

1. POLITICAL FACTORS OF BILATERAL COOPERATION

The Ukrainian authorities pursue their policy in relations with Russia mainly in a manual mode, it looks inconsistent and controversial. Ukraine's position in the dialogue with the Russian Federation is weakened by sharp confrontation within the political elite, deregulation of the system of state governance, permanent home policy crises. There is a critical deficit of strategic ideas of the prospects of partnership with the Russian Federation, regular forecasting of the consequences of current actions of the country leadership.

Russia's policy towards Ukraine is more coordinated, target-minded and tough. The Russian leadership is actively using tools of political-diplomatic pressure, Ukraine's "gas dependence", pro-Russian spirits in the political establishment and among many Ukrainian citizens. There are evident attempts of the Russian Federation to influence Ukraine's foreign political course, strengthen the "pro-Russian component" in its home political developments and generally keep it within its sphere of influence.

This section examines the format and specificity of the political-diplomatic dialogue on different levels, assesses contacts between the parties within the framework of bilateral cooperation mechanisms (Ukrainian-Russian Interstate Commission), analyses the state of regulatory-legal relations. Special attention is paid to some problem aspects of the policy domain dealing with the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine, Russia's Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea, processes of reintegration into the post-Soviet space, information background of cooperation.

1.1. SPECIFICITY OF BILATERAL DIALOGUE, MECHANISMS AND LEGAL FUNDAMENTALS OF PARTNERSHIP

Evidently, the parties' relations are largely shaped by the nature, tone and trend of the political-diplomatic dialogue. It may be said that today, this dialogue is waged a critical mode. The political elites of both countries are guided by old and new stereotypes.

The development of partnership is hindered by the state of institutional-legal support. Mechanisms of bilateral cooperation are not fully used. The regulatory-legal framework is largely obsolete, requires modernisation and specification of a number of framework agreements – first of all, concerning Russia's Black Sea Fleet stationing on the territory of Ukraine.

Now, the political-diplomatic sector of cooperation is one of the most problem-struck. The parties cannot settle a number of acute problems affecting the entire set of bilateral relations.

Relations of state and political elites of Ukraine and Russia. Political-diplomatic dialogue

After the presidential elections of 2004 in Ukraine, the top of the Russian state and political elite took a clear stand of disapproval of the Orange Revolution and the foreign-political course proclaimed by the new authorities. A doctrine of "unconstitutionality", "destructiveness of revolutionary shocks" in the post-Soviet space was formulated on the national level¹. The Russian propaganda machine was tuned to the mode of strong criticism of the activity of Ukraine's leadership. Special information operations were waged (especially during election campaigns). Support was provided for the Party of Regions, staying in opposition to the country leadership. By contrast to the "casual diplomacy" practiced under the presidency of L.Kuchma, contacts between the Russian and Ukrainian leadership were utmost formalised and limited.

Under the presidency of V.Putin the Russian foreign policy notably intensified, both globally and regionally. It took a stand towards greater influence in

¹ For more detail see: Problems and prospects of Ukraine-Russian cooperation. – "National Security & Defence", 2006, No.5, p.4.



the post-Soviet space. Russia positioned itself as an “energy superpower”. By and large, the new head of the Russian state D.Medvedev continued that course. Under his presidency, a number of fundamental political documents were passed (including the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation and the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2020), where development of partnership in the post-Soviet space (CIS) is termed a priority of Russia’s foreign policy². In particular, D.Medvedev said that Russia had “regions of privileged interests”, where it “will act very attentively”³. Evidently, Ukraine is one of such regions.

Implementing its foreign political course, the Russian side exerts target-minded and coordinated politico-diplomatic pressure on Ukraine designed to keep the neighbouring country in its sphere influence⁴. The Russian leadership does not seem to view Ukraine as an equal economic and geopolitical partner. There is an impression that a great part of the Russian establishment has a stereotype of Ukraine’s “due” behaviour at home and abroad, and actions not meeting that stereotype are seen at least as unfriendly. This complicates contacts between the two countries’ elites.

The relations of the Ukrainian and Russian elites are also influenced by residual stereotypes. The Russian establishment tends to see Ukraine as a subordinate, puppet state with a dependent foreign policy, a scene of collision of the Russian and Western interests. Ukraine’s political community is wary that deeper cooperation with the Russian Federation will inevitably lead to greater control of Ukraine, interference in its home and foreign policy.

At that, the Ukrainian elite is not united on how to build relations with Moscow, there are different ideas of tactical issues of cooperation, evident deficit of a strategic vision of future partnership with Russia⁵.

Presidents and premieres of both countries more than once noted the need of building constructive, friendly and pragmatic relations between Ukraine and Russia. For instance, President D.Medvedev on September 18, 2008, accepting credentials from the Ukrainian Ambassador to the Russian Federation K.Hryshchenko, stressed that “Russia is ready for honest, all-embracing, deepest and absolutely mutually

advantageous cooperation with Ukraine in the spirit of genuine partnership”⁶. In turn, Ukraine’s President V.Yushchenko in an interview for foreign media on February 10, 2009, noted that Ukraine sought constructive relations with the Russian Federation, “the main thing is that those relations rest on mutual respect, equality and good will”⁷. A similar stand was reported by the speakers, foreign ministers, other representatives of the supreme echelons of power of the two countries.

However, those statements did not change the tone of the dialogue for the better. The heads of states exchanged harsh, confrontational statements on the most acute problems of bilateral relations witnessing fundamental differences in positions. For instance, in November 2008, the country leaders in fact exchanged mutual accusations in connection with the events dedicated to the 75th anniversary of Holodomor (the famine of 1932-1933)⁸. In December 2008, D.Medvedev sharply criticised ineffectiveness of the Ukrainian authorities that “harms Ukraine-Russia relations”⁹.

Flat refusal of the Russian leader to visit Ukraine for participation in the events devoted to Holodomor was demonstrative in this respect. Under the presidency of D.Medvedev (since March 2008) the heads of states have not made official or full-scale working visits to Ukraine and Russia. There was only one working meeting during an informal CIS summit (June 2008, Saint Petersburg). Therefore, the mechanism of top level contacts is actually defunct.

The current political-diplomatic dialogue is full of accusative notes, statements, critical comments of representatives of foreign offices of the two countries.

The Russian leadership formulated a package of claims to Ukraine. Their fullest least is presented in the Russian Foreign Ministry Statement on Russia-Ukraine relations of September 11, 2008. The document says that “recently, the Ukrainian authorities have been pursuing a policy that cannot be termed otherwise than unfriendly towards Russia”.

According to the Russian side: (a) the Ukrainian leadership tried to lay the blame for the bloodshed in Georgia on Russia; (b) official Kyiv continues its course of soonest accession to NATO, contrary to security interests of the Russian Federation; (c) attempts are being made to complicate operation of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in

² Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation through 2020. – Official web site of Russia’s Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mid.ru>

³ Interview of D.Medvedev to Russian TV channels, August 31, 2008. – Official web site of the Russian President, <http://president.kremlin.ru>

⁴ The Statement of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry of January 20, 2009, stressed: “Ukraine has already formed lasting immunity to unfriendly and disrespectful statements sometimes heard from high-ranking officials of the Russian Federation about Ukraine and its leadership. Such unbalanced rhetoric is taken up by the obedient party elite and controlled media of the Russian Federation. The Kremlin consistently exerts undisguised pressure on Ukraine for its independent foreign and home policy”. – Official web site of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua>

⁵ It is suffice to recall the critical reaction of Prime Minister Yu.Tymoshenko to President V.Yushchenko’s Decree (August 2008) on the procedure of the Ukrainian border crossing by units of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet.

⁶ Timeserving considerations and internal crises should not undermine fraternal relations between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine – Medvedev. – Interfax, September 18, 2008.

⁷ Issue of improvement of Ukraine-Russia relations is in the hands of the President of the Russian Federation – Yushchenko. – Interfax-Ukraine, February 10, 2009.

⁸ Medvedev does not consider it possible to take part in events on the occasion of anniversary of Holodomor marked in Ukraine. – Interfax, November 14, 2009; Viktor Yushchenko: It was genocide. – Interview to “Dziennik” newspaper, November 20, 2008. See: Official web site of the President of Ukraine, <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/12094.html>

⁹ Ukraine has no effective authorities, which hinders Russia-Ukraine relations. – UNIAN, December 24, 2008.



Crimea; (d) ill practice of bans on entry of Russian MPs and politicians to Ukraine continues; (e) the Ukrainian authorities are trying to review the common history in an anti-Russian spirit; (f) rights of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine are suppressed, there is a trend towards pressing the Russian language out of public life, education, education, culture, mass media¹⁰.

A response statement of Ukraine's Foreign Ministry (September 2008) terms the assessments of the Russian side as tendentious, remote from realities and therefore, erroneous¹¹.

Expert assessments¹². The majority (90.5%) of Ukrainian experts believe that the Russian state and political elite is swept over by a negative, critical attitude to the current Ukrainian leadership. Meanwhile, 53% of Russian experts term that attitude pragmatic, restrained, 39% – negative, critical. Experts also note the need of removing harsh, confrontational statements from the political-diplomatic vocabulary.

In March 2008, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry strongly responded to a speech by the Russian representative at the 7th session of the UN Human Rights Council. Meanwhile, the Russian side argued that Kyiv tried to refuse from the fundamental principles of the entire set of bilateral ties. In April 2008, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry sent a note to the Russian Foreign Ministry in connection with S.Lavrov's comments on the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine¹³. It also said that the Russian Federation ignored Ukrainian interests in the issue of division of foreign property of the former USSR. Sharp diplomatic polemics arose in connection with deliveries of Ukrainian arms and military equipment to Georgia.

In the summer of 2008, the parties exchanged diplomatic demarches – the Russian side in response to a ban for Yu.Luzhkov to come to Ukraine barred entry to the Russian Federation for the Verkhovna Rada member V.Kaskiv and First Deputy Minister of Justice of Ukraine Ye.Korniyshuk. Ukraine's Security Service made a warning to the State Duma member K.Zatulin.

A new tide of confrontation arose in January 2009, with the "gas conflict" between Ukraine and Russia that involved the EU countries. Russia unleashed a large-scale campaign accusing Ukraine of unfair partnership, unauthorised siphoning of gas, violation of international commitments, etc. Ukraine termed Russia's actions as "gas blackmail", an attempt to destabilise the home policy situation, control the gas transportation system, punish it for its Euro-Atlantic integration.

In February 2009, a sharp conflict arose in connection with sayings of the Russian Ambassador to Ukraine

V.Chernomyrdin about the home political situation in Ukraine. The list of conflict situations may be continued.

Analysis of the tone and content of the parties' dialogue shows that it is largely confrontational, premeditatedly denunciatory. Estrangement of the state and socio-political elites of the two countries goes on. Such relations of the elites are not conducive to emergence of a productive format of bilateral relations.

Mechanisms of bilateral cooperation

The key mechanism of interstate cooperation is presented by the Ukrainian-Russian Interstate Commission (hereinafter – the Commission) established by a decision of the Presidents of the two countries on May 8, 2005¹⁴. The Commission's structure covers actually all sectors of bilateral relations, new divisions are formed within it on as-needed basis¹⁵.

In course of four years, the Commission only twice met in presence of the presidents (December 2006, February 2008). Under the office of the Russian President D.Medvedev, the Commission never met at full strength (although according to its Procedures, the Commission meetings are held in accordance with an agreed plan of work twice a year). Optimistic statements of the Ukrainian side of a possible meeting of the Commission in March 2009 did not come true¹⁶. Three specialised subcommittees (for security, international and humanitarian cooperation) have not met since 2007. The work was mainly reduced to the sub-commission level.

Such a pause in the Commission's work is attributed to a number of reasons.

First, the political factor plays a role. As we noted, the dialogue between the heads of states is waged by correspondence, involves problems and conflicts.

Second, the Commission's work is complicated by "frozen problems" of bilateral cooperation: official delimitation of the borders, problems and prospects of Russia's Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea, issues of guarantee of national-cultural rights of Ukrainians in the Russian Federation and Russians in Ukraine, security problems, etc. In a number of key sectors of the Commission's work, the parties did not come to terms, did not approach joint decisions, to be legitimised by the Presidents.

Third, the Commission's work is affected by home political instability in Ukraine: early parliamentary elections and, respectively, change of the top echelon of the executive branch. Operation of the Commission is also complicated by the uncoordinated approaches of representatives of the Ukrainian side.

¹⁰ Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on Russia-Ukraine relations of September 11, 2008. – Official web site of Russia's Foreign Ministry.

¹¹ Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on Ukraine-Russia relations. – Official web site of Ukraine's Foreign Ministry.

¹² Cited hereinafter are results of the latest expert poll. For more detail see: "Ukrainian and Russian experts about the state, problems and prospects of bilateral relations", pp.61-71 of this magazine.

¹³ Simultaneously, UN Headquarters disseminated the Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with a call upon Russia to stop the practice of threats in connection with the country's intention to join NATO.

¹⁴ The Commission Procedures were signed by the Presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation on October 15, 2005.

¹⁵ The Commission includes: Committee for economic cooperation (12 sub-commissions), subcommittees for security (2), international cooperation (6), humanitarian issues (9), Sub-Commission for operation of Russia's Black Sea Fleet and its stationing on the territory of Ukraine (5 working groups). All in all, 34 structures are active within the Commission. In 2008, a new Sub-commission for inter-regional and transborder cooperation was set up. It first met on February 26, 2009, in Kharkiv.

¹⁶ Top level meeting of Interstate Commission Yushchenko-Medvedev may be held in March – Deputy Head of the President of Ukraine Secretariat. – Interfax-Ukraine, February 12, 2009.



Gains in the Commission's work included operation of the key Committee for economic cooperation chaired by the Prime Ministers of the two countries. The Committee met four times. The latest meeting (April 29, 2009) discussed implementation of previous agreements, specified measures at development of economic and energy cooperation, partnership in the industrial policy, transport and agriculture. Following the meeting, a number of documents were signed in pursuance of provisions of the Ukraine-Russia Action Plan till 2009¹⁷.

Currently, the dialogue continues mainly of the level of sub-commission heads. According to unofficial sources, the Russian side signalled that in the near future, contacts of the parties to the Commission will be maintained on that level¹⁸.

It may be assumed that full-scale activity of that structure in the short run will remain "frozen" (at least, until the presidential elections in Ukraine).

Regulatory-legal relations

In relations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine has the most elaborate system of agreements on the interstate, intergovernmental, departmental and regional levels, covering actually all aspects of cooperation¹⁹.

The parties have signed more than 380 bilateral documents (some 250 of them – on the interstate and intergovernmental levels)²⁰. The bulk of the passed agreements (more than 200) dealt with trade and economy, defence and military technologies, scientific research, the rest regulated contacts in political, humanitarian, information, consular and other domains of cooperation. Since 2005, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation approve a short-term Action Plans listing priority measures in bilateral relations²¹. Ukraine and Russia also maintain regulatory-legal relations in the multilateral format – within the CIS.

However, the regulatory-legal framework of Ukraine-Russian cooperation is largely obsolete, needs revision and modernisation. *First*, some treaties are of a framework nature and need to be specified by special agreements. In particular, the parties should agree the list of bilateral documents specifying provisions of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership ("Big Treaty").

Second, some agreements are either through, or lost their relevance. So, the process of inventory of the regulatory-legal framework should be intensified.

Third, the parties should complete intrastate procedures for final "legitimation" of a number of agreed documents. In particular, this refers to agreements on mutual recognition of ownership rights and regulation of ownership relations, on establishment and conditions of activity of information-cultural centres, on the procedure of crossing the Ukraine-Russian state border by residents of border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, etc.

In 2008, the situation aggravated in connection with prolongation of the basic document – the "Big Treaty". In April 2008, the State Duma of the Russian Federation held hearings on implementation of that document, and in June, issued an Appeal to the President and the Government of the Russian Federation raising the issue of possible withdrawal of Russia from the "Big Treaty"²². The conflict concerning the basic agreement was initiated as part of Russia's campaign of obstructing Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic course. In fact, this endangered the pillar of the entire system of the bilateral regulatory-legal framework, which could have unpredictable consequences. However, in October 2008, the parties "by default" extended the document for 10 years.

Assessing the overall Ukraine-Russia regulatory-legal relations, one should note the following problem aspects.

Present-day realities of partnership, actions of the parties are often inconsistent with the letter and spirit of treaty-based relations.

For instance, the current state and nature of cooperation in a number of key sectors (energy, aircraft building, military and technical, humanitarian) do not meet the format of strategic partnership envisaged by Article 1 of the "Big Treaty". Moreover, it is hard to speak of strategic relations in presence of fundamental differences in geopolitical positions of the parties, absence of common long-term priorities in cooperation.

The situation that arose in 2003 around Tuzla island, "freezing" of the process of regulatory-legal settlement of the borders are inconsistent with mutual respect for territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders

¹⁷ In particular, the parties signed an intergovernmental agreement of opening divisions of the Trade and Economic Mission at the Ukrainian Embassy in the Russian Federation and branches of the Trade Mission of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, and a protocol of deliveries of goods within the framework of production cooperation in 2009.

¹⁸ Meeting of V. Yushchenko with his Russian counterpart D. Medvedev announced for March may not happen. – "Ekonomicheskie Izvestia", February 13, 2009, <http://www.eizvestia.com/state/full/4176981>

¹⁹ The basic documents include, in particular: Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership ("Big Treaty", 1997), Agreement of Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation Stationing in Crimea (1997), Agreement of Strategic Cooperation in Gas Sector (2002), Treaty of Ukraine-Russia State Border (2003), Agreement between Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and Government of the Russian Federation of Readmission (2006), Programme of Inter-Regional and Transborder Cooperation till 2010 (2006).

²⁰ 308 documents entered into effect.

²¹ In September 2005, the Action Plan for 2005-2006 was approved, in January 2008 – the Action Plan through 2009.

²² Appeal of State Duma to President of the Russian Federation and Government of the Russian Federation in connection with results of parliamentary hearings on the subject "State of Russia-Ukraine relations and performance of obligations under the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine". – Web site of Strategic Culture Fund, <http://www.odnarodyna.ru/topics/6/33.html>



between the countries declared in Article 2 of the “Big Treaty”. Article 3 of the Document contains the commitment of peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or threat of force, including economic and other means of pressure. However, the “meat and milk wars” of 2006, gas conflicts 2006 and 2009 witness that in the practice of bilateral relations, that article does not work.

Formalisation (delimitation) of the state border in the Azov and Kerch water area and demarcation of its land segment are frozen. The land border line is settled by the Treaty of Ukraine-Russia state border (2003). Simultaneous ratification of that document and the Treaty of Cooperation in Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait (2004) completed the process of delimitation of the land border and started delimitation of water areas.

However, in the past years, border settlement actually deadlocked. Numerous rounds of talks only recorded fundamental differences between the parties and did not bring solution of the problem closer²³. Negotiations on delimitation of the Azov and Kerch water area lasting 13 years (since 1996) stalled. In January 2009, Kyiv hosted the 30th round of talks. The Russian delegation in fact returned to its basic point, reverting to the issues of joint use of the Kerch Strait and movement of the border line towards Ukraine²⁴. There are no grounds to expect progress at the next meeting in June 2009 in Moscow. Motives of the Russian side are illustrated by words of Ambassador at Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry A. Tolkach: “Any Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine presume that it settles all its issues, including border. They need the border for one simple reason: to join NATO as soon as possible”²⁵.

Demarcation of the land segment of the border is delayed. The first meeting of the Joint Commission for Demarcation of the Ukraine-Russia border planned for March-April 2008 was never held. The Russian side has not accomplished intrastate procedures of preparation for signing of the Agreement of Demarcation. Repeated initiatives of Ukraine aimed at the document signing failed. Item 10 of the Ukraine-Russian Action Plan envisaging practical steps for demarcation of the border remained on paper. It may be said that the Russian side is using a “package approach” to solution of issues of

formalisation of land and water segments of the state border. Such situation prompts the Ukrainian side to raise the issue of unilateral demarcation of the border with the Russian Federation.

Basic agreements of the conditions of the Russian Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea (1997) require elaboration, specification and effective mechanisms of implementation. Those arrangements are of a framework nature and not backed with documents describing the detailed procedure of their implementation. This gave rise to a set of acute problems (political, financial, legal, environmental, etc.) aggravated by the changing political situation, legislative novelties²⁶.

Negotiations of legal grounds for Russia’s Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea should concentrate on attainment of concrete agreements in the following domains: (a) navigation-hydrographical support for shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov²⁷; (b) procedure of crossing Ukraine’s state border and movement of military servants and military equipment of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet on its territory; (c) actions of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in crisis situations; (d) presentation of information about the total strength and basic weapon systems of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet; (e) inventory of property and land plots transferred to Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in use for establishment of their market value and legalisation of lease relations in line with the legislation of Ukraine; (f) cooperation in the field of navigation, fishing, protection of the marine environment in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov; (g) legal status of military servants of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and their families, including issues of citizenship.

Unfortunately, the level of negotiations on those problems was lowered. After the latest (January 2008) meeting of the Sub-commission for operation of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and its stationing on the territory of Ukraine, it worked only on the level of working and expert groups, and meetings of the Sub-commission co-chairmen²⁸. Repeated proposals of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry to hold a full-scale meeting of the Sub-commission were not supported by the Russian side. There are ground to note kind of “decay” of negotiations²⁹.

²³ The Russian side questions the border line between former USSR and RSFSR in the Azov and Kerch water area and insists on a so-called selective approach to different segments of the border (principle of the middle line, proportionality, justice). This does not suit the Ukrainian side. Noteworthy, the universal principle of the middle line was used for division of the water areas between Russia with Estonia, Lithuania and other states.

²⁴ Ukrainian diplomat accuses Russia of uselessness of talks of delimitation of Azov-Black Sea basin. – Interfax-Ukraine, January 27, 2009.

²⁵ Russia’s Foreign Ministry refutes Kyiv’s statements about Russian claims to Ukrainian territory. – Interfax, January 29, 2009.

²⁶ In 2000, the Law of Ukraine “On Procedure of Access and Conditions of Stay by Units of Armed Forces of Other States on the Territory of Ukraine” was passed that prohibited transfer of navigation-hydrographical facilities to foreign forces.

²⁷ According to international norms, Ukraine is responsible for security of navigation in its territorial waters.

²⁸ 22 such meetings were held in that timeframe. Some positive results were achieved. The Russian side presented data of land inventory for some facilities, removed environmental violations at the most “problem” sites of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, confirmed readiness to sign a protocol between the defence ministries the two countries about presentation of information about the personnel and armaments of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet.

²⁹ Over the entire time of the Sub-commission work, it met three times in 2006, two – in 2007, one – in 2008. The next (seventh) meeting of the Sub-commission is scheduled for June, 2009.



1.2. SOME PROBLEM POLITICAL FACTORS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Development of the system of political relations is seriously complicated by a number of problem issues that add conflicts to the dialogue. They are caused by the different civilisational choice of the two countries. Evidently, the mutual relations are most of all affected by the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine that has a cumulative effect of deterioration of contacts in actually all sectors of cooperation. The parties' positions fundamentally differ in the issues of integration in the post-Soviet space. Recently, there appeared an alarming trend towards the emergence of the unfavourable information background for cooperation, affecting the relations between citizens of Ukraine and Russia.

Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine

The course of Euro-Atlantic integration proclaimed by Ukraine's leadership and provided by the national legislation is the main irritant in Ukraine-Russia relations. The Russian side views further expansion of NATO as a direct threat to its security and claims that Ukraine's accession to the Alliance will fundamentally change the relations between the countries and contacts of the Russian Federation with NATO, affect the security situation in Europe.

Prevention of NATO enlargement is one of the main long-term priorities of Russia's foreign and security policy. The new National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2020 approved by the Russian President's Decree on May 12, 2009, reads: "...The determinant factor in relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation remains unacceptability for Russia of plans moving the military infrastructure of the alliance to its borders..."³⁰.

The Kremlin leadership realises that Ukraine's accession to the Euro-Atlantic security system takes it from the Russian sphere of influence.

In 2008, Ukraine's relations with NATO went still further. The Alliance reaffirmed the prospects of Ukraine's membership in NATO (Declaration of the Bucharest NATO summit, April 2008), introduced a new tool of Ukraine-NATO cooperation – Annual National Programme³¹.

In response, the Russian side unleashed a coordinated and target-minded political-diplomatic and information campaign to bar deepening of Ukraine's contacts with the Alliance. It used international channels of influence, executive bodies, power structures, Parliament, state-owned media, the expert community, the public, employed pro-Russian forces in NATO countries and in Ukraine.

On June 4, 2008, the State Duma of the Russian Federation issued the above-mentioned Appeal to the President and the Government proposing, in case of Ukraine's accession to the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), to consider the issue of the Russian Federation withdrawal from the "Big Treaty"³².

The Russian position was expressly presented by Foreign Minister S.Lavrov: "We will do everything to not let admission of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO, and to avoid inevitably associated with such possible admission sharp deterioration of our relations with the Alliance, its key members, and our neighbours"³³.

The Russian leadership regularly made statements of possible revision of relations with Ukraine in case of its accession to the Alliance. In particular, it spoke of automatic introduction of the visa regime, curtailment of military-industrial cooperation. Security Council Secretary N.Patrushev predicted possible deployment in Ukraine of "big land, air and naval strike forces armed with precision-guided and tactical nuclear weapons"³⁴. Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Yu.Baluyevsky spoke of possible use of military measures.

Evidently, Russia's activity somehow influenced the stand of NATO countries. At the Bucharest summit, the French Prime Minister and the German Chancellor spoke out against granting MAP to Ukraine³⁵.

An extract from a speech by the Russian President D.Medvedev at an extended meeting of the Board of the Federal Security Service on January 28, 2009, is demonstrative in this respect: "Unstable socio-political situation persisted in a number of neighbouring states, attempts of NATO enlargement did not stop, including at the expense of so-called accelerated accession of Georgia and Ukraine to the Alliance. All that certainly required

³⁰ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2020 – Official web site of Security Council of the Russian Federation, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

³¹ In March 2008, Ukraine's President and Prime Minister sent an official letter to NATO Secretary General requesting Ukraine's admission to the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). A similar request was addressed to the German Chancellor and French President. At the April NATO summit in Bucharest, solution of that issue was postponed till December, and the final Declaration reaffirmed prospects of Ukraine's membership in the Alliance. At the December meeting of foreign ministers of NATO countries, Ukraine was offered a new tool of cooperation – Annual National Programme.

³² Appeal of State Duma to the President and Government of the Russian Federation... – Web site of Strategic Culture Fund, <http://www.odnarodyna.ru/topics/6/33.html>

³³ Russia will do everything to not let Ukraine to NATO. – "Forum" internet publication, <http://www.for-ua.com/ukraine/2008/04/08/190342.html>

³⁴ Ovcharenko Ye. Russia's Security Council Secretary N.Patrushev: "We warned: Saakashvili behaves inadequately". – "Izvestia", October 2, 2008, <http://www.izvestia.ru>

³⁵ On March 8, 2008, on the eve of the Bucharest summit, Russian President V.Putin during the meeting with German Chancellor A.Merkel insisted on inexpediency of NATO enlargement and unreadiness of Ukraine to join the Alliance. On the diplomatic level, the Russian Federation warned the U.S. of grave consequences of Ukraine's accession to NATO for Russian-US relations.



efficient and concerted efforts of all special power structures, law-enforcement bodies and quite a high level of coordination of their activity”³⁶.

Expert assessments. The absolute majority (87%) of Russian experts reported as the main reason for deterioration of bilateral relations “Russia’s rejection of Ukraine’s course of accession to NATO”. Assessing the factors exerting the greatest negative influence on bilateral relations, both Ukrainian (89.5%) and Russian (97%) experts first of all noted Ukraine’s intention to join NATO. The opinions of respondents in both groups regarding the steps of Ukraine that would best meet Russia’s interests absolutely coincided. The majority of Ukrainian (75.2%) and Russian (88%) experts noted refusal from the decision to join NATO.

The “deferred effect” of Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO is largely attributed to the Russian influence. However, the home political situation in Ukraine may be mentioned as the key reason for slowdown of the Euro-Atlantic integration. The subject of NATO membership is very sensitive for the Ukrainian elite and entire society. However, it ceded into the background in view of the deepening socio-economic crisis, critical confrontation within the political establishment, deregulation of the system of state governance. In such conditions, attempts of soonest joining the Alliance discredit the idea of accession to the Euro-Atlantic security system.

Therefore, the events of 2008 - early 2009 in the triangle “Ukraine-NATO-Russia” witness that Russia, actively using the internal political factor in Ukraine and differences among the Alliance members, managed to influence the process of granting MAP to Ukraine. This political-diplomatic step was rather important for the present Russian leadership, given the forthcoming presidential elections in Ukraine. It may be assumed that the Russian side not unreasonably hopes that a possible replacement of the head of state will involve a shift of accents in the foreign policy, including in the Euro-Atlantic direction.

Problems of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea

The subject of the Russian Fleet stationing in Crimea is one of the most sensitive in the agenda of the bilateral dialogue. Conflicts arise with navigation facilities, exercises held without notification of the Ukrainian side, violations of the Ukrainian legislation by military servants of the Russian Federation, neglect of rules of state border crossing, etc.³⁷ The military base poses a significant

conflict potential. According to some Ukrainian and foreign experts, “there is a risk of an armed incident in the result of impulsive actions of one party in the area of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet facilities”³⁸.

It may be assumed that the Russian Fleet in Crimea plays a political-ideological rather than military-strategic role, given the level and nature of threats to Russia originating from the Black Sea region. Russia is well aware of that, which is indirectly proven by the obsolescence and low combat effectiveness of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet.

Military presence in Crimea gives Russia: (a) means of control of the situation on the peninsula, pressure on Ukraine; (b) a tool barring the Euro-Atlantic course of official Kyiv; (c) a convenient mechanism of support and retransmission of pro-Russian spirits in Crimea; (d) an ideological symbol for the home policy. The situation around the Russian military base in Sevastopol seriously aggravated after the conflict in the Caucasus that involved ships of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. On August 13, the President of Ukraine issued a decree effectuating Ukraine’s NSDC decision establishing the rules and procedure of military servants and equipment of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet crossing the Ukrainian border³⁹. That decision met a strong negative reaction of the Russian side. On August 28, 2008, Russian President D. Medvedev spoke of precedence of international agreements over “decrees and orders of local authorities”. According to his words, “the Russian Armed Forces obey the Supreme Commander-in-Chief... One should proceed from that, the rest are emotions”⁴⁰.

Expert assessments. Answering the question what steps of Ukraine would best meet the interests of the Russian Federation, both Russian and Ukrainian experts ranked second (after the refusal from accession to NATO) extension of the term of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea. This opinion is shared by 72% of Russian and 62.9% of Ukrainian experts.

In 2008, the problem of withdrawal of units of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in 2017 came to the forefront. The Ukrainian side made a number of attempts to formalise the subject. On December 26, 2008, the President of Ukraine issued the Decree “On Additional Measures for Socio-Economic Development of Sevastopol”. In pursuance of that document, a working group was established tasked to work out proposals “of use of infrastructure of the Sevastopol harbour for non-military goals after 2017, conversion and modernisation of the logistic, including port, infrastructure”⁴¹.

³⁶ Speech at an extended meeting of the Board of the Federal Security Service. – Official web site of the Russian President, <http://president.kremlin.ru>

³⁷ In 2008, Russian military servants committed 521 offences, 16 crimes. See: Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry is worried by growth in number of offences committed by military servants of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. – Interfax-Ukraine, January 27, 2009.

³⁸ Ukraine’s security in the XXI century: challenges and needs of collective measures. – Kyiv, Razumkov Centre, 2009, p.9.

³⁹ President of Ukraine Decree “On Decision of Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council of August 13, 2008 “Issues of Crossing State Border of Ukraine by Military Servants, Military Ships (Support Vessels), Aircraft of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet Arriving to the Territory of Ukraine” No.706 of August 13, 2008.

⁴⁰ Ukraine hails Russia’s desire to respect its international commitments in issues of temporary stationing of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. – UNIAN, August 29, 2008.

⁴¹ President of Ukraine Decree “On Additional Measures at Socio-Economic Development of Sevastopol” No.1204 of December 26, 2008.



On May 20, 2008, the President of Ukraine issued another decree enacting Ukraine's NSDC Decision "On Measures Ensuring the Development of Ukraine as a Naval Power". The document suggested legislative backing of the decision of withdrawal of Russia's Black Sea Fleet from Ukraine⁴².

Official Kyiv also initiated inclusion of the subject of the Fleet withdrawal in the agenda of Ukraine-Russian political-diplomatic dialogue. During a working visit to the Russian Federation on April 15, 2008, Ukraine's Foreign Minister V.Ohryzko handed to the Russian Foreign Minister S.Lavrov the Memorandum between Ukraine and the Russian Federation concerning the Stages and Procedure of Withdrawal by May 28, 2017, of Military Units of Russia's Black Sea Fleet from Places of Its Temporary Dislocation on the Territory of Ukraine. (The document proposed beginning of consultations to that end in June 2008).

On February 9, 2009, the President of Ukraine once again spoke of the approaching "moment when foreign troops will be withdrawn from our territory"⁴³.

The Russian side strongly responded to those acts. However, the first trial "conciliatory" step was

made by Defence Minister A.Serdukov. He reported Russia's interest in prolongation of Russia's Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea and noted the possibility of presentation of a set of mutually advantageous proposals related with rent, cooperation in the field of defence industry and other sectors⁴⁴. Foreign Minister S.Lavrov was more definite: "In due time, we will be ready to propose the Ukrainian side to discuss the conditions of further stationing (of the Black Sea Fleet – *Ed.*) in Sevastopol. Discussion of those issues is due at a later stage, closer to 2017, with the government of Ukraine then working in that country"⁴⁵.

Regional integration

Problem aspects of Ukraine-Russia relations include regional cooperation in the post-Soviet space. The parties' stand on the content, forms and prospects of integration processes in the CIS fundamentally differs.

The Russian side views the Commonwealth as an area of its "privileged interests". As noted above, Russian President D.Medvedev approved the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (July 12, 2008) and the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation through 2020 (on May 12, 2009), describing development of cooperation in the CIS as a priority of Russia's foreign policy. The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is viewed as the core of economic integration, and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) – as the main interstate tool designed to oppose regional challenges, defence policy and military-strategic threats⁴⁶. In May 2008, the new Federal Agency for CIS Affairs was established under the Russian Government.

Russia initiated modernisation and strengthening of the CIS, EurAsEC and CSTO as mechanisms of political-economic, defence policy, humanitarian influence in the post-Soviet space. In 2007-2009, a package of documents creating the legal framework of the EurAsEC Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan) was passed⁴⁷. Heads of CSTO member states approved the Agreement of Peacekeeping Activity. It was decided to establish the Collective Operational Reaction Force⁴⁸.

For Ukraine, participation in the CIS is not a priority of foreign policy. The course of Euro-Atlantic integration leaves no room for cooperation within the CSTO framework. And future signing of an Agreement of Association with the EU (including creation of a free trade area) makes the issue of the country involvement in

⁴² The document suggested all-round assessment of effects of temporary stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine and drafting a bill on termination from 2017 of international treaties on temporary stationing of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine. See: President of Ukraine Decree "On Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council Decision of May 16, 2008 "On Measures Ensuring the Development of Ukraine as a Naval Power" No.463 of May 20, 2008.

⁴³ President says, Ukraine's territory should be free from any foreign troops. – UNIAN, February 9, 2009.

⁴⁴ Russia ready to make a number of advantageous proposals to Ukraine for the Black Sea Fleet to stay in Sevastopol after 2017. – Interfax-AVN, September 23, 2008.

⁴⁵ Moscow will in the future offer to Kyiv to extend the agreement of lease of the naval base in Sevastopol – Lavrov. – Interfax, October 22, 2008.

⁴⁶ See: Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation through 2020.

⁴⁷ At a meeting in October 2007, the EurAsEC Interstate Council signed: Decision "On Formation of Legal Framework of EurAsEC Customs Union", Agreement of Establishment of the Single Customs Territory and Formation of the Customs Union, Agreement of the Customs Union Commission, etc. In January 2008, EurAsEC Interstate Council passed nine more documents establishing the Customs Union. In October 2008, EurAsEC Interstate Council on the level of heads of states was entrusted with functions of the supreme body of the Customs Union.

⁴⁸ At the Collective Security Council session (October 6, 2007, Dushanbe) the Agreement of Peacekeeping Activity was signed and a package of documents on that subject approved, including the Agreement of Establishment of a System of Command and Control of CSTO Collective Security System Forces. On February 4, 2009, an extraordinary session of CSTO Collective Security Council in Moscow took a decision to establish the Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF) of CSTO.



pro-Russian reintegration projects of the “second generation” – EurAsEC and SES – irrelevant.

The low profile of Ukraine’s participation in the CIS adds tension to bilateral relations. Official Kyiv views the Commonwealth as a mechanism of interstate consultations and talks, does not take part in the Joint Armed Forces, does not share the idea of a “single humanitarian space” pushed by the Russian Federation. Ukraine does not take part in the CIS observer mission, abstained from signing a number of agreements in the military, energy, humanitarian sectors.

In 2008, Ukraine’s President confined participation in the supreme CIS bodies to attendance of the February informal summit. At a meeting of the CIS heads of states (October 2008, Bishkek) Ukraine was represented by NSDC Secretary R.Bohatyryova. Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry proposed reduction of contribution to the CIS budget⁴⁹.

V.Yushchenko more than once sceptically assessed the CIS. In an interview for Russian media in July 2007, he said: “the CIS accomplished its mission, first of all, during the difficult political divorce of the former Soviet republics... Only 4% of decisions passed in CIS were implemented by the member states. 96% is a whistle that gave nothing but a sound. All this makes prospects of the CIS pessimistic”⁵⁰. In an interview for “Ekho Moskvyy” radio (April 3, 2009) the President noted extreme politicisation of the CIS activity and deficit of “considerate, pragmatic decisions”⁵¹.

Tension in the “Ukraine-CIS-Russia” triangle was aggravated by the conflict in the Caucasus in August 2008, and subsequent recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation. Ukraine sided with Georgia, which caused a strong negative reaction of the Russian Federation. On August 18, 2008, the CIS Executive Committee received a note from Georgia’s Foreign Ministry of its withdrawal from CIS⁵².

Those events demonstrated: (a) inability of the CIS structures to influence conflict situations in the Commonwealth, ineffectiveness of multilateral regulatory-legal relations; (b) Russia’s intention to establish itself as a world leader in the post-Soviet space that can use military means for the attainment of its geopolitical interests; (c) in-depth differences among the Commonwealth member states.

Restriction of Ukraine’s participation in the Commonwealth is conditioned by a number of reasons, the main of them being the change of approaches to regional integration in the CIS with account of the course of European and Euro-Atlantic integration proclaimed by the new leadership of the country.



It may be assumed that the Strategy of Economic Development of the CIS adopted in November 2008, will not substantially change the situation in the Commonwealth.

The Single Economic Space project may be seen as a setback in Ukraine-Russia relations. Ukraine reduced the idea of creation of a quadrilateral customs union under Russia’s auspices to a free trade area. The present country leadership denounced advances of the previous authorities, considering assignment of powers to a single regulatory body with depositary functions and the package principle of international-legal documents coming into effect unacceptable. SES presented a rigid post-Soviet reintegration form with a bureaucratic superstructure and a supranational government body.

Ukraine’s stand was made clear in the President of Ukraine Decree of June 15, 2005, that set the goal of the country’s participation in SES – a free trade area⁵³. Such format of Ukraine’s participation did not meet the interests of the Russian Federation, and further negotiations stalled. High Level Groups meetings stopped, 11 priority documents agreed by the “four” receded into the background, and the idea of the Customs Union was implemented by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in the EurAsEC format.

However, Ukraine does not seem to have passed the point of no return regarding SES. Nobody reversed the Agreement establishing SES, ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on April 20, 2004. SES project is not over yet, it in fact presents a deferred reintegration alternative to the course of accession to the EU. The reason lies in the unobviousness of prospects of Ukraine’s accession to the EU, lack of consensus in Ukraine’s elite regarding the “depth” of participation in SES. In the Ukraine-Russian dialogue, the subject of SES reappears from time to time. For instance, the Party of Regions’ leader V.Yanukovych said at the United Russia congress (November 2008) that “we should return to the idea of a single economic space, there is no alternative”⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ People of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko could not divide money allocated to CIS. – “Ukrayinska Pravda” internet publication, November 27, 2008, <http://pravda.com.ua/ru>

⁵⁰ Sokolovskaya Ya. Victor Yushchenko: “Meeting Putin, I will wear a pendant Cossack cross”. – “Izvestia”, July 9, 2007.

⁵¹ Yushchenko believes that relations among CIS countries involve much politics and little practical action. – UNIAN, April 3, 2009.

⁵² According to the CIS Charter, a Commonwealth member state notifies the depositary in writing of its intention to secede from the Commonwealth 12 months before secession. The official date of Georgian withdrawal from CIS will be August 18, 2009.

⁵³ President of Ukraine Decree “On Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council Decision of May 20, 2005” No.952 of June 15, 2005.

⁵⁴ Ukraine and Russia should return to idea of single economic space – Yanukovych. – Interfax-Ukraine, November 20, 2008.



The Russian side cautiously met the EU initiative of “Eastern Partnership” that united six post-Soviet countries⁵⁵. Given the specificity and nature of the Russian Federation activity in the CIS area, it may be assumed that that project will be seen by Russia as an attempt of the EU to lead a group of the Commonwealth member states out of the sphere of its influence, as an “obstacle” for reintegration processes in the former USSR space led by the Russian Federation.

Foreign Minister S.Lavrov said at a press conference following a plenary meeting of the Russia-EU Permanent Partnership Council in Luxembourg (April 2009) that “some comments to that initiative heard from the EU made us wary”. He reminded of agreements with the EU, whereby integration processes promoted by the European Union should not run contrary to integration processes in the post-Soviet space⁵⁶.

Some Russian politicians made concerted warning, critical statements. Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation A.Grushko said that the European integration of Ukraine should not weaken its contacts with Russia and present a dilemma for Kyiv: either with the EU, or with Russia⁵⁷. Chairman of the Russian State Duma Committee for International Affairs K.Kosachev warned that if “Eastern Partnership” presents a concealed attempt to extend to those countries the most favoured status at the expense of such regime in relations with the Russian Federation, Russia will have to respond to that⁵⁸. The Russian Ambassador to the EU V.Chizhov questioned the viability of the “Eastern Partnership” project.

The CIS leadership joined the campaign. Executive secretary of the Commonwealth S.Lebedev said that “Eastern Partnership” might influence the dynamic of integration processes in the CIS, lead to revision of the regulatory-legal framework of the Commonwealth. In his opinion, the EU initiative is no good for post-Soviet countries and poses a threat to the CIS integrity⁵⁹.

Fears of the Russian side were expressly stated by the Russian President D.Medvedev at a press conference following the Russia-EU summit (May 22, 2009, Khabarovsk). He said that it was not quite clear for Russia “what forms “Eastern Partnership” will take”. According to the President, “some states see

that partnership as partnership against Russia ... We would not like “Eastern Partnership” to turn partnership against Russia, ... unite separate anti-Russian minded states with other European states”⁶⁰.

Judging by its reaction, the Russian side sees “Eastern Partnership” as a regional challenge from the EU, an encroachment on the Russian sphere of interests in the post-Soviet space⁶¹.

Information background for bilateral cooperation

As we noted above, the relations between the political elites of the two countries largely rest on conflicts and confrontation. The political-diplomatic dialogue is full of mutual accusations, categorical statements, warnings, sharp demarches.

Such tone of official contacts influences the relations in different sectors of cooperation – economy, energy, military, humanitarian. The public discourse covered in the media generally creates an unfavourable atmosphere for mutual relations.

The information background for partnership is largely shaped by large-scale propaganda campaigns run by the Russian side. This especially struck the eye during election campaigns in Ukraine (2004-2008), gas conflicts (2006, 2009), solution of the issue of MAP for Ukraine (2008), events related with the Holodomor (2008), the conflict in the Caucasus (2008), etc.⁶²

The Russian media system controlled by the authorities spares no efforts to criticise the activity of the Ukrainian leadership, its foreign and home political course. The subjects of the information flow generally form a biased impression of Ukraine in the eyes of Russian citizens. Mass media instil in the public consciousness the following stereotypes: (a) Ukraine’s leadership acts on Western orders, pushes the country to NATO contrary to the will of its people; (b) due to internal conflicts, the country’s elite is unable to pursue an effective policy of reforms; (c) the common history is distorted, attempts are being made to rehabilitate Nazi accomplices; (d) cultural rights of the Russian-speaking population are violated, forcible Ukrainisation goes on; (e) Ukraine is an unreliable partner unlawfully taking Russian gas; (f) Russian sailors in Crimea are persecuted.

⁵⁵ The Polish-Swedish initiative “Eastern Partnership” unites Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The “Eastern Partnership” summit was held in Prague on May 7, 2009.

⁵⁶ Minutes of presentation and answers to mass media questions by Russia’s Foreign Minister S.Lavrov following plenary meeting of Russia-EU Permanent Partnership Council, Luxembourg, April 28, 2009. – Official web site of Russia’s Foreign Ministry.

⁵⁷ It is of fundamental importance for Moscow that European integration of Ukraine and Georgia does not lead to weakening of ties of those countries with Russia – Russia’s Foreign Ministry. – UNIAN, November 9, 2008.

⁵⁸ State Duma Member Kosachev asks the EU not to use “Eastern Partnership” to “tear” post-Soviet countries from the Russian Federation. – UNIAN, January 15, 2009.

⁵⁹ According to S.Lebedev, “European Union at the current stage cannot make up for the losses those states may sustain in case of participation in “Eastern Partnership”, having refused from cooperation within the Commonwealth”. See: Participation of some CIS countries in “Eastern Partnership” may require revision of agreements within the Commonwealth – CIS Executive Committee Head. – Interfax-West, May 13, 2009.

⁶⁰ Press conference upon the results of Russia-EU summit, May 22, 2009. – Official web site of the Russian President.

⁶¹ In this connection, one should also mention the unexpectedly tough position of Russia regarding the Declaration of the international conference in Brussels (March 23, 2009) on modernisation of the Ukrainian gas transportation system.

⁶² For instance, according to the Deputy Head of the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine, Russian media covered the 2007 parliamentary elections in Ukraine in a biased manner. Information of the political forces that formed the coalition and the Cabinet of Ministers was mainly positive, of the opposition – negative. – “Ekspert-Tsentr”, October 10, 2007, <http://www.expert.org.ua5>



Ukrainian leaders are among the most often mentioned in the Russian media (among foreign subjects). One of the leading Russian companies, “Medialogia”, compiled a “rating of mention” of the Russian media in 2008. V.Yushchenko (174,035 publications) ranked third (after V.Putin and D.Medvedev)⁶³.

The same trend is proven by regular monitoring of the Russian System for Complex Analysis of News (Interfax). In November 2008, the leaders among foreign politicians were: B.Obama (3,193 mentions), V.Yushchenko (2,677), Yu.Tymoshenko (1,963)⁶⁴. In the heat of the gas conflict (January 1-11, 2009) the top three most mentioned foreign leaders were: V.Yushchenko (589), Yu.Tymoshenko (409), O.Dubyna (389)⁶⁵.

Given the general tone of presentation of materials on Ukraine by the Russian media, it may be assumed that those mentions were mainly critical. Such popularity of Ukrainian politicians may be termed as ill fame. According to the known TV journalist Ye.Kiselev: “Citizens of Russia dislike Ukraine, USA, Great Britain, Poland, Georgia, many other countries, for one reason – pro-governmental TV propaganda depicts them as enemies, foes, sources of threat”⁶⁶.

Expert assessments. According to Ukrainian experts, Ukrainian problems are covered in the Russian media mainly critically (40%) and very critically (57.1%). 67% of Russian respondents chose the answer “mainly critically”, 19% – “very critically”.

Coverage of Russian problems in the Ukrainian media was assessed by Russian experts as mainly critical (19%) and very critical (65%). Ukrainian representatives were more reserved in assessments: 48.6% reported a neutral, reserved coverage of Russian problems, 32.4% – mainly critical and 9.5% – very critical.

In turn, Ukrainian media covering the situation in the Russian Federation not always take a balanced and impartial approach. They do not take into account the Russian realities, specificity of political processes. Some actions of the Russian side are viewed too critically, presented as direct interference in Ukraine’s home and foreign policy. The media spread around the thesis of aggressiveness of the Kremlin, of the arrogant and improper tone of its dialogue with Ukraine. Fears are expressed that development of contacts with Russia will inevitably lead to the growth of its control of Ukraine.

It should be noted here that the presence of Ukrainian media in the Russian information space is limited, and one may hardly speak of their influence on the Russian citizens. Meanwhile, the presence of Russian electronic and printed media in Ukraine’s media space is strong enough.

The information background is largely a derivative of the relations between the state and political elites of the two countries. Now, the media atmosphere of cooperation seems unfavourable – the air is dominated by confrontation of the parties, “black PR”, defamatory actions are used. Such situation, *first*, seriously complicates negotiations, bars solution of acute problems of cooperation. *Second*, undermines the international image of the parties (a recent example – exchange of series of mutual accusations during the gas conflict). *Third* (the main thing!) – the negative information background affects relations among citizens of the two countries.

Relations between countries’ citizens

Results of different sociological surveys held in Ukraine and Russia show that citizens of both countries rather critically assess the state of bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, results of some studies reveal an alarming trend towards deterioration of relations between citizens of Ukraine and Russia. Evidently, the conflict in the dialogue of the elites transmitted by the media, the generally negative information background for cooperation could not but influence the stand of citizens. This is the most threatening trend in bilateral relations.

Expert assessments. According to the majority (77.1%) of Ukrainian experts, relations between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia deteriorated. 21% believe that they remained unchanged. Deterioration of relations was noted by 54% of Russian respondents, 44% reported no change.

Ukrainian experts describe the attitude of Ukrainians to Russia as mainly positive, well-disposed (59%), of Russians to Ukraine – as mainly negative, critical (71.4%). Russian respondents are more optimistic – a positive, well-disposed attitude of Ukrainians to Russia was reported by 47% of those polled. 54% believe that Russians are well disposed to Ukraine.

The dynamic of the attitude of Ukrainians to Russia and of Russians to Ukraine is showily illustrated by results of simultaneous surveys conducted by respected sociological structures in 2008-2009 in Ukraine (KIIS) and Russia (“Levada Centre”) (Table “*What is your general attitude to Ukraine/Russia now?*”)⁶⁷.

What is your general attitude to Ukraine/Russia now?
% of those polled

	to Ukraine (in Russia)			to Russia (in Ukraine)		
	March 2008	January 2009	March 2009	April 2008	February 2009	March 2009
Very good / mainly good	55	29	41	88	91	90
Mainly bad / very bad	33	62	49	7	5	6
Hard to say	12	9	9	5	4	4

⁶³ Yushchenko appeared among top three politicians mentioned the most in Russia. – UNIAN, December 25, 2008.

⁶⁴ Medvedev and Putin, Obama and Yushchenko with Tymoshenko lead by mentions in Russian press in November – SCAN data. – Interfax, December 1, 2008.

⁶⁵ “Gazprom” CEO ranked second in rating of mention of Russian and foreign figures in the media since year beginning – SCAN data. – Interfax, January 12, 2009.

⁶⁶ Ye.Kiselev: “Anti-Ukrainian spirits in Russia can hardly be durable”. – “Glavred” Internet publication, May 19, 2009, <http://www.glavred.info>

⁶⁷ Press release of Kyiv International Institute of Sociology “Assessments of Ukraine-Russia relations by population of Ukraine and Russia”. – Kyiv, March 2009.



As one may see from the Table, the positions of Ukrainian and Russian citizens seriously differ – Russians are mainly critical about the neighbouring country, while Ukrainians cherish mostly positive emotions to Russia.

Surveys by the leading Ukrainian and international sociological services (KIIS, “FOM-Ukraine”, “Eurasian Monitor” international research agency, “Research & Branding Group”, etc.) record mainly positive attitude of Ukrainians to the Russian Federation. (In particular, according to a poll held by “FOM-Ukraine” (October 2008), 68.6% of Ukrainian respondents reported a good attitude to Russia⁶⁸. According to the “Eurasian Monitor” survey (November 2008), 58% of Ukrainian citizens consider the Russian Federation a friendly state⁶⁹).

Meanwhile, Russians demonstrate sceptical spirits. They are witnessed by surveys held by different sociological services in the Russian Federation. The report of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences “What are Russians afraid of?” (2008) notes a drop of sympathies to Ukraine. Only 23% of Russians reported good feelings to Ukraine, 60% – mainly bad. Sociologists attribute that to V.Yushchenko’s support for Georgia. They note that “the share of “Ukrainophiles” among Russians fell, compared to the previous year (2007 – *Ed.*), more than two-fold.... Respectively, the negative attitude to that recently closest to Russians “sister republic” grew in almost the same proportion”⁷⁰.

It may be suggested that the stand of the Russian citizens was strongly influenced by the generally critical information coverage of developments in Ukraine⁷¹. Russian media make emphasis on problem aspects of the situation in Ukraine, draw the audience’s attention to unfriendly actions of the Ukrainian authorities towards the Russian Federation, the “pro-Western course” of the leadership of the neighbouring country.

According to a poll held by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center in April 2008, Russians mentioned among the three countries with which the Russian Federation has the most tense and hostile relations the USA (25%), Georgia (25%) and Ukraine (21%)⁷². Multiyear surveys (2001-2009) by the above-mentioned “Levada Centre” witness a decrease of Russian sympathies to Ukraine and corresponding growth of critical spirits. (In 2001, 71% treated Ukraine positively, 23% – negatively. In 2009, their ratio made 41% to 49%⁷³).

What is witnessed in fact is some “psychological estrangement” of citizens of the two countries. Their

relations show signs of mistrust and suspicion. It may be suggested that such assessments largely apply to the strong and mighty, and generally the relations between the elites. So, establishment of a productive, friendly dialogue, removal of confrontation and intolerance may contribute to improvement of relations among citizens of the two countries.

Problems in the political segment of relations are caused by divergence of geopolitical course, different civilisational choice of the nations. This is probably one of the main reasons for the estrangement between the Ukrainian and Russian elites, conflicts in the political-diplomatic dialogue, largely bearing an accusative nature. Political confrontation involves growth of tension in all sectors of cooperation, bars solution of long-standing problems of bilateral partnership.

Exactly political reasons cause skidding of bilateral cooperation mechanisms, more than a year-long break in full-scale work of the Ukrainian-Russian Interstate Commission. Actions of the parties are often inconsistent with the spirit and letter the treaties between them. Unfortunately, so far, there is no consensus on the issues of border settlement in the Azov and Kerch water area, basic agreements of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet in Crimea are not elaborated. The subject of the terms and prospects of the Russian Fleet stationing in Crimea is one of the most disputed in the agenda of bilateral talks.

The parties’ positions regarding the content, forms and prospects of integration in the post-Soviet space fundamentally differ. Ukraine stays off reintegration projects initiated by the Russian Federation, intended to strengthen the Russian influence in the CIS and geopolitical “linkage” of post-Soviet states to the economic and defence policy alliance formed under Russia’s auspices.

Conflicts in the political sector, confrontation on the level of the state and political elites are widely covered by mass media, creating a negative background for bilateral cooperation. Media mainly work in the mode of criticism, creating in the public consciousness distorted stereotypes and sometimes inadequate perceptions of processes in the neighbouring country. As a result, there is an extremely alarming trend toward deterioration of relations between citizens of the two countries recorded by sociological surveys. That is why it seems extremely important to change the tone, nature and format of the bilateral dialogue, to build the system of relations in accordance with European norms, rules and standards.

⁶⁸ Majority of Ukrainians is well disposed to Russia – Interfax-Ukraine, October 27, 2008.

⁶⁹ Residents of most countries of former USSR consider Russia a friendly state – international poll. – Interfax, November 25, 2008.

⁷⁰ Information-analytical bulletin “What are Russians afraid of?” – Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2008, No.6, <http://www.isras.ru>

⁷¹ According to Ye.Kiselev: “Now, the information space in Russia is filled with Eurovision... Otherwise, if there is no top news, if the TV news editor does not know what to begin with, they make a story with some demonstration of the Party of Regions in Khreshchatyk. First, they show V.Yanukovich blaming the Orange authorities. Next goes a report from Crimea, and third – something about Russia’s President or Prime Minister. This is a norm of life”. – “Glavred” Internet publication, May 19, 2009.

⁷² Russian Public Opinion Research Center, press release No.951, May 8, 2008. – Web site of Russian Public Opinion Research Center, <http://wciom.ru>

⁷³ Attitude of Russians to the USA, EU, Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus (March 2009). – “Levada Centre” web site, <http://www.levada.ru>