Ukraine.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CES – Common Economic Space

CIFTA - Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Area

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

CSTO – Common Security Treaty Organization

EAEC – Eurasian Economic Community

EU – European Union

GUAM - Regional organization of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

RF – Russian Federation

UN – United Nations

USA – United States of America

USD – United States Dollar

USSR - The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WTO – World Trade Organization

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Master Thesis Proposal

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Proposed Topic:

The impact of Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with the CIS countries

Topic Characteristics:

The thesis will be focused on relations between Russia and independent states that emerged after the breakup of the Soviet Union, especially Belorussia and Kazakhstan. These relations remain the Russian Federation's significant foreign policy priority.

For deeper understanding of how relations have been developed over the years, specific regional organizations will be analyzed: Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Community, Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, Collective Security Treaty Organization.

In the year 2013-2014 we could witness a very dramatic situation on Ukrainian political scene, which has gone from chaos in Maidan Square to severe military confrontation. Situation, which is related to country's further development, can change not only the future of Ukraine but also stability in the whole region. Russia, the United States and European Union, promoting their interests, are greatly involved in the crisis.

An important aspect that will be discussed in the Thesis is to what extent situation around Ukraine can affect Russia's relations with CIS countries. To answer this question it will be important to see how certain post-Soviet states reacted on main events of Ukrainian crisis.

Research questions:

- What is the role of CIS countries in Russian Foreign Policy?
 - How successful is functioning of current regional organizations?
 - What is the possible impact of Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with CIS countries?
-

Methodology:

In order to analyze the topic I will use descriptive and analytical methods of research. The approach is empirical-analytical.

Outline:

Introduction

1. Russia's foreign policy towards CIS countries and integration projects in the post-Soviet space
2. Analyzing regional integration: economy, trade, political institutions. Main problems and current state.
3. Ukrainian crisis 2013 – 2014 and it's perception by CIS key players: Russia, Belorussia, and Kazakhstan. Possible impact of Ukrainian crisis on Russia's relations with CIS countries.

Conclusion

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