

**Russia and Ukrainian Denuclearization:
Foreign Policy Under Boris Yeltsin**

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**Submitted to the Department of Government of
Smith College in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors**

Steven Goldstein, Faculty Advisor

April 3, 2008

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Steven Goldstein for agreeing to work with me as I walked into his office in the September 2008 with a raw proposal and confused thoughts. I am grateful for his patience, encouragement and inspiration in the writing of this thesis, for reading my numerous and incredibly lengthy drafts, and for being exceptionally friendly in critiquing them. He also loaned me many books, opened my eyes to the art of naming the chapters and sections of my work intelligently, and made sure I was optimistic throughout the many months of writing. He could easily put my confused ideas in a perfect and concise English, and talking to him was probably the most pleasant and rewarding part of writing this thesis.

I would also like to thank Professors Alice Hearst, Mlada Bukovansky, and Timothy Ruback for their advice on the process of writing and reassurance that kept me going. I must also thank Professor Howard Gold for reminding me of the deadlines and requirements just when I needed it. I am also grateful to Professor Jacques Hymans, who inspired me to write about nuclear weapons in his seminar on the Weapons of Mass Destruction. Working with Jacques Hymans and writing a seminar paper on the psychology of denuclearization prepared me for doing independent research for my thesis. I am also grateful to James Goodby for finding time to answer my questions and for giving me many insights on the denuclearization process and US-Ukrainian negotiations, in which he participated.

I am also thankful to my parents to collecting a wealth of materials and spending long hours in the old-fashioned Belarusian libraries photocopying publications relevant for my research and calling the libraries in Moscow and Kiev. Finally, thanks to the fellow thesis-writer Sarah Dunlap for keeping me company and promising to celebrate once we are done writing.

Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union made Ukraine an unexpected member of the nuclear club. Kiev found itself in possession of the world's third largest nuclear arsenal¹, but within six years Moscow and Washington restored the nuclear balance of the world prior to the Soviet demise, and Ukraine joined the NPT as a non-nuclear state. Of course, some friction in Ukrainian denuclearization was bound to occur due to the nationalist sentiments in the Ukrainian Rada, but the length of the denuclearization process and the size of the compensation received by Kiev resulted from Russian and American decisions in the early 1990s.

This is a case study of the evolution of Russia's policy toward the denuclearization of Ukraine. It is intended to add to our understanding of a broader evolution of Russia's foreign policy in the 1990s as well as to our appreciation of Boris Yeltsin's role as a leader and policymaker. Taking a closer look at the process of Ukraine's denuclearization is of interest for several reasons.

First of all, negotiating disarmament with Ukraine marked a change from the typically coercive diplomacy practiced by the United States and the Russian Federation. The "problem child" Ukraine was handsomely rewarded and received numerous security guarantees for giving up the nuclear arsenal that it could hardly claim, launch, or keep.² Both the United States and

¹ The force on the Ukrainian territory consisted of 176 launchers of intercontinental ballistic missiles (130 SS-19s, each capable of delivering six nuclear weapons, and 46 SS-24s, each armed with ten nuclear weapons) with about 1,240 warheads. In addition, 3,000 tactical nuclear weapons were present. The Nuclear Information Project, "Ukraine Special Weapons," *Federation of American Scientists*, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/ukraine> (accessed April 1, 2009).

² Mitchell Reiss writes, "For weapons that Ukraine did not control and had not built, it received (twice) American, Russian, and British security assurances, one hundred tons of nuclear fuel, forgiveness of its multibillion-dollar oil and gas debt to Russia, and a commitment of \$900 million in U.S. financial assistance." Mitchell Reiss, *Bridled Ambition: Why Countries Constrain Their Nuclear Capabilities* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995), 129.

Russia exhibited somewhat atypical behavior to achieve their goals (as examples may serve the US pressure against Libya in the 1980s and against Iraq in the 1990s as well as Russia's uncompromising posture in dealings with its now independent satellites and federal republics alike). Moscow's patience toward Ukraine in the first stages of denuclearization process was especially striking because it had used a much more assertive center-periphery tone only a couple of years earlier, in the Soviet period, and was dealing with the republic that had subverted its efforts to salvage the USSR by voting for independence in 1991 referendum. Yeltsin's reconciliatory tone is most remarkable because Ukraine was exceptionally important to Russia's role as a regional leader and successor to the USSR.³ Despite the economic difficulties Russia experienced with the dissolution of the USSR, enormous discrepancies in size, population, GNPs and military capabilities between Moscow and its neighbors (of which Ukraine was by far the most self-sufficient) provided Russian leadership with a considerable potential to influence these republics, given the political will. Therefore, it is quite surprising that Russian policy remained relatively benign when dealing with Ukraine's intransigence.

Secondly, the denuclearization of Ukraine occurred at the time of the very formation of Russian foreign policy after the dissolution of the USSR, as Russia was undergoing the process of nation and state building. Moreover, it involved two of the most important states in the eyes of Russian policymakers – the United States and Ukraine. Washington had been the focus of Russia's general external policy for more than half a century and can be in fact considered Russia's "significant other," to use the constructivist concept. On the other hand, Ukraine has been the focus of Russia's policy in the Near Abroad and has taken a special place in the hearts

³ A Russian diplomat acknowledged the growing realization of Ukraine's importance in an interview to *Izvestia*, "Russian diplomacy really needed to find a common language with Ukraine. Russian-Ukrainian agreement remains the foundation of the CIS. Without Ukraine no economic union is possible." *Izvestia*, November 6, 1993.

of Russians due to the common past in the Kiev Rus. As Bobo Lo writes, “Relations with Ukraine offered something for everyone in the Russian foreign policy elite: economic priorities for advocates of the liberal agenda, security objectives for great power ideologists and supporters of an independent foreign policy line, and a pan-Slavism for believers in a CIS-first outlook.⁴ Presidential advisor Sergei Stankevich wrote in March 1992 that the practice of Russian foreign policy was “to help Russia become Russia.”⁵ Russia was developing its identity in its discourse with the West and the Near Abroad, and Ukraine’s geographical position made it a crucial link between Russia and the West. Improving relations between Kiev and the United States could undermine Russia’s own discourse with the West.⁶ Thus by studying the denuclearization process, which brought together the two most important states in the eyes of Russian foreign policy makers, we are able to examine the very emergence of Russia’s identity as an independent state.

Thirdly, the process of Ukraine’s disarmament is an example of an unprecedented cooperation between Moscow and Washington, the two former enemies, and may carry some guidance regarding the ways to improve US-Russia discourse at this time of a new low in the relationship between two states. Finally, nuclear reversal is a phenomenon by itself and a closer look at Ukraine’s denuclearization may carry some lessons about the sticks and carrots that can dissuade a state from pursuing nuclear status. The case is unique because the three former Soviet

⁴ Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 81.

⁵ Sergei Stankevich, “Derzhava v poisakh sebja,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, March 28, 1992, cited in James Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity,” in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallender, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 69.

⁶ For example, Presidential Press Secretary Yastrzhembsky acknowledged, “Ukraine and NATO are two very closely intertwined things. The closer our relations with Ukraine, the less of a headache there will be with NATO.” *Kommersant-Daily*, May 31, 1997, p. 1. Quoted in Bobo Lo, 80.

republics - Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan - were the only states, besides South Africa, to have given up fully developed nuclear arsenals. In July 1990, before the dissolution of the USSR (and thus the official increase of nuclear powers by three) shocked the Western world, the third largest nuclear power had voluntarily pledged nonnuclear status in its declarations of independence. Before the Russians and Americans started employing sticks and carrots to prod the newly independent state along the denuclearization path, Ukraine had vowed to relinquish the nuclear weapons on its territory and reasserted its commitment to nonnuclear status on multiple occasions.

This paper is concerned with the period from the coup attempt in the Soviet Union in August 1991 to the end of 1994. The last warhead was removed from the Ukrainian territory on June 1, 1996, but the issue was effectively solved and negotiations completed by the end of 1994. The subsequent process consisted of implementing the agreements negotiated and signed in the period addressed in this work. Ukraine's hesitant nuclear compliance and frequent suspension of the transfer process gave Russian and American policymakers many reasons to worry. In 1992, Kiev took ownership of the Soviet nuclear arsenal on its territory, claiming that the Soviet deterrent was created with resources of many republics and therefore belonged to all of them. The Ukrainian Rada deputies repeatedly rejected Ukraine's membership in the NPT; kept demanding greater security guarantees and greater compensation from Russia and the West; and went as far as threatening to retain the weapons or even sell them to the highest bidder⁷. Ukraine placed after-the-fact conditions on the Lisbon Protocol to the START I Treaty, which committed the country along with Belarus and Kazakhstan to nonnuclear status "in the shortest

⁷ Thomas Bernauer, Stefan Brehm, and Roy Suter, "The Denuclearization of Ukraine," in Bernauer, Ruloff, *The Politics of Positive Incentives in Arms Control* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 119.

possible time,”⁸ and renounced freshly concluded Massandra Accords, which, among other things, reaffirmed its nonnuclear status.⁹ The problems were solved only in 1994. After Ukraine signed the Trilateral Agreement with Russia and the United States, the denuclearization process proceeded with no more disruptions.

Examining the four years of the disarmament process, I demonstrate that Russian policies aimed at Ukraine’s nuclear disarmament evolved from the half-hearted pursuit of denuclearization efforts under the US leadership in 1991-92 to the jealous guarding of its role as the successor of the Soviet Union in solving the problem by taking more initiative and seeking to limit US involvement in 1993-94. Russia continued to cooperate with the United States, which remained the chief sponsor of the project, but the success in the denuclearization efforts clearly rose on the list of Moscow’s priorities, and the Russian leadership adopted a more assertive stance in its negotiations with Ukraine.

What could account for this change in Russia’s behavior? In the discussion, which follows, I address how this shift in Russia’s attitude toward Ukraine’s denuclearization fits into the overall pattern of Russia’s foreign policy, which evolved from the decisive Westernism to a more balanced approach, and seek to explain the highlights in this transformation by analyzing the policies of Russian president Boris Yeltsin, accounting for the influence of his personal views and preferences, as well as for the various forces affecting his policy choices.

The paper is organized as follows: chapter one presents the general framework of Russian foreign policy making during 1991-1994, focusing on Boris Yeltsin’s role as the top decisionmaker; chapter two reviews Yeltsin’s views and their significance; chapter three

⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Lisbon Protocol to the START I Treaty,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/27389.pdf>, (accessed April 1, 2008).

⁹ Bernauer, Brehm, and Suter, 121-23.

addresses the most important pressures shaping his decisions during the period – those coming from the contentious parliament and powerful military; in chapters four and five, I outline the process of denuclearization in 1991-92 and 1993-94, respectively, identify the instances of apparent change in Russian policy toward Ukraine’s denuclearization, and demonstrate how Yeltsin’s preferences were influenced by the military and the parliament. I conclude by relating Yeltsin’s policies toward the denuclearization of Ukraine to the factors explained in the first chapter and showing how Russia’s policy in Ukraine fits into the general drift of Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin from the Westernism to centrism beginning in late 1992.

CHAPTER 1. YELTSIN'S ROLE IN FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING

The preferences of individual players affect all governmental actions, and their effects are directly proportionate to the individuals' positions in the state's power structure. In authoritarian Russia, the President situated at the very top of the hierarchy had the greatest input and relative freedom in making foreign policy in the early 1990s. Therefore, President Boris Yeltsin shaped Russia's policies in the Near Abroad, and his preferences and leadership style were major determinants in the denuclearization process. Not only was Boris Yeltsin in charge of the "key" to the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory, but he also was to decide the future of these weapons, negotiating with Ukraine, the United States, the Russian top military brass and his domestic opponents, mainly concentrated in the defiant Parliament. Those interactions – Yeltsin-Kiev, Yeltsin-Washington, Yeltsin-Parliament, and Yeltsin-Military – shaped Yeltsin's decisions alongside with his personal preferences. In this chapter, I will address the conditions that determine how much the President mattered, canvass his personal views, analyze various influences on his policymaking, and study their effects on his policies toward Ukraine's denuclearization in 1993.

Assessing the Leader's Influence

Valerie Hudson outlined conditions that determine how much influence a particular leader has.¹⁰ Yeltsin qualifies as a leader having a high impact on foreign policy according to the following criteria:

1. Regime type

¹⁰ Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2007), 38-39.

Although at the time Yeltsin won international acclaim for democratizing the country, the state remained authoritarian and the President held considerable power. Yeltsin's authority soared after the August 1991 coup attempt, even before the Soviet Union collapsed. As scholar of Soviet and Russian leaders George Breslauer points out, in the early 1990s Yeltsin was less constrained than other leaders due to a large electoral mandate and the absence of the powerful collective leadership of the Communist Party.¹¹ Richard Sakwa likewise mentions the inadequacy of accountability mechanisms constraining the presidency in Russia.¹² In October of 1991, the Russian Supreme Soviet awarded Yeltsin the power to rule by decree for a one-year period. Until June 1992 Yeltsin acted as his own prime minister and then was able to appoint the men of his choice. In the spring of 1992 he also acted as Defense Minister of the Russian Federation. Admittedly, for most of 1993 Yeltsin struggled with the opposition in the Parliament, and he had to seek support in the military and tame his liberal Westernist policies. However, at the end of 1993, he was again in charge and adopted a superpresidential Constitution, which allowed him to appoint the members of the government, dismiss the prime minister, and, under certain conditions, dissolve the Duma. All this proves that Russia's regime type and political realities at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union provided an environment in which Yeltsin dominated policy-making.

2. Leader's interest in foreign policy.

By the early 1990s, foreign policy was definitely among Yeltsin's priorities, not in the least because of Russia's dire need of Western aid and international recognition as a new state and the successor to the Soviet Union. Yeltsin took an active role by repeatedly traveling to the

¹¹ George M. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 142.

¹² Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, Fourth edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43.

United States and engaging with the West despite the objections of the legislature. Articles 80 and 86 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted by Yeltsin in 1993 gave him the power to exercise "leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation."¹³ He could negotiate and sign treaties as well as accredit foreign diplomats. Moreover, the key ministries involved in foreign and security policy – the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, the Federal Intelligence Service, and the Federal Border Service – reported directly to the president.¹⁴ The President was also in control of the government and headed the Security Council, composed of high-ranking government officials involved in foreign and security policy. *Izvestia* commented on Yeltsin's involvement in the denuclearization of Ukraine in 1993: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is slow to act while the general strategic line is left up to the president himself."¹⁵

3. The style of leadership.

Lilia Shevtsova uses the metaphor of "electoral monarchy" to describe the leadership style of Russia's first president. □ Yeltsin established a "personalized and monolithic system of power"¹⁷ and resisted spreading his authority among the branches of government, even at the expense of effectiveness.¹⁸ According to Breslauer, Yeltsin exercised a "benevolent but personalistic leadership" and behaved like "a head of the household," demanding loyalty and obedience, prying into the private lives of his subordinates, and tolerating no dissent.¹⁹ Yeltsin was said to retain much of the arbitrary, meddling management style of the provincial Party

¹³ Konstituciia Rossiiskoi Federacii (Constitution of the Russian Federation), English version, <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-01.htm> (accessed April 1, 2009).

¹⁴ F. Stephen Larrabee and Theodore W. Karasik, *Foreign and Security Policy Decisionmaking Under Yeltsin* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1997), 2.

¹⁵ *Izvestia*, May 29, 1993.

□ Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia – Lost in Transition*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 7.

¹⁷ Breslauer, 34.

¹⁸ Shevtsova, *Russia – Lost in Transition*, 3.

¹⁹ Breslauer, 176.

secretary, which he was earlier in his career.²⁰ He “custom-built some positions for individuals whose contribution or company he valued, and when he did so, he gave scant thought to the whole chessboard.”²¹ Timothy Colton writes about Yeltsin’s efforts to “have political independence from allies and associates,”²² with the result that the influence of Yeltsin’s advisers and aides was very limited. The president preferred to get advice from staff members on an individual basis thus immunizing his decisions from his aides’ opinions.²³ Colton writes that Yeltsin would listen to advice, agree in principle, and then act “as if the conversation had never taken place.”²⁴ In crisis situations Yeltsin remained independent. He did not consult anyone until the last moment even when he made the decision to dissolve the Supreme Soviet.²⁵ Determined to keep his hands on all levers of power, Yeltsin saw the heads of the FSS and the FIS, the Foreign Minister, and the Minister of Defense on an almost daily basis.²⁶ His favor seemed unpredictable and hard to gain,²⁷ which intensified the rivalry between the Defense and Foreign Ministries, as both Pavel Grachev and Andrei Kozyrev were Yeltsin’s closest aides.

4. The role played by the individual.

²⁰ Neil Malcolm and Alex Pravda, “Introduction,” in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Neil Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison, and Margot Light (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1996), 15.

²¹ Timothy Colton, *Yeltsin: A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 334.

²² Colton, 244.

²³ Breslauer writes, “Yeltsin did not want his staff to get together, work out a common viewpoint on an issue, and present it to him as a collective judgment.” Breslauer, 307.

²⁴ Colton, 191.

²⁵ “No one knew this, not even my closest aides,” Yeltsin wrote in his memoirs about the fateful events of October 1993. Boris Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia*, translated by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: Random House, 1994), 242.

²⁶ Neil Malcolm, “Foreign Policy Making,” in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Neil Malcolm, *et al.*, (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1996), 109.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The first president of independent Russia, Yeltsin was simultaneously “a state builder, a nation builder, the designer of a new economic order, and a statesman.”²⁸ He also played different roles at home and abroad depending on his audience. Togzhan Kassenova writes that while he believed in international norms and supported the free market on his trips to the United States, Yeltsin acted like Peter the Great in his Kremlin office and could entertain anti-Western thoughts when necessary.²⁹ All of Yeltsin’s roles contribute to explaining his impact on Russia’s foreign policy in the 1990s.

Margaret Hermann, who specializes in leadership styles of the heads of government, also draws attention to leaders’ prior diplomatic training. She suggests that untrained leaders tend to rely more on their personal worldviews in making foreign policy decisions.³⁰ An engineer who for thirteen years after university worked in construction before joining the party apparatus (a field that in Hermann’s vocabulary is “insensitive” to the international context), Yeltsin seems to have lacked diplomatic experience, especially in comparison to Gorbachev and other world leaders with whom he was interacting. In Colton’s words, “For diplomacy with the world powers, the man from Sverdlovsk was at first woefully unprepared. Kozyrev [Russian Foreign Minister] shopped around in Washington and West European capitals the message that their leaders should personalize their relations with him and appeal to his better instincts.”³¹

²⁸ Breslauer, 143.

²⁹ Togzhan Kassenova, *From Antagonism to Partnership. The Uneasy Path of the US-Russian Cooperative Threat Reduction* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag 2007), 39.

³⁰ Margaret G. Hermann, “A study of 53 Heads of Government,” in *Foreign Policy Decision Making: Perception, Cognition, and Artificial Intelligence*, ed. Stephen Walker (Durham: Duke UP), 123-40.

³¹ Colton, 267.

The Structure of Russian Foreign Policy Decision-Making in 1991-94

At the end of 1991, Yeltsin inherited a system of state institutions accustomed to working under the central control of the Communist party within the guidelines of the state ideology. The President used the momentum resulting from the demise of the Communist Party and expulsion of the politicians who sided with the putschists in 1991 to redraw the rules in accordance with his own preferences.

To bring the top foreign policy and national security officials together, Yeltsin established the Security Council in June 1992.³² The Council was to make recommendations and proposals and prepare decisions on security matters, which the President could then choose to implement.³³ According to Larrabee and Karasik, the Council's greatest impact was under secretary Yuri Skokov (May 1992 - May 1993). Skokov oversaw the work on "The Key Tenets of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," published in 1993. The document was the first major effort to define Russia's foreign policy and stressed that foreign political work would be "directed by the president, relying on the Security Council." However, Yeltsin's views on the Council's place in the government clashed with those of Skokov, and the secretary was dismissed in May 1993. Skokov's successor Air Marshall Yevgeni Shaposhnikov proved to be a less effective leader than Skokov³⁴ and resigned after only two months of service, complaining that he had to demonstrate "political loyalty and a minimum of activity."³⁵ Oleg Lobov,

³² The original decree 547 stipulated that the Council would consist of five permanent members with voting rights and a larger group of ministers without voting rights. The permanent members were initially comprised of the president, the vice president, the prime minister, the first deputy speaker of the Supreme Soviet, and the Security Council secretary. In 1993 the posts of vice-president and Supreme Soviet first deputy speakers were eliminated. Larrabee and Karasik, 35-37.

³³ *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, "Law on Security of May 5, 1992," May 6, 1992.

³⁴ Larrabee and Karasik, 36-37.

³⁵ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 12, 1993.

appointed Secretary of the Security Council in September 1993, was believed to have been selected because of his loyalty to Yeltsin.³⁶ In addition to passive leadership, the Council's efficiency was also constrained by bureaucratic factors. While the Council's responsibilities were wide, the body did not have the resources to analyze, plan, coordinate, and supervise all the areas concerned except on a selective, episodic basis.³⁷ Therefore, despite the Council's attempts to control foreign policy, Yeltsin resisted its influence fearing that a strong consultative body would diminish his own power.³⁸ The President felt no obligation to respect Security Council decisions.³⁹

The Presidential Apparatus (15 branch departments) likewise failed to become an active actor in foreign policy decisionmaking.⁴⁰ Although it grew rapidly, absorbing many former Party employees in the process, it lacked the experience, the skills, and the well-established internal structure. According to Malcolm and Pravda, "regular procedures do not seem to have taken root, and many decisions appear to have been taken in a haphazard way."⁴¹

Yeltsin's presidency coincided with the opening of the policy process to wider participation and greater public visibility. The weight of autonomous social forces, international pressures, and new political actors increased thanks to the Gorbachev's *New Thinking* and Yeltsin's abolishing of the Communist Party.⁴² By the early 1990s, policymakers at all levels

³⁶ Journalist Valery Vyzhutovich commented, "The President believes that the Security Council is first of all Lobov, 'his own man.'" *Moscow News*, 1994, no. 52.

³⁷ For example, the Council's Commissions, which had the task of drawing up resolutions, met very infrequently and were not allowed to play a significant role in decisionmaking. Neil Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," 113.

³⁸ Robert H. Donaldson, "Boris Yeltsin's Foreign Policy Legacy," University of Tulsa, <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~robert-donaldson/yeltsin.htm> (accessed April 1, 2009).

³⁹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 11, 1995.

⁴⁰ Larrabee and Karasik, 43.

⁴¹ Malcolm and Pravda, "Introduction," 15.

⁴² Breslauer, 231.

were paying more attention to public opinion. However, the Russian Federation never became a democracy, in which public opinion could actually influence the political process. Russian political parties remained underdeveloped and had only minor impact on the foreign policy. Similarly, interest groups in Russia were poorly organized and fragmented; therefore, their lobbying was largely ineffective. Finally, the decades of Soviet secrecy and the impossibility of free-ranging discussion inhibited the development of the informed public.⁴³ Therefore, in the words of the expert on Russian foreign policy Alexei Arbatov, the Russian government was “to all intents and purposes directly under the President.”⁴⁴

Yeltsin’s Role in Denuclearization

Yeltsin liked to maintain the fiction that the CIS nuclear weapons were under the CIS rather than Russia’s command. For example, he said:

Russia's president is by no means the Commander-in-Chief. The Armed Forces on Russia's territory – strategic as well as conventional – are under the jurisdiction of the Commander in Chief of the United Armed Forces of the Commonwealth marshal of aviation E.I. Shaposhnikov. My rank is colonel.⁴⁵

In reality, despite maintaining the Soviet practice of having three “nuclear briefcases,” “the nuclear button” remained under the effective Russian control⁴⁶ and with the move of

⁴³ Malcolm, “Foreign Policy Making,” 102.

⁴⁴ Alexei Arbatov, “Rossiya: natsinonal’ naya bezopasnost’ v 90-ye gody” (“Russia: national security in the 1990s”), *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya (World Economy and International Relations)*, no. 7 (1994):10-11.

⁴⁵ *Izvestia*, February 22, 1992.

⁴⁶ Ruth Deyermond, *Security and Sovereignty in the Former Soviet Union* (Boulder: Lynn Publishers, Inc., 2007), 81.

Shaposhnikov from his post as commander in chief of the CIS Joint Armed Forces to the Security Council in June 1993 belonged to the Russian Ministry of Defense, giving Yeltsin ultimate control of both the nuclear button and the strategic forces that were carrying out the removal of nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory.⁴⁷ And despite technicalities, throughout the whole time Yeltsin was fully in charge of negotiating the disarmament efforts with the Ukrainian President Kravchuk. He also was in control over the docile Foreign Ministry, headed by Yeltsin's friend Andrei Kozyrev, who regulated the formal aspects of US-Russia cooperation and Russia-Ukraine negotiations in accordance with Yeltsin's preferences. When the signals from the executive changed, Kozyrev had to reconsider his internationalism and modify the Foreign Ministry line to incorporate a pragmatic nationalist worldview, even though he remained a dedicated Westernist himself.⁴⁸ Asked to explain his policy shift in October 1993,⁴⁹ Kozyrev said that he was conducting the "President's policy."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁸ Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," 135.

⁴⁹ Kozyrev insisted that "partnership" with the West never meant "unity" and would be based on "realism and mutual overcoming of difficulties." Interview with Andrei Kozyrev, *Moskovskie novosti*, October 24, 1993.

⁵⁰ L. Velekhov, *Segodnia*, April 3, 1995.

CHAPTER 2. YELTSIN'S BELIEFS AND FOREIGN POLICY

The Significance of a Decisionmaker's Beliefs

Yeltsin's views on the CIS, Ukraine, nuclear weapons, the United States, and cooperation with the West are essential for understanding the evolution of the policy. The turbulent years following the dissolution of the Soviet empire suggest the relevance of many of the decisional settings, which Ole Holsti, expert on decision-making in politics and diplomacy, found to increase the valence of a decisionmaker's basic "beliefs."⁵¹ The following five are most appropriate:

1. Situations that contain highly ambiguous components and are open to a variety of interpretations (due to scarcity of information, information that is contradictory, etc).
2. Non-routine situations that require more than the application of standard operating procedures and decision rules.
3. Decisions at the pinnacle of government hierarchy by leaders who are relatively free from organizational and other constraints.
4. Responses to events that are unanticipated or contain an element of surprise.
5. Long-range policy planning, a task that inherently involves considerable uncertainty.

The situation in the early 1990s is consistent with the above decisional settings. Firstly, the coup of August 1991 was a highly ambiguous event, and up to signing the Belovezha Accords in December 1991 the future of the USSR remained uncertain. After the dissolution, the relationships between the republics had to be redefined and a great deal of inconclusiveness

⁵¹ Ole Holsti, "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," in Robert Axelrod, ed., *Structure of Decision* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976), 30.

remained. Moreover, it was far from certain that Russia was the sole formal successor of the Soviet Union, and Ukraine repeatedly contested its claims (for example, by taking ownership of the Soviet military assets). Additionally, the behavior of Ukrainian decisionmakers sending contradictory signals was hard to interpret. A lot of noise was generated by the nationalist Rada deputies, some of whom advocated retaining the nuclear weapons contradicted the statements of the Ukrainian President regarding the nation's willingness to enshrine the nonnuclear status into many of its official documents.

Secondly, the collapse of the empire and obtaining independence after the decades of the Soviet rule was a unique experience for Ukrainian and Russian leaders alike. To Yeltsin fell the task of defining Russian national identity and establishing the tenets of its national security in a new international environment, deciding the direction for economic reform on an unprecedented scale, and restructuring the governmental apparatus after the collapse of the Communist Party. All these tasks were unique and there was no precedent to follow. Moreover, emergence of the Near Abroad required a substantial reformulation of Russia's foreign policy and non-routine decisionmaking. If in his relations with the United States Yeltsin could follow Gorbachev's example, dealing with the new states along Russia's border meant creating new rules, often as different and contradictory as the identities and policies of Russia's new neighbors themselves. Furthermore, the process of denuclearization was itself a unique experience.

Thirdly, the political system inherited by Russia was far more centralized than a typical Western system, and the President was relatively free from institutional constraints, as was emphasized in the previous section. Although the legislature had to ratify important international treaties, the political process was largely in the hands of the executive. With the Communist party in shambles and the centuries-long tradition of authoritarian rule in Russia, Yeltsin wielded

considerable power throughout his presidency, having ruled by decree, acted as his own prime minister, and temporarily served as his own Defense Minister. He obtained even more powers by adopting the 1993 superpresidential Constitution.

Fourth, the coup of August 1991 and the dissolution of the armed-to-the-teeth Soviet Union were by no means anticipated by Moscow. It greatly increased the state's insecurity and stimulated the need for formulating a new national identity and a new national interest. Additionally, Ukraine's stalling the denuclearization process was an unpleasant surprise to Yeltsin after the country had repeatedly stated its adherence to the nonnuclear status. The change in the US approach toward the FSU states developed by Strobe Talbott by mid-1993 was also unanticipated.

Fifth, the situation required a great deal of policy planning that extended well into the future. Moscow had to draft long-range policies regarding US-Russia cooperation relying on the fragile period of unprecedented goodwill between the two countries. Yeltsin was signing sweeping arms control agreements with implementation deadlines in the next century, and by then the relationship between Russia and the West could have changed. Russia's initial goal was integrating into the Western economic system, which by the most optimistic estimates required considerable time for adjustment. The future of the newly independent countries was also uncertain, and the leadership had to plan decades ahead when signing the CIS agreements.

Thus, the turbulent political scene in Russia in the early 1990s demanded decisions that would rely on beliefs rather than calculations, increasing the influence of Yeltsin's distinctive views on Russia's policy choices. Of course, we need to recognize the distinction between Yeltsin's convictions and decisions, as well as between his decisions and resulting actions.⁵²

⁵² Holsti, 34-35.

Here I will outline some of Yeltsin's views on the issues relevant to the denuclearization process, which will help us to understand his policies as a leader.

Boris Yeltsin's Beliefs

Yeltsin's attitude to the CIS and the Level of Independence of its Member States

In his memoirs Yeltsin liked to portray himself as a champion of republics' independence. As early as 1989, on his first visit to the United States, he stated, "If a Republic wishes to secede from the Union, it should be allowed to do so."⁵³ His campaign program for nomination as a candidate of Sverdlovsk oblast' to the Supreme Soviet in 1990 expressed his belief in the strong republics exercising "maximum possible self-reliance."⁵⁴ Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin had advanced the "Russia-victim" argument, according to which Russia had subsidized other Soviet republics, getting nothing in return.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, in the summer of 1991, he joined the growing chorus of the leaders of the socialist republics who demanded "greater political rights, greater economic and financial independence," only on behalf of the Russian Federation.⁵⁶ After the failed August 1991 coup attempt, as his power was drawing strength from the weakening USSR, Yeltsin wrote, "Gorbachev represented the Union, the empire, the old power, and I represented Russia, an independent republic, a new and as yet nonexistent country."⁵⁷

⁵³ *Washington Times*, 18 September 1989.

⁵⁴ Yeltsin quoted in Colton, 179.

⁵⁵ Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 76, 59.

⁵⁶ Breslauer, 135.

⁵⁷ Boris Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia*, translated by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, (New York: Random House, 1994), 35.

But although the power struggle with Gorbachev put him on the other side of the barricade in 1991 what Yeltsin really wanted was not the end of the Soviet Union, but Russia's autonomy in the Union's confederal reincarnation.⁵⁸ Although Yeltsin called for "the strengthening of Russia's statehood," he defined it as a prerequisite for Russia's membership in the "Union of Sovereign States."⁵⁹ And Yeltsin saw Kiev as an integral part of this body, "What kind of union would there be without Ukraine? I cannot imagine it."⁶⁰

Before he was even elected president and then throughout his two terms in office, Yeltsin corrected, downplayed, and officially refuted occasional declarations of the State Duma and individual politicians that could have been read as unfriendly toward Kiev.⁶¹ On November 19, 1990, Yeltsin signed a ten-year cooperation treaty with Kravchuk recognizing existing borders, which gave weight to Ukraine's claim to Crimea.⁶² The next year, he was quick to retract the statement of his own press secretary, Pavel Voshchanov, regarding Russia's right to raise the border issue with the republics that declared their independence, prudently sending his Vice-President Rutskoi to Kiev with assurances that Russia had no territorial claims.⁶³ After Ukraine voted for independence in December 1991, Yeltsin "expressed his conviction on the possibility and the need to quickly establish new inter-state relations between Russia and Ukraine, to

⁵⁸ Yeltsin saw Russia and other sovereign republics joining a confederation, in which the periphery controlled taxation and natural resources and delegated only a few functions – for example, national security, railroads, the power grid, and atomic energy – to a central authority. Colton, 195.

⁵⁹ Breslauer, 138.

⁶⁰ Yeltsin (on November 25, 1991) quoted in Colton, 204.

⁶¹ Mikhail A. Molchanov, *Political Culture and National Identity in Russian-Ukrainian Relations* (College Station: Texas A&M UP, 2002), 104.

⁶² Colton, 189.

⁶³ Roman Solchanyk, *Ukraine and Russia: The Post-Soviet Transition* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2001), 56.

include diplomatic relations.”⁶⁴ Although Russian public opinion was uniformly in favor of Crimean irredentism, Yeltsin refused to support it and negated several parliamentary resolutions on the status of Sevastopol.

Although in December 1991 Yeltsin’s dedication to the Union fell prey to his dedication to getting executive power and ousting Gorbachev, his opinion on preserving a looser but still united community did not change. This is how he defends his decision to dissolve the USSR in Belovezha:

The Belovezhsky agreement was [...] a revision of the Union treaty among three major republics of that Union. We articulated and preserved the idea of the coexistence (actually quite strictly regulated) of states in one economic, political, and military region. But we departed from the old formula of Union government and control of everyone by Moscow.”⁶⁵

Indeed, the Russian delegation came to the meeting in Belovezha advocating a union of democratic states. According to the account of the CIS founding by Andrei Kozyrev, Yeltsin and Gennady Burbulis (First Deputy Chairman of the Government of the RSFSR in December 1991) “tactfully but rather persistently kept reiterating the thought that regardless of what happened to the Soviet Union, the three Slavic states should stick together because they are united by historical kinship.”⁶⁶ Kozyrev credited Yeltsin with directing the discussion to an agreement on a union of fraternal republics.⁶⁷ Colton writes that Yeltsin even had “an assignment from Gorbachev” to ask Kravchuk whether Ukraine would agree to the kind of agreement Gorbachev

⁶⁴ *The New York Times*, December 3, 1991.

⁶⁵ Yeltsin, *The Struggle*, 113-14.

⁶⁶ Andrei Kozyrev, *Preobrazhenia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1995), 170.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 168-73.

pushed at Novo-Ogarevo, if Ukraine received more rights and freedoms.⁶⁸ However, the Ukrainians disagreed with the “union and integration” rhetoric of the Russian delegation. Kravchuk saw the CIS as a mechanism to smooth Ukraine’s divorce from the Soviet Union and was worried that Yeltsin had come to “threaten and issue an ultimatum of using force” to pressure Ukraine into remaining within the Soviet Union.⁶⁹

Attempts to replicate the USSR model by replacing the central Soviet structures with those of the Russian Federation can be seen in the CIS Agreement, as Ruth Deyermond, an expert on post-Soviet security, pointed out.⁷⁰ The signatory states that were declaring independence from one another focused on outlining the areas of their dependence and interaction and agreed to cooperate in the broadest matters, allowing for interference in each other’s internal affairs on a regular basis. For example, Article 4 commits members to developing “cooperation of peoples and states in the spheres of politics, the economy, culture, education, public health, protection of the environment, science and trade and in humanitarian and other fields.”⁷¹ Articles 6 and 7 commit member states to cooperation in the security and foreign policy spheres,⁷² precluding independent foreign policy decisionmaking. The CIS Agreement resembles the 1977 Soviet Constitution, with foreign and security policies determined by the center rather than by the “sovereign” union republics (Chapter 9 and Article

⁶⁸ Colton, 205-206.

⁶⁹ Kozyrev, 169.

⁷⁰ Deyermond, 37.

⁷¹ “Agreement on the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States,” TheRussiaSite.org, <http://therussiasite.org/legal/laws/CISagreement.html> (accessed April 1, 2009).

⁷² Article 7 of the Agreement reads, “The high contracting parties recognize that within the sphere of their activities the following will be implemented on an equal basis through the common coordinating institutions of the commonwealth: cooperation in the sphere of foreign policy; cooperation in forming and developing the united economic area and the common European and Eurasian markets, and in the area of customs policy.” Ibid.

73 of Chapter 8 of the Constitution).⁷³ A similar arrangement must have been what at least some of the CIS members envisioned. Indeed, Russia and Belarus viewed the Commonwealth as a mechanism for retaining key Soviet features,⁷⁴ as Kravchuk acknowledged in an interview in January 1992:

The domestic and foreign policy of each state is determined by the people and the government structures of that state. The representatives of other states- I do not want to specify them here – forget this truth and are attempting again to create something that would resemble a state. For instance, the idea of a single army is based on the principle of a single state, because there cannot be eleven states and a single army.⁷⁵

It was especially hard for Yeltsin to give up planning the CIS common defense system. To him “any division of strategic arms among the republics was completely out of question.”⁷⁶ In February of 1992, Yeltsin considered “the approach based on combining the defense efforts of states more effective” and promised that “if his opinion continue[d] to be shared by the majority of the Commonwealth members, Russia [would] not change its position on the issue.”⁷⁷ Despite Ukraine consistently frustrating Russia’s attempts for a collective security system within the CIS, the President’s illusions about the CIS possibilities persisted. For example, the version of the draft Ukrainian-Russian treaty drawn up as late as September 1992, nine months after the

⁷³ “Constitution of the USSR,” Bucknell University, <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/1977toc.html> (accessed April 1, 2009).

⁷⁴ Deyermond, 48.

⁷⁵ *Segodnya*, July 27, 1994.

⁷⁶ Robert V. Baryliski, *The Soldier in Russian Politics: Duty, Dictatorship, and Democracy under Gorbachev and Yeltsin* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998), 153.

⁷⁷ *Izvestia*, February 22, 1992.

dissolution of the USSR, still foresaw developing a joint military doctrine and putting Russian military bases in Ukraine.⁷⁸

Although Russia, like other states of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), declared its independence, it sought to be the Union's primary successor. This meant not only that it owned the Union's assets and took its place in the UN Security Council. By agreeing to pay the Union's debts Russia expected the Union's former republics to revolve around Moscow as usual, as if only the distance and the pace of revolution had changed. In early 1992, the future of the CIS and Russia's role in it were uncertain, but Yeltsin undoubtedly hoped to make more of it than it became, particularly in regard to the "brotherly" Slavic states on its border, Ukraine and Belarus.

Yeltsin's Views on Nuclear Weapons and Nonproliferation

Yeltsin not only followed Gorbachev's arms reduction path; he altered Russia's strategic posture by adopting a more radical stance on the destruction of nuclear, bacteriological, and chemical weapons.⁷⁹ Viewing security in primarily economic terms, he argued that the immense military apparatus failed to preserve the Soviet Union, and that Russia's economic and political stability rather than its nuclear arsenal would help it to occupy its rightful place in the international system and enhance national security. For the first time since the beginning of the nuclear arms race, Russia abandoned what he dubbed "ominous parity" with the United States, "which has led to Russia's [...] having half of its population living below the poverty line."⁸⁰ In February of 1992, Yeltsin proclaimed that Russia did not have a special, secret nuclear policy and announced his goal for the nuclear-free world:

⁷⁸ Solchanuk, 69.

⁷⁹ Breslauer, 156.

⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

Russia will not be the first to use the nuclear weapons. This is our principal position. [...] The media have been lately talking about exploiting the nuclear factor in our relations with the former Soviet republics; such accusations have nothing in common with reality and are blasphemous and offensive. [...] Russia is in favor of the nuclear disarmament [...]. The principle of nuclear nonproliferation must be rigorously enforced...⁸¹

Yeltsin was so enthusiastic about disarmament that he promised that Russia would reach reduction levels stipulated by the START-1 (signed by Gorbachev) within three years, instead of the seven envisioned by the treaty.⁸² He acknowledged that these concessions in reducing the Soviet arsenal expressed “the fundamental change in the political and economic relations between the United States of America and Russia.”⁸³ He also issued a statement expressing Russia’s readiness to extend the moratorium on the nuclear testing enacted by Russia, France, and the United States, which was to expire on July 1, 1993, if the United States promised not to resume its nuclear testing.⁸⁴

Yeltsin’s views on disarmament were far from idealistic. Although he somewhat naively believed that nuclear weapons were sufficient to deter any foe,⁸⁵ he realized that Russia simply could not afford to maintain parity with the United States for much longer, opting for what from his viewpoint was the “minimum security level to deal with any possible eventuality which might arise anywhere in the world and threaten [Russian] security.”⁸⁶ He also knew that Western interest in and financial contribution to the FSU states was grounded on the value of nuclear

⁸¹ *Izvestia*, February 22, 1992.

⁸² *The New York Times*, January 30, 1992.

⁸³ Thomas L. Friedman, "Reducing the Russian Arms Threat," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1992.

⁸⁴ *Izvestia*, June 4, 1993.

⁸⁵ Dale R. Herspring, *The Kremlin and the High Command: Presidential Impact on the Russian Military from Gorbachev to Putin* (Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 2006), 65.

⁸⁶ *The New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

weapons in the international system. Thus, he skillfully manipulated the information on the safety and stability of Russia's nuclear arsenal to bolster Western support for his regime. He even justified the extraconstitutional act of dissolving the Parliament in October 1993 by "protect[ing] Russia and the whole world against catastrophic consequences of the disintegration of Russian statehood, recurring in a country that has an enormous arsenal of nuclear weapons."⁸⁷ Playing upon the Western fear of nuclear-armed unstable Russia, Yeltsin would ask for extension of Russia's credits and loans.

The logic was similar when the denuclearization of the three NISs was discussed. Yes, the Ukrainian weapons would be transferred to Russia's territory and destroyed, but Russia needed money – and much more than the United States initially offered. In this aspect, Russia's haggling was not much different from Ukraine's, and the nuances in tone and posture were due to Russia's size, position as the successor of the Soviet Union, and Washington's friendlier attitude toward Russia.

Yeltsin's Views on the Nuclear Weapons on the Ukrainian Territory

Yeltsin realized the danger of the nuclear weapons, but was not nearly as worried about the dire scenario of loose nukes projected by American think tanks as his Western counterparts. Most of the debate over the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory revolved about their ownership and control: if Ukraine owned the weapons, then it had to be compensated for them; if Ukraine had "administrative" control of these weapons, then its position had to be given greater weight in international negotiations. To Yeltsin, who understood Kiev better, Ukraine's denuclearization represented a different problem than it did to the US leaders, who were paranoid over the emergence of three additional nuclear successor states to the USSR and would

⁸⁷ Moscow Ostankino First Channel Network, September 21, 1993 (FBIS-SOV-93-182-, p.2), cited in Breslauer, 170.

not spare resources to reduce that number to only one – Russia. Of course, Yeltsin had no interest in seeing independent nuclear states along Russia’s borders either, but Kiev’s commitment to denuclearization was strong in his eyes. Firstly, Ukraine had voluntarily denounced the nuclear weapons in its declaration of independence before any pressure was exerted.⁸⁸ Because Ukraine was trying to join the international community, fast denuclearization and joining Western treaties (including the NPT) seemed logical. Yeltsin also knew that the nonnuclear status served as a marker distinguishing Ukraine from the subdominant position in the Soviet Union and that atomic power was associated with the Chernobyl tragedy.⁸⁹

Secondly, Yeltsin was in control of the weapons and had his hands on the nuclear “button.” In fact, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union not much changed in the nuclear realm from Yeltsin’s point of view (as opposed to the US point of view, in which three new nuclear states with their weapons targeting the United States, emerged). Russia still had the technical ability to launch the weapons. Of course, in theory, Yeltsin had to get the approval of the three other leaders⁹⁰, but they did not possess any codes and could hardly do anything to overturn Russia’s decision.⁹¹ Therefore, there was no need to force the issue at the time when the President had more pressing concerns and the United States was willing to pay and take the

⁸⁸ Ukraine reaffirmed its desire to achieve a non-nuclear status many times. The Ukrainian SSR’s mid-1990 Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine stated, “The Ukrainian SSR solemnly declares its intention of becoming a permanently neutral state that does not participate in military blocs and adheres to three nuclear-free principles: to accept, to produce and to purchase no nuclear weapons.” A resolution “On the Nuclear-Free Status of Ukraine” was passed in October 1991, several weeks before the final dissolution of the USSR. Deyermond, 70.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ According to Article IV of the “Agreement on Common Measures Towards Nuclear Weapons,” decisions on the use of the weapons were made, after approval by the heads of states of the Parties, by the President of the RSFSR. “Agreement on Common Measures Towards Nuclear Weapons, December 21, 1991,” *Pravda*, December 23, 1991.

⁹¹ Alexander A. Pikayev, “Post-Soviet Russia And Ukraine: Who Can Push The Button?” *The Nonproliferation Review*; Volume 1.3; Spring-Summer 1994, 35.

initiative. As a result, in the beginning Yeltsin took the statements of Ukrainian nationalists with a grain of salt and did not panic even when the transfer of the tactical weapons was suspended. (This was in contrast to the alarmed United States).⁹²

Pavel Podvig writes, “Yeltsin never seemed to subscribe to the view that nuclear weapons were important. Instead, he believed in the power of his personal relationships with people – namely, his relationships with other world leaders.”⁹³ In negotiating international agreements, especially on the sensitive issues like disarmament, Yeltsin tended to rely on his friendships and affinities. For example, he was convinced that the weapons reductions treaties signed between the United States and Russia were “an expression and a proof of the personal trust and confidence” between President Bush and himself.⁹⁴ He established friendships – characterized by a degree of familiarity that sometimes surprised even those to whom it was addressed – with Bush, Clinton, Helmut Kohl, the American ambassador to Moscow Robert Strauss (with whom he set up “a mutual admiration society”⁹⁵) and other leaders.⁹⁶

Given the tensions between Kiev and Moscow in the 1990s, Yeltsin can be credited with establishing a remarkably amicable relationship with the Ukrainian President. The relationship between Yeltsin and Kravchuk could give one the impression that the two presidents saw eye to

⁹² According to *The New York Times*, “The declaration [to suspend arms transfer] disturbed Washington. In Moscow, it was viewed largely as a ploy by Ukraine to wrest a share of Western funds earmarked for the dismantling, and as a political maneuver in advance of the meeting Friday of Commonwealth leaders in Kiev.” *The New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

⁹³ Pavel Podvig, “Boris Yeltsin’s arms control legacy,” *The Bulletin Online*, April 30, 2007, Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces, http://russianforces.org/blog/2007/04/boris_yeltsins_arms_control_le.shtml (accessed April 1, 2009).

⁹⁴ *The New York Times*, June 17, 1992.

⁹⁵ Yeltsin quoted in Colton, 267.

⁹⁶ For example, Yeltsin wrote, “George Bush and I established very friendly relations. Barbara Bush also calls now and then. I hope that she will come to visit, and Naina [Yeltsin’s wife] will host her well, and she will have a wonderful time. Bush and I agreed to play tennis. It’s sure to be a very tough match.” Yeltsin, *The Struggle*, 138.

eye on most issues, including denuclearization, but the hot-headed nationalists in their respective parliaments frustrated their efforts. After yet another unproductive meeting, Yeltsin would cheerfully admit, “The main political result is that we have remained friends.”⁹⁷ And to friends the President could not say “no”. In his memoir Yegor Gaidar, Yeltsin’s Prime Minister and economic advisor, mentioned his fear that Yeltsin, if left alone with the Belarusian leaders, would concede more than Russia could afford.⁹⁸ According to an insider in the Yeltsin administration, in CIS relations Yeltsin “could be generous to a fault.”⁹⁹ However, no friendship and courtesy could patch the deep disagreements between Russia and Ukraine, and by December 1993, Yeltsin remarked in exasperation, “Ukraine is cheating us all – Russia, the USA, Europe, all the world. And we are so helpless that we cannot deal with this evil.”¹⁰⁰

Yeltsin and the West

It is helpful to place Yeltsin’s views in perspective by examining the attitudes of Russia’s main domestic “schools of thought” toward the West, the Near Abroad and the issue of disarmament. Few nations were as ambivalent about their national interest as Russians in 1991. Foreign policy toward the fourteen republics along the Russian border had to be drawn from scratch, and the Russian political elite, composed largely of communists and those who fought against them, could not easily agree on the basic policy principles. Russian society was split between those who wanted Russia to be a Westernized country, and those who still cherished dreams of restoring the Soviet Union as a bastion against the West. Debates raged over whether Russia should orient itself toward the West or the East; whether Russia was still a superpower;

⁹⁷ *The New York Times*, January 16, 1993.

⁹⁸ Breslauer, 180.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁰⁰ *Izvestia*, December 22, 1993.

and whether it belonged in Europe or in Asia. Borrowing definitions from Neal Malcolm,¹⁰¹ Nicole Jackson distinguishes three main foreign policy orientations that competed for political dominance in Russia in the early 1990s: liberal Westernism, pragmatic nationalism, and fundamental nationalism.¹⁰² According to Alex Pravda, who divides Russian parties and blocs into similar categories,¹⁰³ nationalism went hand in hand with conservatism while reformism was strongly associated with Westernism.¹⁰⁴ I will now briefly outline the views of the above-mentioned three political camps.

1. Liberal Westernism. In the idealist view of international relations advocated by “liberal Westernists” (also called internationalists, reformists, or Atlanticists), the economic and political aspects of security were as important as military issues, and observance of international norms was the most effective way of advancing national interests. Westernists saw no external military threat to Russia¹⁰⁵ and favored disarmament efforts. They supported economic liberalization and a free market economy, believed in international organizations (the UN, the OSCE) and advocated close relations with the West. In the Near Abroad, they generally supported gradual economic integration, respected the sovereignty of the CIS states, and favored diplomacy over the use of force.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Malcolm, *et. Al.*, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*.

¹⁰² Nicole J. Jackson, *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, debates and actions* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 6,7.

¹⁰³ Pravda, Alex, “The Public Politics of Foreign Policy,” in Malcolm *et al.*, *Internal Factors*, 171.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁰⁶ The key reformist party at the time was Demrossiya (Russia’s Choice since 1993), which comprised the reformist members of the government, including Foreign Minister Kozyrev. Another prominent liberal internationalist was Yeltsin’s economic adviser advisor Egor Gaidar. Jackson, 35.

2. *Fundamental nationalism.* A different policy orientation was articulated by fundamental nationalists (also called oppositionist nationalists), who opposed Russia's integration into the world economy and the Western world. They proposed means to recreate a greater Russia, envisioning a rebirth of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ For fundamental nationalists, the rapid intensification of US-Russian relations endangered Russia's national identity.¹⁰⁸ They warned against rapid disarmament agreements and Russia's membership in Partnership for Peace. The most radical fundamental nationalists even condemned the President and his Foreign Minister as "agents of influence" of the US "special services."¹⁰⁹

3. *Pragmatic nationalism.* Russian "pragmatic nationalists" thought to balance the agendas of the diametric groups mentioned above.¹¹⁰ Their definition of Russian security interests was primarily geopolitical. From their perspective, articulated by presidential advisor Sergei Stankevich, Russia had a special mission to serve as a bridge between the West and the East, "to initiate and maintain a multilateral dialogue of cultures, civilizations and states."¹¹¹ They advocated political, economic, and even military means to secure Russian interests and supported more active

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Most prominent fundamental nationalist movements were Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and communists of Zyuganov's Communist party of the Russian Federation. In more moderate terms, nationalist argument was also made by Aleksandr Rutskoi (Vice-President until 1993), a centrist critic ending up as a highly nationalist leader of the opposition in the autumn 1993 showdown with the President. D. A. Maiorov (ed.) *Neizvestnyi Rutskoi: Politicheskii portret* (The Unknown Rutskoi: Political Portrait) (Moscow: Obozrevatel, 1994), 258-74.

¹⁰⁹ Pravda, 176.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 179.

¹¹¹ Stankevich envisioned "Russia the conciliator, Russia the unifier, Russia the harmonizer [. . .] a country that takes in West and East, North and South, and thus is uniquely capable [. . .] of harmoniously unifying many different elements, of achieving a historic symphony." Sergei Stankevich, "Derzhava v poiskakh sebya" ("A State seeking itself"), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 28, 1992.

involvement in the states of the Former Soviet Union. In the pragmatists' view, close relations with the CIS states would ensure Russia's return to the great power status.¹¹²

The new political establishment was unevenly divided between the three groups.¹¹³ According to survey of opinion among the foreign policy elite carried out in 1993, liberal internationalists were mainly found "in foreign policy institutions, including the Foreign Ministry, the academic community and the press, among politicians supporting Yeltsin, and among members of the Supreme Soviet Foreign Affairs Committee." On the other hand, more conservative views "tended to be drawn from opponents of the President, other members of the Supreme Soviet, and officials from other government departments (i.e. Ministry of Defense, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the Council of Ministers apparatus)."¹¹⁴ Another survey analyzed the views of the military, discovering that early in 1992 perhaps some 80 percent of colonels remained in broad terms conservative and only 29 percent were reform-minded.¹¹⁵ However approximate they may be, these correlations draw attention to the main contestants for the soul of Russia held by the "liberal internationalists" at the Foreign Ministry and centrists and nationalists inside the Supreme Soviet and the Defense Ministry.

The Westernist conception of national interest dominated Russian foreign policymaking in 1991-1992. Andrei Tsygankov identifies its three key components as radical economic reform,

¹¹² Between 1991 and 1993, the key centrist political party was the political movement Civic Union. A centrist party Yabloko recommended a gradualist strategy of economic integration and firm legalized military means for stabilizing conflict areas. Centrist views were also advocated by the military elite, including Defense Minister Grachev, Deputy Defense ministers Boris Gromov and Geogey Kondratyev and Colonel-General Viktor Sorokin. After the Soviet collapse, they openly promoted an activist military role in the CIS states in order to settle ethnic conflicts on Russia's terms and to support Russians in the Near Abroad. Jackson, 46.

¹¹³ Kassenova, 38.

¹¹⁴ Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," 131.

¹¹⁵ Roy Allison's interview with Col. Urazhtsev, head of the unofficial 'Shielf' military trade union, 14 February 1992. Roy Allison, "Military Factors in Foreign Policy," in Malcolm *et al.*, *Internal Factors*, 233.

rapid membership in the Western international institutions, and isolationism from the former Soviet states.¹¹⁶ The liberal Westernists held that if Russia focused on the West and improved its economy, stability in the CIS would follow.¹¹⁷ This didn't happen; soon the euphoria on both sides of the Atlantic waned and Russia's official foreign policy philosophy shifted away from Westernism.

Boris Yeltsin was a decisive Westernist in the early years of his presidency despite the widespread criticism from pragmatic and fundamental nationalist camps. It was President of the USSR Gorbachev who ushered Russia into the era of new relationship with the United States, for which his successor President of the Russian Federation shouldered criticism. However, rapport with the United States was always high on the list of Yeltsin's priorities. Leon Aron mentions Yeltsin's "perennial hunger for external validation" strengthened by the humiliation of November 1987.¹¹⁸ For Yeltsin, this "hunger" was two-fold. Firstly, he for a long time struggled for validation as a leader of Russia by replacing Gorbachev in Western minds. Secondly, he believed that Russia as a state needed external validation as a legitimate successor of the Soviet Union and a European power by integrating with the West.

An engineer from the provinces, Yeltsin was overwhelmed by the United States, calling his first visit in 1989 a "lifelong dream come true."¹¹⁹ But despite his enthusiasm¹²⁰, the leader's

¹¹⁶ Tsygankov, 58.

¹¹⁷ Jackson, 60.

¹¹⁸ In fall of 1987 Yeltsin was dismissed from his high-ranking party position and severely criticized. In November he was fired from the post of first secretary of the Moscow City Committee and demoted to the position of first deputy commissioner for the State Committee for Construction. In Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York; St. Martin's Press, 2000), 332-33.

¹¹⁹ Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp, "Visiting Soviet Views Indiana Farming Firsthand," *Indianapolis Star*, September 15, 1989, cited in Aron, *Yeltsin*, 325.

¹²⁰ He said, "All my impressions of capitalism, of the United States, of Americans that have been pounded into me over the years, including by the Short History of the Communist Party - all of

uneasy relationship with the West began and ended with disappointments. On Yeltsin's first visit, the US President would not meet him, and only after Yeltsin threw a fit refusing to meet Bush's security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, was the arrangement made for Bush to "drop by."¹²¹

Leon Aron notes Yeltsin's "desire to *epater* the American public by outdoing Gorbachev" on his very first visit to the United States.¹²² But even in 1991, the West remained enamored with Gorbachev, believing in the future of the Soviet Union. In the West Yeltsin was seen as just another leader of one of the fifteen Soviet republics, albeit the largest one. US Secretary of State James Baker 3rd refused to meet with Yeltsin privately on his visit to Moscow on March 14-16, 1991. In April 1991 Yeltsin got a chilly reception at the European Parliament in Strasbourg and was unable to get Mitterrand to see him in Paris. Little had changed after Yeltsin was elected President of the Russian Federation. On his visit to Washington in his new capacity, Yeltsin pompously announced to a joint session of the US Congress on June 17, 1992 that Russia "has made its final choice in favor of a civilized way of life, common sense, and universal human heritage..."¹²³ He was "saying everything that Americans want[ed] to hear, everything that they would love Mr. Gorbachev to say."¹²⁴ Applause notwithstanding, Bush stressed relations with the Soviet government and repeatedly mentioned Gorbachev during his meeting with Yeltsin.¹²⁵

However, Yeltsin's political struggle, first with Gorbachev and then with his own parliament and vice president, made him swallow the initial frustration and seek Western

them have changed 180 degrees in the day and a half I have been here." *New York Times*, September 11, 1989.

¹²¹ Colton, 172.

¹²² Aron, *Yeltsin*, 330.

¹²³ Yeltsin quoted in Colton, 267.

¹²⁴ *New York Times*, June 23, 1991.

¹²⁵ The meeting took place in the Rose Garden on June 20, 1992. Colton, 190.

support. Yeltsin needed allies, especially the ones with big checkbooks, and the need for good relations with the West guided his foreign policy. Once the West had finally accepted the Union's demise, the prospects of Western aid made Yeltsin appeal to Western leaders and institutions with renewed enthusiasm. Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister trumpeted liberal Westernist values and knocked on many doors, concluding treaties of friendship and cooperation with individual Western states, obtaining membership for Russia in the G7 and pursuing opportunities to join or at least to cooperate with other selective Western organizations (the Council of Europe, the Paris Club, and the London Club) and financial institutions (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Monetary Fund).¹²⁶ In December 1991, Yeltsin publicly announced Russia's interest in joining NATO. In his address to NATO members on the level of foreign ministers, he stated that Russia took relationship with the Alliance seriously and was willing to view membership as a long-term political goal.¹²⁷ He also accepted the applicability of the terms of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty to Russia, vowing to gradually reduce the Army and Navy.

Addressing the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 27, 1991, Yeltsin set two goals for Russian policy: to secure favorable external conditions for domestic political and economic reforms and to overcome the legacy of the Cold War and to dismantle confrontational structures.¹²⁸ As Richard Sakwa points out, nothing was said about forging a new relationship with the FSU. Cultivating relationship with the West took priority over communicating with the

¹²⁶ Donaldson, <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~robert-donaldson/yeltsin.htm>.

¹²⁷ *Pravda*, December 3, 1991.

¹²⁸ Kozyrev, 'Vneshnyaya politika', *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1994): 6. Cited in Sakwa, 368.

newly independent republics. The Russian president reiterated his liberal views at a special summit meeting of the United Nations Security Council on January 31, 1992:

Russia sees the U.S., the West, and the countries of the East not merely as partners but as allies. This is a highly important prerequisite for, and, I would say, a revolution in, peaceful cooperation among the states of the civilized world. We rule out any subordination of foreign policy to ideological doctrines or a self-sufficient policy. Our principles are simple and understandable: the supremacy of democracy, human rights and liberties, legality, and morality.¹²⁹

At Camp David in February 1992, Yeltsin pressed President Bush for reference in the communiqué to Russia and the United States as “allies,” but Bush conceded only to the “friendship and partnership” language.¹³⁰

Denouncing the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968, handing over to South Korea tapes of radio messages regarding the destruction of a Korean Airlines jet in 1983 – Yeltsin put a significant effort into cultivating Russia’s relationship with the United States.¹³¹ His devotion to liberal Westernist ideas went beyond rhetoric. He outperformed Gorbachev in arms-reduction race,¹³² ended Russia’s subsidies to Cuba and Afghanistan, assumed responsibility for the Soviet debt, supported US operations in Iraq, agreed to US-Russia ambitious cooperation in space exploration, expressed willingness to renegotiate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and even to consider developing a joint Russian-American global ballistic missile defense system (which was a remarkable proposal, even if a purely

¹²⁹ *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, February 3, 1992.

¹³⁰ Colton, 268.

¹³¹ Mark Galeotti, *The Age of Anxiety: Security and Politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Longman, 1995), 162.

¹³² For example, in June 1992 Russia had already begun unilaterally destroying SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

symbolic gesture).¹³³

Russia invited the peacekeeping forces of the UN and the OSCE in Europe to provide security in the former Soviet Union¹³⁴ and supported the West's actions in the Balkans despite its ties with Serbia. In the spring and the summer of 1992, it also supported the UN's economic sanctions against Yugoslavia and did not use its veto power when the UN General Assembly voted to expel the country from the UN.¹³⁵ Moscow lost billions in arms sales by abandoning markets in countries frowned upon by the United States and supporting sanctions against Libya, Iraq, and Yugoslavia. On Iraq, Russia supported US bombing and UN sanctions.¹³⁶ Focused on the West, Russian leadership neglected China¹³⁷ and was slow to recognize the role India and Korea could play in its foreign policy.¹³⁸

At the Washington summit of June 1992, Yeltsin and Bush signed a Charter of Russian-American Partnership and Friendship affirming "the indivisibility of the security of North America and Europe" and a common commitment to "democracy, the supremacy of law . . . and support for human rights."¹³⁹ But clearly more than ideology or perceptions were involved. The

¹³³ Breslauer, 156-57.

¹³⁴ Tsygankov, 70-71.

¹³⁵ Initially, they avoided even meeting with the Leaders of Yugoslavia and sided with the West in condemning the Serbs for atrocities against the Muslims over the independent Bosnian state. Later, Yeltsin also supported the Western plan, devised by US secretary of state Cyrus Vance and British foreign secretary David Owen, for a weak confederation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ibid., 71.

¹³⁶ This policy stance began to change only in 1993 under the pressures of those arguing that Russia could not afford to lose Iraq's \$7 billion debt to it. Peter Shearman, "Russian Policy toward the United States," in *Russian Foreign Policy since 1990*, ed. Peter Shearman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 121.

¹³⁷ Tsygankov, 73.

¹³⁸ Tsygankov writes, "Russia's Westernism meant a reduction of Russia-India trade, particularly in the military area. In the Korean Peninsula, Yeltsin pursued the one-sided policy of favoring the South over the North. In 1992, he proposed signing a treaty of friendship with South Korea to cement their relationship." Ibid.

¹³⁹ *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, June 19, 1992.

Russian President viewed Western aid as a quid pro quo for his support and cooperation. He told Americans: “Today the freedom of America is being upheld in Russia. Should the reforms fail, it will cost hundreds of billions” to mop up.¹⁴⁰ Yeltsin made transformation of Russia's economy his number one domestic priority. In a speech in October 1991, he stressed the need for Western assistance and cooperation promising to share any information the West may want to facilitate aid.¹⁴¹

Although Russia received less than it hoped for, and the US assistance failed to cushion the people from Yeltsin’s “shock therapy,” Yeltsin received a pledge of an immediate assistance package of \$1.6 billion, and the Paris Club granted Russia a ten-year deferral of its debt obligations due in 1993. Yeltsin’s policies also paid off during the Constitutional crisis of 1993. After dissolving the Parliament in violation of the Constitution, he enjoyed full support of the United States.¹⁴² By acknowledging that Yeltsin “had no choice in October 1993” what the West really meant was that it had no choice but to support Yeltsin’s actions; the alternatives were vice president Rutskoy and speaker Khasbulatov, who openly opposed the West.¹⁴³

Yeltsin’s siding with centrists later resulted in worsening of US-Russian relationship, and Western foreign policy experts spoke of “the premature partnership” with Russia,¹⁴⁴ which had a sobering influence on Yeltsin.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Yeltsin quoted in Colton, 267.

¹⁴¹ *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 29, 1991.

¹⁴² Clinton called Yeltsin to make sure that “the difficult choice he had made in dissolving the parliament was necessary to ensure peace, stability and open political process in the fall” and, of course, was reassured that such was the case. *Izvestia*, September 25, 1993.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (1994): 67-82.

¹⁴⁵ Tsygankov, 66-67.

CHAPTER 3. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISIONMAKING

The process of Ukrainian denuclearization rarely comes up in Yeltsin's memoirs, which focus on domestic struggles with the opposition, economic reform, and relationship with the United States. For Yeltsin, consolidating the Soviet nuclear arsenal was always subordinate to broader political goals and more immediate concerns. In fact, in the beginning negotiating with Ukraine was usually up to his pro-Western foreign minister Kozyrev.¹⁴⁶ However, as the problems grew, they required more of Yeltsin's attention. I first describe the contentious political environment in Russia and explain the role of the Supreme Soviet in the adaptation of Yeltsin's views toward Russian and US involvement in the CIS states. A section on the military's growing leverage will follow.

Yeltsin and the Legislature

The Parliament played a less important role in foreign policy making over these years than its constitutional power might indicate, and a more significant one than the overall degree of executive dominance would lead one to expect.

Alex Pravda¹⁴⁷

The Soviet constitution had assigned great formal powers to the legislature, but in the post-Soviet Russia the parliament's influence on foreign policy was limited. The new constitution in

¹⁴⁶ Volha CHarnysh's interview with James Goodby, Washington, DC, January 9, 2009. Mr. Goodby is the former ambassador, principal negotiator, and special representative of President Clinton for Nuclear Security and Dismantlement; former chief negotiator for cooperative threat reduction agreements (Nunn-Lugar program); and former vice chair, U.S. delegation to U.S.-Russian strategic arms reduction talks.

¹⁴⁷ Pravda, 218.

1993 made it even more difficult for the legislature to affect the President's policies.¹⁴⁸ The Supreme Soviet and its successor, the Federal Assembly,¹⁴⁹ were hampered by the confrontational relations with the powerful executive¹⁵⁰ and tended to focus on domestic politics. The Parliament's impact on foreign policy was indirect. Still the legislature shaped the general political climate, in which decisions were made, and affected the tone of Russia's diplomacy.¹⁵¹

Firstly, the Parliament's radical statements and resolutions aimed at domestic political actors had side effects on the international arena. In Alex Pravda's words, "Nationalist declarations from the Russian parliament often set off megaphone diplomacy with the Ukrainian Supreme Council that did little to help the work of the Foreign Ministry."¹⁵² For example, the proclamation of Russia's right to the Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet complicated Moscow's relationship with Kiev and strengthened the opponents of nuclear disarmament in the Rada.¹⁵³ Secondly, the Russian Parliament reflected the changing preferences of the Russian political elite and the mood of the electorate, both of which Yeltsin had consider. The legislature's move toward open confrontation in 1993 underscored the importance of support for the President's actions by other powerful actors, including the United States and the Russian military. Therefore, to maintain his power Yeltsin had to take the Duma's grumbling into consideration, and adapt his foreign policy accordingly.

In examining the influence of the parliament on the Russian foreign policy one also needs to take into account that certain parliamentary committees enjoyed more influence on the

¹⁴⁸ Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," 107.

¹⁴⁹ Consisting of two chambers, the State Duma and the Council of the Federation.

¹⁵⁰ Pravda, 204.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁵² Ibid., 212.

¹⁵³ Another example is the resolution on the federal status of Sevastopol passed by the Russian Parliament in March 1993, which clearly violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine. *Izvestia*, March 24, 1993.

President than the others. For example, the Defense Committee enjoyed good relations with the Defense and Security Ministries because its centrist chairman, Segei Stepashin, first combined chairing the Committee with his job as Deputy Minister of Security and headed Russian counter-intelligence.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, the heads of the International Affairs Committee, while centrist and close to the government circles, had uneasy and difficult relations with the Foreign Ministry.¹⁵⁵ However, this section will mainly address the influence of the legislature's increasingly contentious relationship with the President on his foreign policy priorities.

Structure and Functions of the Parliament

I will first briefly outline the structure and functions of the Parliament. The Congress of People's Deputies (first of the Russian SFSR and later of the Russian Federation) acted as the supreme governing body until September 21, 1993, when it was dissolved by the presidential decree #1400. The Congress was made up of 1,068 constituencies, of which 168 (15.7 percent) were national-territorial and 900 (84.3 percent) territorial.¹⁵⁶ As Richard Sakwa points out, when the Russian presidency was created by amending the Constitution at the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies on May 22, 1991, the powers of the parliament had not correspondingly diminished.¹⁵⁷ Both the Supreme Soviet and the Congress could revoke presidential decrees, impeach the president by a two-thirds vote, and pass laws by majority, which then required the President's signature. The powers of the Congress also included passing the Constitution and making constitutional changes, approving the Heads of Government, and declaring referendums.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ *Segodnya*, May 18, 1993.

¹⁵⁵ *Pravda*, 210.

¹⁵⁶ Sakwa, 45.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The Congress met twice a year to legislate on the most important issues, and elected the Supreme Soviet to govern between the Congressional sessions. The Supreme Soviet had the power to pass laws, ratify treaties, declare amnesty, and approve presidential decrees. The Supreme Soviet gained the right to approve ambassadorial appointments and in 1993 the appointment of Foreign and Defense ministers.¹⁵⁹ Yeltsin's former ally Khasbulatov was confirmed as the chair (speaker) of the Supreme Soviet on 28 October 1991.¹⁶⁰

The Congress of People's Deputies was superseded by the Federal Assembly of Russia, according to the Constitution of Russian Federation, ratified in December 1993. The Duma, the lower chamber of the Federal Assembly, controlled the budget and the power to refuse to ratify international agreements signed by the state. The Federation Council, the upper Chamber, exercised say on the sending of armed forces abroad.¹⁶¹ The work related to foreign policy was carried out in the specialized committees. The Federation Council had committees on International Affairs, CIS Affairs, and Security and Defense. The corresponding Duma committees included International Affairs; Defense and Security Questions; and CIS Affairs and Ties with Compatriots.¹⁶²

Mounting Criticism of Yeltsin's Policies at Home

Considerable differences in foreign policy positions between the legislature and the executive existed from the very beginning. In 1991-1992, liberal Westernism prevailed within the government, while centrists and nationalists dominated the parliament. In the Congress, two major blocs quickly formed in opposition to each other – the Communist Bloc, and the Democratic Russia Bloc, which supported Yeltsin's Westernist policies. By 1993, the

¹⁵⁹ Pravda, 204.

¹⁶⁰ Richard Sakwa. *Russian Politics and Society*. Fourth edition, p. 45.

¹⁶¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 29, 1993.

¹⁶² *Kommersant Daily*, January, 18-19 1994.

Democratic Russia Bloc collapsed and was succeeded by two new blocs – “Reform Coalition” and “Democratic Centre;” conservative communists formed a new bloc “Russian Unity,” and the moderate left formed the centre-left “Creative Forces.” Together they constituted a majority and voiced opposition to Yeltsin and many of his policies.

As early as December 1991, Yeltsin commented on the conservatives in the legislature, “What they failed to achieve in August 1991, they decided to repeat now and carry out a creeping coup.”¹⁶³ In his interview with *Izvestia* two months later, he admitted being reproached for neglecting “the interests of his own state and retreat[ing] on all fronts.”¹⁶⁴ However, in the beginning the government was riding high and paid little attention to the growing opposition. Yeltsin’s resistance to the August 1991 coup attempt justified the growth of presidential power, and the Supreme Soviet granted him emergency powers to deal with the situation.¹⁶⁵

According to Alex Pravda, Russian parliamentarians saw foreign policy (and especially the policy toward the Near Abroad) as “a slightly specialized branch of domestic policy”¹⁶⁶ and eagerly dabbled in it despite their lack of expertise and experience. The Parliament repeatedly charged the government with neglecting the Near Abroad, failing to protect Russia’s national interests, and betraying the Russians outside of the borders of the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁷

Oblivious to geopolitical reality, the mid-March 1992 Sixth Congress of People’s Deputies

¹⁶³ *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, December 11, 1992.

¹⁶⁴ *Izvestia*, February 22, 1992.

¹⁶⁵ The reconvened Fifth Congress of Peoples Deputies (28 October – 2 November 1991) awarded him even more powers, including the right to reorganize the government, to appoint ministers and pass economic decrees without reference to the parliament. Four days later, Yeltsin assumed the post of prime minister, in addition to his other responsibilities. *Izvestia*, November 2 and November 4, 1991.

¹⁶⁶ Pravda, 207.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 207-208.

confirmed existence of the Soviet Union and declared the CIS null and void.”¹⁶⁸ To pacify the deputies, Kozyrev had to assure them that Russia’s priority was to “reestablish a renewed Union in one form or another” and that the CIS was “the vehicle through which this would be accomplished.”¹⁶⁹ Ambatsumov expressed the general discontent with Russia’s initially pro-Western foreign policy in his interview to *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*: “We have a right to expect greater firmness from our foreign minister when defending Russia’s interests in the CIS countries and the interests of Russians who have become foreigners against their will.”¹⁷⁰

Internal politicking in Russia was reinforced by the differing views of the Russian political elite on cooperation with the West. Dominated by centrists and nationalists, the State Duma was suspicious of the United States. Holding a hearing on the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program in December 1992, some deputies even claimed the bilateral agreements between Moscow and Washington “contradicted the Russian Constitution.”¹⁷¹ The widespread sentiment in the Duma was that Washington would use the program to discover critical information about Russia’s nuclear program, and some parliamentarians openly accused the United States of trying to undermine Russia’s national security. Attempts “to educate parliamentarians” on the START-I treaty undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought no results.¹⁷² The gap between the Foreign Ministry’s endorsement of the US decisions and the legislature’s hostility to the United States was illustrated by the incident in the summer of 1993,

¹⁶⁸ Solchanyk, 68.

¹⁶⁹ “Verbatim report of 6 April 1992, Sixth Congress of Russian People’s Deputies,” in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, April 8, 1992.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Arbatsumov, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, April 13, 1992.

¹⁷¹ Vladimir Orlov, “Perspectives of Russian Decision-Makers and Problems of Implementation,” in *Dismantling the Cold War: US and NIS Perspectives on the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program*, ed. John Shields and William Potter (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1997), 86.

¹⁷² *Izvestia*, March 24, 1993.

when the Parliament condemned the US strike on Baghdad and criticized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its unconditional support of the US military operation.¹⁷³

The skyrocketing prices, inflation, and civil unrest throughout 1992 strengthened the emerging “red-brown” coalition of nationalists and communists.¹⁷⁴ The hardships of Russia’s revolutionary economic transition rewarded Yeltsin’s critics, who ridiculed him as a supplicant for foreign aid. In late 1992 speaker Khasbulatov attacked Yeltsin’s reforms as the “Americanization” of the Russian economy.¹⁷⁵ *Pravda* chided Yeltsin, saying “the role of Washington yes-man [was] unbecoming of any country, especially Russia, and it inevitably conflict[ed] with the national interest.”¹⁷⁶ Despite Yeltsin’s efforts, the economic assistance from the United States turned out to be less than expected. “For a year and a half,” noted communist *Pravda* after the Vancouver summit, “we have been fed lies about the inevitable ‘rain of gold’ from the West to back up Yeltsin's reforms.”¹⁷⁷

The privatization program passed by the Supreme Soviet on June 11, 1992 was the last pro-reform law approved by the legislature. From then on, the Soviet voted down every single reform measure introduced by the executive.¹⁷⁸ A two-thirds majority of the Congress sufficed to introduce an amendment to the Constitution, and the legislature soon awarded itself the right to suspend presidential decisions.¹⁷⁹ Amendments were constantly passed and repealed, affecting

¹⁷³ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 1, 1993.

¹⁷⁴ Breslauer, 161.

¹⁷⁵ Khasbulatov, speech at the Seventh Congress of People’s Deputies, December 1, 1992, Russian Television Channel (Rossia) (FBIS-S)V-92-232-S, 12-15, cited in Aron, *Yeltsin*, 501.

¹⁷⁶ *Pravda*, January 27, 1993.

¹⁷⁷ *Pravda*, April 6, 1993.

¹⁷⁸ Aron, *Yeltsin*, 496.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 501.

20 percent of the Constitution.¹⁸⁰ Yeltsin complained about the Congress viewing “its very existence [as] a permanent basis for disrupting the balance between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.”¹⁸¹

To reduce tensions, Yeltsin and Khazbulatov reached a compromise, signing a nine-point agreement on December 12, 1992.¹⁸² However, a few weeks later the Supreme Soviet reneged on the agreement,¹⁸³ and Khasbulatov promised that there would be no more compromises with the Kremlin.¹⁸⁴ The Eighth Congress (March 10-13, 1993) did not authorize the referendum, allowed the government to bypass the President by submitting legislation directly to the legislature, and stripped Yeltsin of the right to issue decrees with the same force as parliamentary laws and to appoint presidential envoys, heads of administration, and government ministers without the legislature’s approval.¹⁸⁵ On March 20 Yeltsin warned that if the stalemate continued, the country “would be pushed into anarchy” and announced the imposition of “special rule,” implying that the executive would no longer be accountable to the legislature.¹⁸⁶ The recalcitrant legislature compromised only after organizing a secret ballot voting on Yeltsin’s impeachment, which fell 72 votes short of the required two-thirds majority.¹⁸⁷ The parliament conceded to a

¹⁸⁰ Alexander Rahr, “Russian Congress Criticizes Cabinet, Seeks New Powers,” *RFE/RL Daily Report*, December 4, 1994, cited in *Ibid.*, 501.

¹⁸¹ *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, July 30, 1992.

¹⁸² The Congress suspended some of its laws and constitutional amendments and agreed to put to a referendum (to be held on 11 April 1993) the constitution drafted by the legislature. It was agreed that Yeltsin would keep his emergency powers until then. Aron, *Yeltsin*, 503.

Nominations for the post of premier were to be put to a vote in Congress, and as a result Victor Chernomyrdin replaced Egor Gaidar, the designer of Yeltsin’s “shock therapy,” as prime minister. Sakwa, 49.

¹⁸³ Aron, *Yeltsin*, 504.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 505.

¹⁸⁵ Sakwa, 49.

¹⁸⁶ Almost immediately Yeltsin retreated from this extra-constitutional move, and the ‘special rule’ was never implemented.

¹⁸⁷ Aron, *Yeltsin*, 506-507.

referendum, provided that the format was changed, now asking the people to vote on the early elections of the legislature and the President, confidence in the President, and support for the President's socio-economic policies.¹⁸⁸ A vote of less than 50 percent of the registered voters would not be considered binding. To Khasbulatov's disappointment, according to the results of the referendum of April 25, 1993, 59 percent expressed confidence in Yeltsin and 53 percent approved his economic policies. Moreover, 67 percent supported pre-term parliamentary elections.¹⁸⁹ The unflattering results of the referendum radicalized the Supreme Soviet even further.¹⁹⁰

The struggle for authority between the president and the parliament snowballed to violent confrontation in the fall of 1993. On September 21, in violation of the Constitution, Yeltsin dismissed the parliament.¹⁹¹ The extraordinary Tenth Congress of People's Deputies was convened, voting to impeach Yeltsin and naming his Vice President Rutskoi (who had been suspended on corruption charges by a presidential decree of September 1, 1993) president. After some initial misgivings, the military supported the President, ensuring his victory. On October 4, 1993, army units entered Moscow, and tanks, paratroopers and Special Forces attacked the Supreme Soviet, easily crushing resistance to Yeltsin. According to official statistics, 146 people died.¹⁹²

Although Yeltsin won, his reputation was damaged. After taking this decisive step, he had to adopt a more conciliatory position, developing a working relationship with the parliamentary leadership. The December 1993 Duma elections were another reminder of the

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 507-508.

¹⁸⁹ Sakwa, 50.

¹⁹⁰ Although the vote for early parliamentary elections was not binding as it constituted less than 50 percent of the registered voters. *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Izvestia*, September 22, 1993.

¹⁹² *Izvestia*, December 25, 1993.

need to accommodate the conservatives. Reflecting the changing mood of Russia, communists and nationalists gained the majority in the Federal Assembly, and the government had to adopt even more centrist ideas to accommodate growing tensions.¹⁹³ In April 1994 the Civic Accord was signed to divide areas of responsibility, allowing for a more efficient power sharing.¹⁹⁴

Changes in Public Opinion

The changing mood of Russia was also reflected in the public opinion polls. Although the biggest demonstration of declining support for Yeltsin and Kozyrev's policies came with results of the December 1993 parliamentary elections when liberal parties lost to those of nationalist orientation, public support for Westernist policies had been waning throughout 1992. Support for the United States model of society fell from 32 percent in 1990 to 13 percent in 1992, or by more than two thirds.¹⁹⁵ During 1993-1995, the number of those viewing the USA as a threat increased from 26 to 44 percent among the general public and from 27 to 53 percent among the elites.¹⁹⁶

By June 1994, Yeltsin had a lot to worry about. Only 10 percent of Russia's population believed that the president's actions would lead the country out of crisis, and 36 percent believed they would not. Only 20 percent of the respondents trusted Yeltsin, 34 percent partially trusted him, and 26 percent did not trust him at all. Only 22 percent of the polled said they would support Yeltsin's candidacy at the next presidential elections, while 28 percent said they would not.¹⁹⁷ The poll results underscored Yeltsin's need to follow the changing mood of Russia to stay in power and be reelected. In addition, many believed Russia was effectively ceding its policy

¹⁹³ Pravda, 183.

¹⁹⁴ Jackson, 54.

¹⁹⁵ Vladimir Sogrin, "Zapadnyi Liberalizm i Rossiyskiye Reformy" (Western Liberalism and Russian Reforms") *Svobodnaya Mysl'* 1 (1996): 32.

¹⁹⁶ Zimmerman, William, *The Russian People and Foreign Policy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 91.

¹⁹⁷ *Izvestia*, June 28, 1994.

autonomy to the West in economic and other affairs. In 1995, 75 percent of the population believed that the economy was essentially in foreign hands.¹⁹⁸

How the Legislature Affected Yeltsin's Policies Toward the West and the CIS

Domestic pressures were increasingly reflected in Yeltsin's policies in the 1990s. In March 1992, under the pressure from the legislature, Yeltsin abandoned his plan to free domestic oil prices.¹⁹⁹ To mollify the Congress, he had to sacrifice Information Minister Mikhail Poltoranin and State Secretary Gennadiy Burbulis (later having to give up on Gaidar as the Prime Minister, too).²⁰⁰ But even as reformers were "being tossed from the sled by the embattled Yeltsin," the legislature was not satisfied.²⁰¹ In December 1992, the Supreme Soviet passed a resolution demanding that Russia use its veto power in the Security Council to stop the UN military intervention in the region. As a result of those pressures, Russia first abstained from a UN vote on additional sanctions against Yugoslavia and then refused to send its troops into Sarajevo to police the UN-brokered military agreement.²⁰²

In response to criticisms of Russia's concessionary foreign policy, Yeltsin gradually deepened appeal to moderates and centrists. He needed allies, and after his Western friends with big wallets let him down, he looked for support in the circles of the Russian political elite. To save face after the agreement reached with the IMF on getting a \$1 billion loan resulted in a significantly smaller amount, he echoed his critics saying, "We can live without these \$24 billions. [...] You cannot make us kneel. Russia is a great country, and it will not allow this."²⁰³

In a speech to the Civic Union conference on February 28, 1993, Yeltsin for the first time

¹⁹⁸ Zimmerman, 91.

¹⁹⁹ Gaidar quoted in Aron, *Yeltsin*, 496.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 502.

²⁰¹ *The New York Times*, December 17, 1992.

²⁰² Tsygankov, 74.

²⁰³ *Izvestia*, July 6, 1992.

claimed Russia's "vital interest in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR" and appealed to the UN "to grant Russia special powers as the guarantor of peace and stability in this region."²⁰⁴ In the face of growing political pressures, in June 1993 he told a group of military officers that Russia should formalize its military presence in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and central Asia. Kozyrev echoed Yeltsin's statement by emphasizing the former Soviet Union republics as a "zone of [Russia's] special responsibility and special interest."²⁰⁵

A notable example of Yeltsin's trying to accommodate the centrists was his volte-face on the issue of NATO expansion. Having first spoken favorably of Poland's joining NATO, he reversed himself under pressure from the legislature and the centrist members of his administration,²⁰⁶ inducing Kozyrev to ask US Secretary of States Warren Christopher to offer Eastern European countries Partnership for Peace as an alternative.²⁰⁷

Another reflection of the Parliament's influence is found in the process of adopting Russia's foreign policy concept, different versions of which were drafted by competing government bodies. It was up to Yeltsin to choose, whose draft to endorse, and his judgment depended on what document was most likely to be approved by the legislature. In January 1993

²⁰⁴ *Moskovskie Novoski*, no. 63 (11-18 December 1994): 4, 6. Cited in Sakwa, 370.

²⁰⁵ Astrid Tuminez, "Russian Nationalism and the National Interest," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 59.

²⁰⁶ "Just before the parliamentary elections in December 1993, Evgenii Primakov, then director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, issued a blistering critique of NATO expansion. He noted that expansion of NATO would create a "new geopolitical situation that [would be] extremely disadvantageous to Russia" leading Russia to rethink its defense concepts and restructure its armed forces. "Russia Issues a Warning on NATO Expansion," *CDPSP*, 45, no., 47 (1993), 11-13.

²⁰⁷ *Izvestia*, November 24, 1993.

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed a 58-page draft reflecting its work since March 1992.²⁰⁸ At the same time, another variation of the document, entitled “The Key Tenets of the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” was proposed by a group of members of the newly created Interdepartmental Foreign Policy Commission of the Security Council headed by Sergei Kasatonov.²⁰⁹ As the proposal of the Foreign Ministry got bogged down in the Supreme Soviet, Yeltsin turned to the more hard-line version by the Security Council, and it was the Council’s “The Key Tenets” that the Parliament finally approved.

The document reflected abandonment of Westernist principles for pragmatic nationalism.²¹⁰ According to the “Key Tenets,” the means of protecting Russia included creating a collective system of defense, maintaining Russia’s military bases in the CIS states, establishing an integral system of military security, strengthening the external borders of the CIS, and retaining Russia’s unique status as the sole nuclear power in the region.²¹¹ As Leon Aron points out, out of nine Russia’s “vitaly important interests” listed at the beginning of the document, only one (No.3) addressed the world outside the former Soviet borders. Three other tenets concerned the Near Abroad: strengthening ties with the former Soviet republics (No. 6), protecting the rights of the ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad (No. 7), and protecting the rights and interests of citizens and organizations of the Russian Federation abroad (No. 8). The Tenets

²⁰⁸ According to this “Concept of Foreign Policy,” Russia was a great power with several foreign policy priorities, which included furthering the CIS integration and ensuring Russia an active role in the Near Abroad. The concept also called for enhanced ties with Asian Pacific countries to balance Russia’s relations with the West and for strengthening a “unified military strategic space” in the CIS and warned that a third state’s military-political presence in the CIS could negatively affect Russia’s interests. *Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik*, January 1993.

²⁰⁹ Kenneth M. Jensen, “Introduction,” in *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. by Leon Aron and Kenneth M. Jensen (Washington: Endowment of the US Institute of Peace, 1994), 5.

²¹⁰ Summary of the document, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 29, 1993.

²¹¹ Jackson, 65.

stressed the need for integration with the FSU republics. According to the document, Russia's "vitally important interests" hinged on "the development of its relations with the states of the Near Abroad."²¹² Consequently, "overcoming the destabilizing disintegrationist processes on the territory of the former USSR"²¹³ was considered a crucial component of Russia's foreign policy. The Tenets stressed that U.S.-Russian interests did not always coincide and brought the "discriminatory restrictions in the commercial, economic, scientific and technological spheres" as an example. The document also asserted that even in crisis the Russian Federation remained a great power "in terms of its potential, its influence on the course of world events, and the responsibility it bears as a result of this." Russia, it was argued, bore the responsibility for the creation of the "new system of positive relations among the FSU states" and acted as "the guarantor of the stability of these relations."²¹⁴

Conclusion

Yeltsin acted within the context of domestic conflict on what Russia's national interest required and faced not only the challenge to reconcile domestic and international imperatives, but also to remain in power in the unstable political situation. Parliamentary opponents continued to frustrate Yeltsin's goals in an indirect way by issuing nationalistic statements and in a direct way by attempting to displace Yeltsin in the fall of 1993. Initially the President was riding high due to his victory over the conservatives in August 1991 coup and the numerous powers accorded to him by the Fifth Congress of Peoples Deputies. However, by 1993 the center-right forces consolidated in the Parliament, and to remain in power the President had to adapt his policies to accommodate the Russian political elite. Yeltsin's Russia remained a cooperative

²¹² Summary of the document, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 29, 1993.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

partner of the United States in arms control and a few other issues.²¹⁵ However, the President came to embrace a more active policy in the FSU states and a tougher line vis-à-vis the West.²¹⁶ He went far enough for some democrats to fear that he was repeating Gorbachev's mistake of "relying too much on alliances with conservative forces whose aim is not to support him but to replace him."²¹⁷

Yeltsin and the Military

Left, right, green, red, blue: just about every political force, current and faction is now seeking to influence the army....
Pavel Grachev²¹⁸

Growing Influence of the Military

The armed forces remained the only stable national scale structure in Russia after the collapse of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Yeltsin assigned the High Command a large role not only in maintaining the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, but also in shaping Russia's policy in the Near Abroad. Over time, the military gained additional political leverage.²¹⁹

In December 1991, the Soviet Ministry of Defense was reorganized into the CIS Supreme Command (Glavkomat), and from January to May 1992 there was no clear government structure over the army. The command of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS was technically subordinate to the CIS Council of Heads of State, but the Council met infrequently and hardly exercised

²¹⁵ Breslauer, 166.

²¹⁶ Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," 135.

²¹⁷ *New York Times*, July 3, 1992.

²¹⁸ Pavel Grachev quoted by Mark Galeotti, *The Age of Anxiety: Security and Politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Longman, 1995), 158.

²¹⁹ Allison, "Military Factors in Foreign Policy," 230-37.

effective oversight.²²⁰ This uncertainty ended in May 1992 with the establishment of the Russian army and the transfer of the functions of Glavkomat (The Russian Ground Forces) to the newly established Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.²²¹ Control of nuclear weapons fell to the Ministry's 12th Main Directorate (Glavnoe Upravlenie Ministerstva Oborony (GUMO)).

After the breakup of the USSR, the Russian Ministry of Defense enjoyed enormous organizational autonomy and had the most direct input into the President's office as its senior officers were sometimes moved to and from the executive branch.²²² The Party's oversight was removed, and Parliament's control was limited.²²³

Yeltsin's rise to power and the tumultuous events of 1991-93 taught him to respect the military. He selected Colonel Alexander Rutskoi, the hero of the Afghanistan war, as his running mate in the June 12 presidential election. In August 1991, the High Command did not support the pro-Communist coup, which allowed Yeltsin to dismantle the Communist rule and secure his power. A keen politician, Yeltsin immediately issued a decree taking temporary control of the Army while Gorbachev remained under house arrest.²²⁴ Soon afterward, Yeltsin issued another far-sighted decree, stipulating that Russia would pay salaries to the Soviet forces stationed on its

²²⁰ Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 273.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 273. Also see Roy Allison, *Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States*, Adelphi Paper (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993) 9-12, 18-21.

²²² For example, Konstantin Kobets was moved from his post as Russian presidential defense adviser to the CIS High Command in 1992, and Shaposhnikov was moved from the CIS Joint Armed Forces to chair of the Russian Security Council in 1993. Deyermond, 54. Another example: in 1995 Deputy Defense Minister Gromov, Grachev's rival, was given the rank of Deputy Foreign Minister and the task of handling relations with NATO, strategic stability in Europe, and military co-operation between CIS Countries. Allison, "Military Factors in Foreign Policy," 237.

²²³ The Chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee Sergei Yushenkov complained that there existed no effective system of public control of the army and that "the Defense Ministry [stood] guard of its corporate interests." P. Anoknin, *Rossiiskii Vesti*, September 17 1994. Cited in Allison, "Military Factors in Foreign Policy," 232.

²²⁴ Barylski, 112.

territory.²²⁵ He continued courting military leaders, and thanks to his efforts in December 1991 the military disregarded Gorbachev's pleas to intervene "to save the Union" – thus ensuring the success of Yeltsin's plans in Belovezha.²²⁶ Shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin promoted the military personnel serving in the Ukraine to the rank of generals, annoying Kravchuk, but ensuring loyalty of the officers stationed in Ukraine.²²⁷

The extremely weak Russian state created many opportunities for military intervention,²²⁸ and in his memoirs Yeltsin remarks that in early 1992 there was a "real threat of a military putsch."²²⁹ John P. Moran mentions rumors of impending coups circulating among the Russian political elite in July 1992, March 1993, and March 1994.²³⁰ The very fact that the Russian defense budget declined by 40 percent in the five-year period between 1989 and 1994²³¹ suggested that Yeltsin had a lot to worry about.

²²⁵ Herspring, 62.

²²⁶ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 12, 1991. Herspring cites Yevgeny Shaposhnikov's account of an insightful incident with Gorbachev when the General told off his commander-in-chief showing how much influence the military had at the time. On December 8, Gorbachev phoned Shaposhnikov several times asking if he had heard anything about Yeltsin's discussions in Belarus with other republic leaders concerning the future of the Soviet Union. At one point, Gorbachev warned Shaposhnikov not to "meddle" in political matters. Shaposhnikov was growing tired of Gorbachev and his indecisive manner. When Gorbachev called the next day, Shaposhnikov took the unprecedented step (for a serving military officer) of telling off his commander-in-chief. Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, *Vybor*, (Moscow: Nezavisimoe Izdatelstvo PIK, 1995), 128, cited in Herspring, 63.

²²⁷ *Izvestia*, January 15, 1992.

²²⁸ In August 1992, the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy drew attention to the danger of the militarization of interstate relations and expressed the fear that "the territory of the former USSR will become a zone where military power will play an essential political role.

Nezavisimaya Gazeta, August 19, 1992.

²²⁹ Boris Yeltsin, *Prezidentskiy marafon: Razmyshleniya, vospominaniya, vpechatleniya...* (Moskva: AST, 2000), 62-63, 79.

²³⁰ John P. Moran, *From Garrison State to Nation-State: Political Power and the Russian Military under Gorbachev and Yeltsin* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 1.

²³¹ Doug Clarke, "Russia's Military Strength Put at 1.7 Million," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report*, October 12, 1994. Cited in Moran, 2.

Therefore, as president, Yeltsin developed friendships with the paratroopers and their commander General Pavel Grachev and went out to visit military units, promising the Army greater pay and benefits. In September 1993, when his need for the military's support was especially acute, he even agreed to revise the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which restricted the internal distribution of Russian forces.²³²

The far-sightedness of his policies was proved during the constitutional crisis in the fall of 1993. The military effectively decided the outcome of that struggle, choosing to support Yeltsin over the legislature.²³³ After the incident, many Russian military officers went public in their demand that the military should be honored for their support.²³⁴ The military not only gained additional political influence by default, as the struggle of the Supreme Soviet and the president undermined central governmental bodies, but was also rewarded with the adoption of the 1993 Constitution, which ended parliamentary oversight over the military.²³⁵ Grachev was awarded a medal "for personal valor," and the Defense Ministry was granted the Military Doctrine it wanted.²³⁶ One commentator has noted how Defense Minister Grachev's support for Yeltsin in the standoff with the parliament transformed his position after October 1993:

He [Grachev] began to appear as more of a diplomat representing Russian interests in international forum. It was even speculated that a tacit deal had been struck between Yeltsin and Grachev, which provided the military command with a freer hand to influence security policy in the CIS and other

²³² Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia's Foreign Policy. Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 72.

²³³ Ruts koy made a fatal mistake when he appointed the former Deputy Minister of Defense, Colonel-General Vladislav Achalov his "Minister of Defense" dismissing Grachev. Taylor, 284.

²³⁴ Stephen Foyer, "Updating Russian Civil-Military Relations," *RFE/RL Research Report* November 19, 1993, 48, cited in Moran, 125.

²³⁵ Lev Gudkov, "The Army as an Institutional Model," in *Military and Society in post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Stephen L. Webber and Jennifer G. Mathers (New York: Manchester UP, 2006), 48.

²³⁶ Galeotti, 167.

issues such as the CFE Treaty and NATO eastward expansion.²³⁷

Rejection of the Communist ideology and abolishment of the Main Political Administration in 1991 “removed a major psychological block to direct military intervention in politics.”²³⁸ As the Soviet army was being divided into national armies, military leaders felt justified in promoting their views of the national interest.²³⁹ Although Defense Minister of the Russian Federation General Grachev continuously repeated that the military should stay “outside politics” and subordinate to civilian rule,²⁴⁰ in practice this did not apply to the senior officers and Grachev himself.

Both the executive and the legislature were competing for the military’s support. The defense of ethnic Russians helped the military and nationalist lobbies find a common ground in the CIS-related issues.²⁴¹ Moreover, because the Westernists identified with arms reductions, scaling down intelligence operations in the West and a general demilitarization of the country,²⁴² the military was naturally opposed to Westernism. The legislature often won succeeded in courting the military. For example, while the Foreign Ministry favored concessions in the

²³⁷ Michael C. Desch, “Why the Soviet Military Supported Gorbachev and Why the Russian Military might only Support Yeltsin for a Price,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 16, 1993, 472-73.

²³⁸ Allison, “Military Factors in Foreign Policy,” 231.

²³⁹ The contest of service oaths between the CIS, Russia, and Ukraine early in 1992 forced officers to identify with a specific nation-state, counter to all their “internationalist” indoctrination. Interview with Col. V. Baranets in *Pravda*, January 17, 1992.

²⁴⁰ Grachev outlined the Ministry of Defense position in December 1992: “The army should be outside politics, and the leadership of the Armed Forces will not permit it to be dragged into politics. Soldiers not want to become hostages, or even more so participants in any political games. A ban on political activity in the army was declared in the Law on Defense. Hence our attitude towards those people who was not to involve the office corps in politics, to politicize soldiers.” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 1, 1992; Lieutenant-Golonel Anatoliy Dokuchayev, “Voozuzhennye Sily Rossii – na storone Zakona I Kostitutsii,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 18, 1992.

²⁴¹ Allison, “Military Factors in Foreign Policy,” 232.

²⁴² Galeotti, 162.

Kuriles, the Defense Ministry refused to withdraw from the islands (producing a report that claimed that surrendering the Kuriles would invite the Japanese through the gates of Moscow). Once the position of the High Command became clear, the legislature weighed in to woo “the generals from the Yeltsin’s side” and humble the pro-Western Foreign Ministry.²⁴³ Thus, Yeltsin (who initially identified with Westernists and advocated sweeping arms reductions) had to put double efforts into securing the support of the High Command and pay attention to the mood in the army as well as maintain good relationships with the military elite.

Involvement of the Military in Denuclearization of Ukraine

The reports and recommendations of the Russian Ministry of Defense provided information on the state of Ukrainian nuclear weapons that helped Yeltsin, Bush and then Clinton make decisions on the issue. Russia’s military establishment estimated the safety of Ukraine’s nuclear weapons; speculated on how long it would take Ukraine to decipher the codes; set the deadlines for the dismantlement; and controlled its pace. Although the Foreign Ministry dominated negotiations over the terms and deadlines, the military’s simple warning about safety problems with nuclear warheads would urge Ukraine to quickly get rid of the defective warheads. Finally, it was the military that assessed the legitimacy of Ukraine’s demands for compensation for the dismantled nuclear weapons and the costs of the process to Russia.

The Military’s Conception of the CIS

With respect to the CIS states, the majority of the officers polled expected that Belarus and Ukraine would be reunited with Russia by the end of the decade at the latest.²⁴⁴ Statements made by the CIS military personnel indicate a complete disregard for the independent security priorities of CIS states. For instance, Lieutenant General Leonid Ivashov, then chief of the CIS

²⁴³ Ibid., 162.

²⁴⁴ Allison, “Military Factors in Foreign Policy,” 248.

Armed Forces Administration of Affairs, saw “an obvious need to coordinate the activity of the legislative structures of the Commonwealth participant states as regards defense problems with a view to implementing to a certain extent the uniform regulation of legal relations in the military sphere.”²⁴⁵ An article in *Krasnaya Zvezda* in late December 1991 asserted that the CIS’s security problems could easily be resolved if politicians left such matters to the Armed Forces rather than intervening in negotiations.²⁴⁶

The position of the Russian military, most frequently expressed in response to Ukrainian ownership claims, was that all nuclear weapons that had previously belonged to the USSR now belonged to Russia, because Russia was the legal, nuclear successor of the USSR, as recognized in international agreements, including those that had been signed by Ukraine. In reality, the CIS Joined Armed Forces appeared to be no more than the Russian Armed Forces.²⁴⁷ Holders of two sets of codes, the commanders-in-chief of the CIS JAF and the CIS Strategic Deterrent Forces, as Russian citizens, fulfilled the orders of the Russian President. Morally and institutionally, they were on the same side. Although the CIS chiefs were supposed to serve the CIS rather than the Russian Federation, Shaposhnikov was cited as taking the position that the nuclear weapons of the former USSR “belong to no state, while judging by all documents they belong to Russia.”²⁴⁸ In October 1992, at a summit of the CIS heads of state, he proposed that the four nuclear states agree to recognize Russia as the sole inheritor of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Speaking in an interview, he commented that all CIS nuclear weapons should be placed under Russian ownership and that he was prepared to hand over his “nuclear briefcase” to the Russian Ministry

²⁴⁵ *Krasnaia Zvezda*, February 5, 1992.

²⁴⁶ *Krasnaia Zvezda*, December 28, 1991.

²⁴⁷ Pikayev, 35-36.

²⁴⁸ ITAR-TASS, 4 November 1992, *FBIS-SOV-92-214*, p. 3, cited in Deyermond, 77.

of Defense immediately.²⁴⁹ In the same period, he also commented on more than one occasion that the nuclear weapons should be handed over to Russia because the CIS was not a state and that nuclear weapons must belong to a state.²⁵⁰ But handing the weapons over did not mean transferred and destroyed. The weapons could stay where they were as long as the Russian military elite was in control. Only when the military saw that the CIS would not end up a common strategic space as it intended and that Ukraine was reasserting control over the weapons, did dismantling the rockets become a priority.

The preferences of the military were translated into Yeltsin's foreign policy because the President had to watch out for his opponents and rely on the top brass for protection. During the October 1993 crisis, Yeltsin managed to secure the support of the Russian army and ministry of interior forces, but it came at a price. He had to reward the military for its support. As a result, the military's influence on the executive grew throughout 1993, facilitating the shift of Yeltsin's policies to the center and affecting his policies towards Ukraine's nuclear disarmament.

²⁴⁹ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, October 8, 1992.

²⁵⁰ *Izvestia*, November 17, 1992.

CHAPTER 4. DENUCLEARIZATION PROCESS IN 1991-92

Introduction

As a result of the conflict between the CIS and Kiev, Ukraine's armed forces block the strategic rockets on the Ukrainian territory. To prevent rockets' capture, Moscow explodes a nuclear device in the atmosphere above Kiev. The explosion is seen on the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, and the nuclear forces of the USA, France, England, and China are being activated. The international nuclear crisis brings the world on the brink of a nuclear Armageddon.

Situational game scenario "On the next day" by the Rand Corporation²⁵¹

This was not the vision haunting Russian leaders. Although the prevention of adversaries' access to nuclear weapons was a major concern of Soviet and then Russian foreign policy, nonproliferation was not in itself a primary policy objective. For example, the USSR did not see its nuclear assistance to North Korea and Iran as undermining the nonproliferation regime and its own security. After West Germany signed the NPT, the Soviet nonproliferation pronouncements became scarcer and the Soviet's attention to the nonproliferation issue decreased. Under Gorbachev, the USSR undertook a number of nuclear export initiatives including efforts to sell nuclear goods and services to non-NPT parties like Argentina, India, Israel, and Pakistan, and even expressed readiness to sell South Korea sensitive nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment and fast breed reactor processes.²⁵² The views on nonproliferation loosened even more with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The process of Ukraine's denuclearization was celebrated as the struggle of the Russian and American policymakers against nationalists in the Rada. But in reality, Russia's desire to see

²⁵¹ Valeri Fedorovich Davydov, "Raspad SSSR i Nerasprostranenie" ("Collapse of the USSR and Nonproliferation") *USA. Economy, Politics, Ideology*. no. 3 (1992): 18.

²⁵² William C. Potter, "The Post-Soviet States and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime," in *The Nuclear Challenge in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. George Quester (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1995), 11-13.

a denuclearized Ukraine was weaker than is usually assumed. The Russian leadership never caught the Western fever over nuclear issues. It became interested in the quick completion of the denuclearization process only in 1993 and for reasons other than the need to curb global nuclear proliferation.

In the following two chapters I will review the four years of denuclearization negotiations that finally concluded with Ukraine's accession to the NPT in December 1994, showing how Russian policies changed from following the US lead and assigning relatively low priority to the issue to actively and assertively negotiating with the Ukrainian government to bring about Ukraine's compliance. I will then explain the dynamics of denuclearization efforts by factors reviewed in the previous chapters.

Detailed Account of the Denuclearization Process in 1991-92

Safety of the Soviet nuclear arsenal should the Union break up worried academics long before the Belovezha Agreement was signed.²⁵³ The Soviet politicians, however, were too busy making history and advancing their careers. They remembered the dangerous arsenals only to disassociate from the center (like the leadership of Ukraine that proclaimed its non-nuclear status in the 1990 sovereignty declaration) or to persuade others of the need to retain the status quo (like Gorbachev, who stressed that preserving the Union would avert the risks of loose Soviet nukes). The Union's continuing existence, albeit in a reformed state, was never disputed, and Russian and Ukrainian politicians alike were trying to calm the Western fears of a nuclear Armageddon triggered by the Soviet disintegration. In September 1991, Leonid Kravchuk, chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet (in December 1991 elected President of Ukraine),

²⁵³ For example, the need for complete destruction of tactical nuclear weapons was discussed by American and Soviet scientists in September 1991 in Pekin. *Izvestia*, January 10, 1992.

reaffirmed Ukraine's position as a non-nuclear state, emphasizing that Ukraine was "in favor of central control over nuclear weapons" and would abide by the arms control treaties that were signed by the Soviet Union.²⁵⁴ The Soviet Minister of Defense Air Marshal Evgenij Shaposhnikov also guaranteed to the panicking West that the nuclear button of the Soviet Union remained under control and denied any disputes over the international obligations regarding the disarmament of the Soviet Union.²⁵⁵

As the referendum on Ukraine's independence from the USSR neared, Moscow's proliferation awareness temporarily grew. Gorbachev emphasized that "Ukraine's departure [would] mean big problems for the Union, but even bigger ones for Ukraine itself."²⁵⁶ The West agreed. Already in November 1991, the U.S. Senate passed the Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act providing \$500 million (lowered by the House to \$400 million) in aid to Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus for the destruction of nuclear and chemical weapons.²⁵⁷

The "Nunn-Lugar" legislation was well-timed. In the national referendum on December 1, 1991, ninety percent of the Ukrainians voted for independence, and the chairman of the parliament Leonid Kravchuk was elected president. In his address to the nation, Kravchuk said Ukraine was subjected to economic blackmail from Russia.²⁵⁸ Validating his statement, Russian papers ridiculed Ukraine as a half-baked state with "underdeveloped national interests and,

²⁵⁴ Xinhua (Beijing), September 26, 1991, in "Ukraine Favors Central Control Of Nuclear Weapons," JPRS-TND-91-016, October 29, 1991, 55, cited in Mark D. Skootsky, "An Annotated Chronology of Post-Soviet Nuclear Disarmament 1991-1994," *The Nonproliferation Review*. Volume 2.3 (Spring-Summer 1995): 64-105.

²⁵⁵ *Izvestia*, October 29, 1991.

²⁵⁶ *Izvestia*, November 27, 1991.

²⁵⁷ As well as the transportation, storage, disabling, and safeguarding of weapons to be destroyed, and the creation of verifiable safeguards to prevent the proliferation of the weapons to be dismantled. The Act became law on December 12, 1991. Theodor Galdi, "The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program For Soviet Weapons Dismantlement: Background And Implementation," *CRS Report For Congress*, December 29, 1993.

²⁵⁸ *Izvestia*, December 2, 1992.

consequently, unpredictable politics,” concluding that independent Ukraine was “a recipe for a real disaster.”²⁵⁹ On December 3, 1991, Ukraine was recognized by Poland and Canada, but the United States, instead of congratulating the newly independent state, preached to Kiev the importance of cooperating with Moscow.

On December 8, 1991, Kravchuk (Ukraine), Stanislav Shuchkevich (Belarus), and Boris Yeltsin (Russia) signed the documents creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and dissolving the Soviet Union. The CIS agreement explicitly mentioned preserving a single command over the nuclear weapons.²⁶⁰ On December 21, at a meeting in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan and a few other former Soviet republics joined the CIS. In a separate agreement, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine agreed that all tactical nuclear weapons would be withdrawn to Russia by July 1, 1992.²⁶¹ However, the President of the USSR did not renounce his right to the nuclear button and remained in charge of the nuclear arsenal for the next few days.

Alarmed at the news of the Soviet demise, Washington sent Secretary of State James A. Baker 3rd to evaluate the needs of a "disoriented and confused" Soviet people.²⁶² He kept his discussions with Minsk, Alma-Ata, and Kiev confidential, upsetting the Russian leadership.²⁶³ Yeltsin reassured Baker that the leadership of the Commonwealth would have full control over

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ “Agreement On The Creation Of A Commonwealth of Independent States,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, January 10, 1992.

²⁶¹ “The Alma-Ata Declaration, 21 December 1991” and “Agreement On Joint Measures On Nuclear Arms, Alma-Ata, 21 December 1991,” *UNIDIR Newsletter*, June/September 1993.

²⁶² James Baker explained the importance of his mission in a 50-minute address at Princeton University: “If during the cold war we faced each other as two scorpions in a bottle, now the Western nations and the former Soviet republics stand as awkward climbers on a steep mountain. [...] Held together by a single rope, a fall toward fascism or anarchy in the former Soviet Union will pull the West down, too. Yet, a strong steady pull by the West now can help them to gain their footing.” *The New York Times*, December 13, 1991.

²⁶³ *Izvestia*, December 18, 1991.

all nuclear weapons.²⁶⁴ In his turn, Shaposhnikov told Baker that short-range nuclear weapons from around the former Soviet Union were already being gathered up and put into “centralized storage” for “elimination.”²⁶⁵

On December 25, Gorbachev resigned, and control of the former Soviet Union's nuclear force passed to Yeltsin. On the next day, President George H. W. Bush declared that USA-USSR diplomatic relations would be conducted with Russia. Four days later the CIS members signed the “Minsk Agreement on Strategic Forces,” creating a joint-CIS command over the former Soviet Union’s nuclear arsenal. Under the agreement, Russia would decide on the use of nuclear weapons with the consultation of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The strategic nuclear weapons located on Ukrainian territory would be under the control of the Combined Strategic Forces Command and would be destroyed by the end of 1994.²⁶⁶ However, once the nuclear button had reached the hands of the Russian President, Moscow postponed taking responsibility in implementing Ukraine’s denuclearization and was much more concerned in improving relations with the United States and signing its own weapons reduction treaties.

Of course, Ukraine did not let the great powers forget about its presence. Kravchuk argued that the President of Russia was not authorized to speak in the name of all four CIS states when discussing strategic nuclear weapons reduction with the United States²⁶⁷ and insisted that

²⁶⁴ Although recognized before other FSU states, Russia was humiliated in the process. Russian papers published alarmed reports emphasizing that from the American viewpoint, Russia's inheritance of the Soviet seat in the UN Security council was not automatically guaranteed because there had been no precedent of such a substitution. *Izvestia*, December 24, 1991.

²⁶⁵ *The New York Times*, December 17, 1991.

²⁶⁶ “Minsk Agreement On Strategic Forces, December 30, 1991,” *Arms Control Today*, January–February 1992, 39.

²⁶⁷ Leonid Kravchuk said, “One can reduce only the weapons he has; he did not receive a mandate on the strategic weapons of all four states.” *Izvestia*, February 20, 1992.

all four FSU states ratify the START I treaty.²⁶⁸ On March 13, Kravchuk stopped the transfer of tactical nuclear weapons from the Ukrainian territory arguing that Russia's capacity to destroy strategic nuclear weapons was inadequate.²⁶⁹

Despite all this, Yeltsin did not take up the gauntlet and remained calm. Unlike panicking Washington, Moscow viewed Kravchuk's act of defiance merely as "a ploy [...] to wrest a share of Western funds earmarked for the dismantling and as a political maneuver in advance of the meeting Friday of Commonwealth leaders in Kiev."²⁷⁰ Shaposhnikov blamed the journalists for spreading false rumors of Ukraine's nuclear ambitions and reassured the world that the weapons were under control.²⁷¹ Together Ukraine and Russia were able to pacify the international community.²⁷² The Rada reaffirmed Ukraine's pledge to nonnuclear status, and²⁷³ because Ukraine suspended the first transportation agreement, Yeltsin and Kravchuk signed a second treaty reaffirming the July 1, 1992 deadline.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ *Izvestia*, February 21, 1992. Kravchuk hoped "to get rid of the most of Ukraine's nuclear weapons by 2000" and volunteered to include the 46 warheads into the agreement that initially envisaged the elimination of 130 (or two thirds) nuclear warheads in Ukraine. Aleksey Golyayev, Tass (Moscow), January 17, 1992; in "Ukraine Wants Nuclear-Free Area By 2000," JPRS-TND-92-003, 2/14/92, 36.

²⁶⁹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, March 14, 1992. Also see *Izvestia*, March 16, 1992.

²⁷⁰ *The New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

²⁷¹ *Izvestia*, April 15, 1992.

²⁷² Explaining the disruption of the transferal process, General Sergei Zelencov said, "Ukraine does not and will not have access to the nuclear weapons. We will take care of it, so that the Ukrainian people, as well as the peoples of Russia and other states could rest assured: the nuclear weapons will not bring them misfortune." *Izvestia*, March 14, 1992.

²⁷³ In April 1992, the Ukrainian parliament passed a resolution on "Additional Measures for Ensuring Ukraine's Acquisition of Non-Nuclear Status," which again reaffirmed its pledge that Ukraine would not use, have, or make nuclear weapons and declared Ukraine's right to control the nonuse of the nuclear weapons stationed on its territory. Bohdan Nahaylo, "The Shaping Of Ukrainian Attitudes Toward Nuclear Arms," *RFE/RL Research Report*, February 19, 1993, 32-33.

²⁷⁴ Itar-Tass (Moscow), 4/16/92; in "Yeltsin, Kravchuk Sign Accord," JPRS-TND-92-012, April 22, 1992, 11. Cited in Skootsky, 69.

In the meantime, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs humbly waited for the information about the outcomes of US negotiations with Minsk, Kiev and Alma-Ata, promised by Reginald Bartholomew, the Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs. Even the press picked up on its inertia. In April *Izvestia* warned that Moscow should not "postpone deciding much longer" and it was high time to "take its share of responsibility."²⁷⁵

But some progress was accomplished due to US engagement. On May 6, 1992 the head of the headquarters of the CIS Joint Armed Forces announced completing withdrawal of tactical weapons from the Ukrainian territory two months ahead of the deadline.²⁷⁶ More importantly, on May 23, 1992, the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Protocol to START I.²⁷⁷ Article V of the Protocol required that Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states "in the shortest possible time."²⁷⁸ The CIS was again promised aid,²⁷⁹ and the humbled Ukrainian President reassured the United States in his earnest efforts to decrease political tensions with Russia.²⁸⁰

In the middle of June, Yeltsin and Bush agreed to further reduce their countries' total

²⁷⁵ *Izvestia*, April 29, 1992.

²⁷⁶ The last warhead was shipped to Russia on May 5, 1992, including gravity bombs, nuclear anti-aircraft missile pods, sea-launched nuclear torpedoes, sea-launched tactical cruise missiles, and air-launched cruise missiles. However, on his visit to Washington, Kravchuk disagreed declaring that the weapons would be completely withdrawn only by July 1st, as originally planned. Although some, including Air Marshall Shaposhnikov, blamed the divergence of Russian and Ukrainian estimates on technical blunders, the reason for divergence is probably Ukraine's desire to remain in the center of attention and use the weapons as a bargaining chip for as long as possible. *Izvestia*, May 6 and 7, 1992.

²⁷⁷ Protocol to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, Lisbon, 23 May 1992.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Izvestia*, May 25, 1992.

²⁸⁰ *Izvestia*, June 3, 1992.

nuclear arsenals²⁸¹ and even pondered creating international armed forces with the participation of Russia's and US contingents.²⁸² But while making progress in its negotiations with the United States, Russian leadership postponed solving problems with Ukraine. In Yalta Yeltsin and Kravchuk agreed to keep the Black Sea Fleet indivisible for at least three more years.²⁸³ No new developments in Kiev-Moscow relationship occurred during the fall of 1992.

Explaining Russia's Policies in 1991-92

In late 1991 and for most of 1992, Yeltsin was riding high and could follow his Westernist policy unhindered by the centrist and right forces, sometimes neglecting the Near Abroad in favor of securing closer ties with the Western states. His allowing the United States to take the lead in the disarmament of Ukraine was consistent with the general line of Russia's foreign policy at the time and coincided with the military's preferences.

1. Yeltsin's Westernism

Although Yeltsin fully supported the disarmament goals²⁸⁴ and shared proliferation concerns with his American counterparts, he had more urgent problems on the agenda, which made him view all issues through an economic prism. He was well aware that Russia could not afford to maintain parity with the United States²⁸⁵ and the US promise to finance Ukraine's and Russia's disarmament without asking much more of Russia than that it destroy the dismantled warheads seemed an ideal solution, which would take care of both of Yeltsin's concerns.

Engaging in a cooperative denuclearization effort in Ukraine and signing the START treaties

²⁸¹ *The New York Times*, June 17, 1992.

²⁸² *Izvestia*, June 19, 1992.

²⁸³ *Izvestia*, August 4, 1992.

²⁸⁴ *The New York Times*, January 30, 1992.

²⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, March 19, 1992.

with the United States, Russia would for many years have a common cause with Yeltsin's most wanted ally. At the same time, Russia would be paid for disposing of the aging weapons it no longer had the resources to maintain, making its economic problems slightly more manageable. Thus, Yeltsin's priorities were different, but he succeeded in finding a common interest with the Bush administration.

In late 1991, Yeltsin's choice of immediate goals was dictated by his desire to get rid of Soviet obstacles to his leadership.²⁸⁶ To get Western support for independent Russia, Yeltsin had to reassure the USA that he was a responsible leader and that the nuclear weapons would constitute no danger under his control despite the dissolution of the USSR. That involved calming the West down about the weapons on the Ukrainian territory and promising their timely transfer. After Yeltsin stated in August 1991 that "in view of the fact that the Ukraine has declared itself a nuclear-free republic, its nuclear weapons [would] be moved to the Russian Federation,"²⁸⁷ *The New York Times* reported, "Mr. Yeltsin's remarks [...] went a long way toward quelling concerns that the Ukraine's leadership had become so mistrustful of Soviet central authority that it might seek independent control over nuclear weapons on its territory..."²⁸⁸

By mid-December Washington, having remained faithful to Gorbachev until the bitter end, started to cautiously communicate with the leaders of the Russian Federation.²⁸⁹ But the US position on the requests for diplomatic recognition from the FSU states, now joined by Russia,

²⁸⁶ Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: myths and reality* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 20.

²⁸⁷ *The New York Times*, August 29, 1991.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ *Izvestia*, December 13, 1991.

remained unclear.²⁹⁰ When the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs put the recognition of Russia's independence on the table, Secretary Baker promised to consider his request together with the “analogous request from the Ukrainian side.”²⁹¹ In response, Yeltsin said he was ready to present Baker with “firm guarantees” that the control over the Soviet nuclear weapons was in reliable hands.²⁹² To get the United States to recognize Russia’s independence and support a handover of the Soviet seat on the UN Security Council to Russia, Yeltsin reassured Baker that the CIS leadership would have full control over all nuclear weapons.²⁹³ To convince the United States of the vitality of the newborn Commonwealth and Russia’s special role in it, Yeltsin repeatedly emphasized how mature, responsible, and trustworthy his leadership was. When Washington was not satisfied with the nuclear aspects of the CIS Agreement,²⁹⁴ Moscow was quick to reiterate that despite the problems in the CIS, the nuclear arsenals were under control and did not constitute a danger. For example, Army General Maksimov reassured the world that the strategic rocket complexes were under central command and said that the President of Ukraine had no claims to the strategic weapons.²⁹⁵ Of course, Yeltsin had to be careful not to paint too rosy a picture of the state of affairs because Russia also needed financial assistance. However, initially Yeltsin’s goal was to gain Western recognition for his presidency of independent Russia, and this could not be achieved without convincing the West of his firm and responsible control over the nuclear weapons.

²⁹⁰ *Izvestia*, December 17, 1991.

²⁹¹ *Izvestia*, December 16, 1991.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Although recognized before other FSU states, Russia was humiliated in the process. Russian papers published alarmed reports emphasizing that from American viewpoint, Russia's inheritance of the Soviet seat in the UN Security council was not automatically guaranteed because there had been no precedent of such a substitution. *Izvestia*, December 24, 1991.

²⁹⁴ *Izvestia*, December 9, 1991.

²⁹⁵ *Izvestia*, December 19, 1991.

After the end of the USSR, Yeltsin continued his liberal Westernist policies, initially unhindered by the center-right.²⁹⁶ The West saw Yeltsin's regime as a determining factor for this transformation, and the President and his Foreign Minister tried sustaining these expectations for as long as possible. Thus, in 1992, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation was low-key and conciliatory toward the West. When discussing how to deal with the post-Soviet republics, the Russian leadership referred to international norms, passing the baton to Western institutions.²⁹⁷ Yeltsin loyally cooperated with the United States in the Ukrainian denuclearization process. Although Ukraine received much more attention than other CIS states, Russia lacked a single and clear policy toward Kiev in the first year after the Soviet Union's collapse, and consistent with Yeltsin's Westernism, the Foreign Ministry trusted its new partner Washington to mediate the Ukrainian nuclear dispute.²⁹⁸ As *Izvestia* caustically noted, "Russia [did] not have a thoughtful strategy of relations with other CIS states [and] would like to compensate [for its absence] by the special relations with Washington."²⁹⁹

In January 1992, when the West was deciding how to handle the nuclear inheritance of the USSR, Russian leadership expressed its support for Germany's proposal that NATO negotiate the future of nuclear weapons in the FSU states on an individual basis. Advocated by Russia, this strategy seemed almost counterintuitive as it would not only prolong the process of denuclearization, but would also allow the newly independent states to negotiate the weapons' fate independently of Russia.³⁰⁰ In fact, the alternative negotiations strategy, advocated by the

²⁹⁶ Jackson, 53.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁹⁸ *Izvestia*, January 17, 1992.

²⁹⁹ *Izvestia*, January 18, 1993.

³⁰⁰ The opinion of the Foreign Ministry differed substantially from the preferences of Russian military elite and centrist political leaders who believed that all Soviet weapons belonged to

United States, addressed Russian interests much better because it suggested solving the issue bilaterally, between the United States and Russia, or the United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Of course, Moscow was easily persuaded to pursue the latter strategy by its new American partners.³⁰¹

Despite Yeltsin's criticism, Russia's focus on cooperating with the United States over finding a common language with Ukraine was by no means to Russia's detriment. In fact, Ukraine's contentious path to denuclearization proved a blessing for Yeltsin's West-oriented course. Firstly, by accepting Western leadership in the denuclearization negotiations Yeltsin showed that Russia and the United States had a common interest in nonproliferation.³⁰² The longer Ukraine's intransigence lasted, the more fruitful the US-Russian cooperation became. At the same time, the US-Russian common denuclearization efforts impeded the development of closer relations between Ukraine and the West.

Secondly, the Kremlin saw no need to compete with its Western partner in the denuclearization negotiations with Ukraine because the talks were always conducted with Moscow in mind. Although Ukraine hoped to participate in the START negotiations as an independent state, Washington preferred to deal with only one CIS representative – Russia.³⁰³ It kept reminding Ukraine who its “older brother” was. For example, after Ukraine subordinated all the troops and fleet stationed on its territory to its command³⁰⁴ and privatized the CIS nuclear

Russia as the sole successor of the Soviet Union and that only Russia ought to have a say in their dismantlement.

³⁰¹ *Izvestia*, January 17, 1992.

³⁰² Steven Miller, “Russia and Nuclear Weapons,” in *The Nuclear Challenge in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. George Quester (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1995), 96-97.

³⁰³ The Russian press speculates that the change of Ukraine's position is due to the US pressure, as the offers of economic aid to Kiev are directly related to its fulfillment of nuclear obligations. *Izvestia*, April 15, 1992.

³⁰⁴ *Izvestia*, April 9, 1992.

arsenal, the US leadership reminded Kravchuk of the direct relation between solving the nuclear question with Moscow and receiving US economic and financial aid and urged the Ukrainian President to improve his relations with the Kremlin.³⁰⁵

Thirdly, up to the summer of 1993 Ukraine's demands were largely dismissed by the United States, which remained Yeltsin's partner to Kravchuk's detriment. Moscow also continued to be Washington's main aid recipient despite Kiev's attempts to divert attention to itself.³⁰⁶ The U.S. Congress, which authorized \$400 million in Nunn-Lugar denuclearization assistance in 1991, continued to authorize \$400 million annually for this purpose, not influenced by Ukraine's nuclear drama. Because Russia was competing for Western assistance alongside with Ukraine, Ukraine's continuing non-compliance ensured that most of the CIS aid would go to Moscow, which would then redistribute the resources, as it deemed necessary. The only thing Ukraine really achieved in the first two years of bargaining was some security guarantees, which in reality amounted to nothing more than a political gesture and were equivalent to what Ukraine would have won by joining the NPT or to what it was already entitled to as a member of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).³⁰⁷

While the Russian leader wanted to preserve the CIS, he at the same time accorded relatively attention to it compared to the West. To succeed, the Westernists believed "Russia had to go to the West alone."³⁰⁸ The Foreign Ministry's Institute of International Relations even wrote a report arguing that Russia had to be prepared to "give up the CIS in favor of orientation

³⁰⁵ *Izvestia*, May 5, 1992.

³⁰⁶ *Izvestia*, December 5, 1991.

³⁰⁷ Michael Wheeler, "Positive and Negative Security Assurances," PRAC Paper, No. 9 (February 1994), *Project on Rethinking Arms Control, Center for International and Security Studies*, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland.

³⁰⁸ Tsygankov, 76.

toward Europe.”³⁰⁹ At the same time, there was no historical precedent for a Russian foreign policy towards the newly independent states, and the Foreign Ministry in Moscow inherited no adequate departments to deal with these now foreign countries. In January 1991, there were only approximately ten people working in the MFA in charge of the near abroad.³¹⁰ A Department for the CIS Countries was finally established in March 1992, but the decree setting up embassies in the capitals of the Near Abroad was not issued until September. The Department consisted of an Administration for CIS Affairs (multilateral), and an Administration for the CIS Countries (for bilateral relations) and was scantily funded.³¹¹ Due to the combination of inadequate resources and different priorities, Russia was not ready to pursue a coherent policy in the Near Abroad in 1992.³¹² As example of inaction serves the protracted dispute over the fate of the Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea: despite countless declarations reimposing Russian control over the Fleet, no action was taken until 1997.

By July 1992, Russia opened only one embassy in the region, in Kiev.³¹³ This speaks not to the low priority assigned to the CIS states, but also to the relative importance of Ukraine, which was considered much more part of Russia proper than other republics along Russia’s periphery.³¹⁴ Although relations with the Near Abroad were neglected in 1992, Kiev immediately followed the West on Russia’s agenda.

2. Yeltsin and the CIS

³⁰⁹ Andrei V. Zagorski, *Posle raspada SSSR: Rossiya v novom mire* (Moscow: MGIMO, February 1992).

³¹⁰ Interview with Shelov-Kovedyaev, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 30, 1992.

³¹¹ Jeffrey Checkel, “Russian Foreign Policy: Back into the Future?” *RFE/RL, Research Report*, I (41) 1992, 24.

³¹² Jackson, 58-59.

³¹³ Tsygankov, 78.

³¹⁴ For example, Ukraine supplied many of the Soviet Union’s governing elite, for example, Brezhnev and Khrushchev. Lo, 80.

The Soviet nuclear arsenal was a symbol of the Union's power and strength. Its indivisibility stood for the Union's integrity. This is why the first move of the states that proclaimed their sovereignty was to declare their non-nuclear status, to which the center reacted by stressing the need for preserving the Union, finding an ally in the United States. To understand the ambivalence of the Soviet and then Russian decisionmakers, including Yeltsin, toward a nuclear-free independent Ukraine it may be helpful to look back to 1990, when the world's third largest nuclear power voluntarily proclaimed nonnuclear status in its declaration of sovereignty, vowing "not to produce; not to spread, and not to use nuclear weapons."³¹⁵ Instead of using the opportunity to transfer the weapons, the center declared that no nuclear-free zones could be established on the USSR territory and blamed the republic for trying to take control of the nuclear forces.³¹⁶ Thus, from the very beginning, the nuclear arsenal became an instrument in the struggle against independence for the center and for independence in the eyes of Ukrainian nationalists. The logic of the Soviet policymakers was that since the nuclear potential could not be divided, then the Soviet Union itself could not be divided into independent states.³¹⁷ The Soviet leadership recalled the dangers presented by the nuclear weapons in the destabilized Union only to pit the West against Ukraine's independence. The Russian papers warned that even if all nuclear weapons were removed from Ukraine's territory the country would not unlearn to make nuclear weapons in Khar'kov, nor rockets in Dnepropetrovsk, nor air carriers in Nikolaev.³¹⁸ The argument was made that only the oversight of Moscow could ensure security. Therefore, the moral imperative for the global community was to support Russia in trying to keep Ukraine in the Union. This tactic worked, and many countries, including the United States,

³¹⁵ *The New York Times*, July 17, 1990.

³¹⁶ Davydov, 19.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Izvestia*, October 5, 1991.

postponed recognizing Ukraine until the last moment, while pressuring Kiev to cooperate with Moscow. Diane Francis aptly notes George Bush's "Chicken Kiev" speech in the Rada urging Ukraine to remain in the USSR right after the country's declaration of independence.³¹⁹ Similar logic stressed the importance of the CIS integration; only the weapons were now being slowly transferred.

Although in December 1991 the Soviet Union was formally dissolved by Yeltsin, the uncertainty about Russia's relations with the states along its periphery continued after the CIS Agreement was signed. In the first half of 1992, Yeltsin made no vigorous efforts to pull deployed nuclear weapons out of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, hoping to forge a common security arrangement. Russia lost no time in the Baltic republics, which were clearly leaving the Union and withdrew its short-range battlefield nuclear weapons from their territories already in the summer of 1991.³²⁰ However, the "brotherly" Ukraine was a different case; although it voted for independence, it could still be urged to participate in the Commonwealth, which Yeltsin saw as a much more integrated entity than it eventually became.³²¹ If for Ukrainian president Kravchuk the CIS was "a committee to liquidate the old [Soviet] structures,"³²² for his Russian counterpart the CIS was an integrated structure in which Russia would play the leading role.³²³ Conveniently, the closely integrated CIS was also what the West initially had in mind.

Yeltsin knew that dividing and destroying the nuclear inheritance would accelerate disintegration of the former Soviet space and alienate the Commonwealth members, especially

³¹⁹ Diane Francis, "A treaty signed with indecent haste," *Maclean's*; Vol. 106 Issue 14, April 5, 1993, 11.

³²⁰ *The New York Times*, August 29, 1991.

³²¹ As Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev said on April 18, 1992, "The choice between the USSR and the CIS [did] not exist. In essence, the CIS [was] the only possible form of a renewed Union." Quoted in Solchanyk, 53.

³²² Kravchuk quoted in *Ibid.*, 66.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

the individualistic Ukraine. Forceful tactics regarding the nuclear arsenal remaining on Ukraine's territory would have undermined Russia's carefully planned reintegration efforts. There were simply no carrots left and the sticks remaining in the dilapidated fence along Russia's shrunken borders would only increase Ukraine's intransigence. Russia's friction-laden reactions with Kiev had only fueled pronuclear sentiments in Ukraine.³²⁴ An astute politician, Yeltsin was trying to smooth the bumpy road to Russian-Ukrainian relations, and sometimes it involved making the road longer and windier. Yeltsin needed the CIS to succeed, and he was relying on his friendship with Kravchuk to solve the Russian-Ukrainian stalemates,³²⁵ which explains his occasional unwillingness to press the denuclearization issue.

At the same time, by dragging out the denuclearization process Yeltsin inhibited Ukraine's attempts to join the West ahead of Russia by complicating Kiev's relations with the foreign capital³²⁶ and institutions. The longer the problem lasted, the less reliable a negotiating partner Ukraine seemed, which meant that Western negotiations with Kiev would continue to go through Moscow. For example, on his visit to Washington in May 1992, Kravchuk was reminded of the direct relationship between solving the nuclear issue with Moscow and receiving aid and was urged to repair Kiev's relationship with Russia.³²⁷ A request by Ukraine for security guarantees was rebuffed by Secretary of State James A. Baker 3rd who told Kravchuk that Ukraine's best security guarantee was "to act like a sovereign state and become quickly immersed in international organizations and treaties."³²⁸ Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister

³²⁴ Miller, 96.

³²⁵ Breslauer, 193.

³²⁶ For example, even Ukraine's trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union, signed in June 1994, was made conditional on Ukraine's denuclearization. "Ukraine Signs EU Trade Treaty: Nuclear Weapons a Stumbling Block," *The Washington Times*, June 15, 1994.

³²⁷ *Izvestia*, May 5, 1992.

³²⁸ *The New York Times*, September 6, 1992.

Boris Tarasyuk admitted that Ukraine was isolated by the West due to its delays in ratifying START and joining the NPT.³²⁹ After the Russian Parliament passed a resolution on the federal status of Sevastopol, causing an uproar in Ukraine, Army General Konstantin Kobec in his interview with *Izvestia* stated that although the actions of Russian lawmakers consolidated the opponents of nuclear disarmament in Ukraine, it was doubtful that the West would decisively support Ukraine against Russia or else it would lose one more useful stick for pressuring the unwanted member of the nuclear club.³³⁰ In this way, the denuclearization stalemate also conveniently provided Russia with numerous reasons to meddle into Ukraine's internal affairs.³³¹

As Ukraine's relations with the West deteriorated, the greater its isolation, the poorer its coffers, and the weaker its international position became. In the meantime, Ukraine's ongoing need for supplies of fuel rods for nuclear power stations and its debt to Russia grew, increasing its dependence on Moscow and strengthening the ties with Russia and the Commonwealth. Even in the text of security guarantees that Russia finally gave in January 1993, the fourth point stipulated that Russia would respect Ukraine's borders "within the framework of the CIS" which was an attempt to cement Ukraine's CIS membership.³³² All this helped ensure that Ukraine would remain in the Commonwealth.

3. Influence of the Military

Military's Pressure To Retain The CIS Command Structure

³²⁹ *Washington Times*, October 25, 1994.

³³⁰ *Izvestia*, July 13, 1993.

³³¹ As Ukrainian President Kravchuk well understood and tried to explain to the Ukrainian parliament in 1994. Robert Seely, "A-Arms Pact Is Approved In Ukraine," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1994.

³³² Solchanyk, 91.

For Ukraine, the CIS command over strategic nuclear forces deployed there seemed much more appropriate than direct Russian control, and until the summer of 1993, the strategic nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian soil were under the legal control of the CIS Armed Forces, an organization in which Ukraine did not fully participate. By refusing to sign the CIS Charter, Kiev effectively left all control of the CIS strategic space to Russia. Thus, until the summer of 1993 thanks to the nuclear weapons' prolonged stay on the Ukraine's territory, Yeltsin could not abrogate the high command of the CIS Joint Armed Forces; transferring the nuclear command and control system to the Russian Army would mean violating the CIS agreements. This was also what the Soviet military wanted.

From December 1991 until mid-1993, the CIS Joint Armed Forces had responsibility for all the strategic forces of the former USSR, including the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory. In the immediate aftermath of the demise of the USSR, the military's goal was not consolidation of the strategic arsenal on its own territory, but the preservation of a unified command structure over the inherited Soviet strategic deployments, wherever they might be. It was only when the attempts to retain a unified military command within the CIS failed that the denuclearization became a problem.³³³

What denuclearization really meant to the shaken Russian military establishment of the early 1990s was that it deprived thousands of people of their privileged positions in society and means of existence. The Russian military was also reluctant to dislocate nuclear deployments that included some of the most modern systems in the Soviet arsenals, including SS-25s in Belarus, SS-24s in Ukraine, and modernized SS-18s in Kazakhstan. Similar reasons explain why the ambitious military reform plans announced during the 1990s stalled. The military did not

³³³ Deyermond, 67-68.

want to dismantle the enormous military machine remaining from the Cold War, hoping that some day the old system would be revived and the financial injections would follow. Aware of the danger hidden in Ukraine's independence aspirations, the Soviet Ministry of Defense scheduled the army inspection on the Ukrainian territory on the very day when Ukrainians were to vote in a referendum on their independence, sending a very clear message about their preferences.³³⁴ But Ukrainians chose independence, and the Union collapsed, putting the future of the Joint Armed Forces in danger.

It was not until May 1992 that an independent Russian defense establishment was created, and not until June 1993 that the joint command of the CIS armed forces was abolished. For months after the demise of the USSR, the Russian General Staff "turned a Nelson's eye on the irreversibly damaged prospect of retaining a unified command structure of the Soviet vintage."³³⁵ The FSU republics started conducting service oaths, breaking up the common military, but while the Soviet strategic forces were present on the FSU space, the existence of the Joint Armed Forces was justified. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Army and consolidation of Russia's nuclear arsenal, many in the High Command would find themselves without jobs.

Establishment of the Russian Armed Forces in May 1992 deprived the CIS generals of their army,³³⁶ but their weakened role lasted while the CIS strategic forces (including Ukraine's nuclear weapons) existed. Therefore, the Soviet, and later the CIS military elite favored dragging the stay of the Union's warheads outside of the Russian borders, hoping for the better times to

³³⁴ Luckily, the inspection was cancelled at the last moment. *Izvestia*, November 29, 1991.

³³⁵ Arup Banerji, "Military as a Factor in Russian Politics" *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, no. 46/47, (November 13-20, 1993): 2543-2546, 2543.

³³⁶ On May 7, Yeltsin signed the appropriate orders. Pavel Grachev was promoted to army general, and became first deputy defense minister – and acting defense minister. Two weeks later, Grachev was named Russia's first Minister of Defense. Herspring, 69.

come (which for many meant the restoration of the USSR or the transformation of the CIS into a closer union). As a result, the single command and control structure was implemented by two agencies—the Russian Defense Ministry and the CIS High Command. Not surprisingly, the military began to favor a much more assertive stance on Ukraine’s denuclearization in the summer of 1993, when the joint military command was dissolved and Shaposhnikov resigned to become Yeltsin's security adviser,³³⁷ now officially leaving the nuclear arms officially in the hands of Russia's Strategic Forces.

Military’s Assessment of the Weapons’ Danger to the Russian Federation

It is also important to realize that the Russian top brass knew more about the safety of the weapons in Ukraine than the international community, and its knowledge allowed it not to be as alarmed about the prolonged stay of the arsenal. Firstly, the military was aware that it was not possible to fire the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory against Russian targets because they were long-range intercontinental missiles,³³⁸ designed to hit targets in North America. Even if the Ukrainians developed their own targeting and guidance systems, their missiles were located too close to be of any danger to Moscow. Secondly, Ukraine did not possess its own testing facilities or flight control stations, which precluded the possibility that Ukraine would organize test flights for its ICBMs.³³⁹ Thirdly, the Soviet era practice of having three “nuclear briefcases” was still maintained, which meant that the nuclear button remained under the effective Russian control: one briefcase was in the possession of the Russian president, another with the outspokenly pro-Russian Shaposhnikov, and the third (held by Gorbachev until the end

³³⁷ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1993.

³³⁸ Kassenova, 96.

³³⁹ While the SS-19 ICBMs were once tested with a range of around 1,500 miles, the minimum test flight for SS-24s was several times longer. This complicates their re-targeting at European Russia. Pikayev, 42.

of 1991) was put into storage but in the custody of the CIS strategic command.³⁴⁰ Thus, Russian generals, no matter whether they were working for the CIS or for the Russian Federation, remained generally confident in their control over the nuclear weapons on the Ukraine's territory. Fourthly, most of Russian military commanders were convinced that Ukraine was unprepared to provide adequate technical servicing of the nuclear rocket arsenal due to the shortage of skilled personnel.³⁴¹ Maintenance of the missiles presented the biggest challenge in the cases of the SS-19s as liquid missile fuel is highly corrosive and certain parts of the weapons had to be replaced regularly. Ukraine did not have domestic capacity to do this, and the Russian military could predict with great certainty that the SS-19s would become inoperable within a relatively short period of time.³⁴² Although most of the reports on the desperate state of old warheads were a part of Russia's policy of pressuring Ukraine to give them up sooner, there were some true concerns as well.³⁴³ Thus, the Russian brass knew all too well that Ukrainian specialists could not service the ammunition on their own because they didn't have an adequate material-technical base and necessary components and would eventually have to turn to Russia for help. Therefore, Russian tactics were based on the fact that there was "no need to shake the tree, the fruit would ripen and fall into the hands of the patient gardener all by itself."³⁴⁴ Finally,

³⁴⁰ Deyermond, 81.

³⁴¹ Shaposhnikov stated that because of Ukraine's deficiency in nuclear experts, Ukraine had only a limited ability to maintain its nuclear weapons. David C Isby, "The Targeting Of Former Soviet Ballistic Missiles," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 11/93, 496-498. Also see Olli-Pekka Jalonen, *Captors of Denuclearization?: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Nuclear Disarmament* (Tampere: Tampere Peace Research Institute, 1994), 29.

³⁴² Jalonen, 41.

³⁴³ For example, in September 1993, the temperature in the depository of nuclear warheads in Pervomaïsk had suddenly risen, and Ukrainian Prime Minister Kuchma notified Russian specialists of the problem. A group of Russian specialists from Minatomenergiya as well as the Ministry of Defense was sent to Ukraine to investigate. *Izvestia*, September 15, 1993. Also *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 9, 1993.

³⁴⁴ *Izvestia*, July 27, 1993.

there were no known design and testing facilities in Ukraine. The production of special nuclear materials like plutonium, enriched uranium, tritium, lithium-6, and deuterium was located exclusively on the Russian territory.³⁴⁵

Furthermore, the military did not see a particular danger in having a part of the Russian nuclear arsenal elsewhere, provided it was on a friend's territory. Interestingly, the speed of denuclearization seemed to be inversely proportionate to the warmth of the state's relationship with the Russian Federation. Belarus, which had the least number of warheads and was most compliant, wound up being the last FSU state to have its warheads leave (the last one was transferred as late as November 1996). Moreover, in the case of Belarus, Russia's staunchest acolyte, deteriorating relations with NATO states after denuclearization was completed were marked by occasional threats of returning nuclear weapons to its territory.³⁴⁶ Thus, while no one disputed the need to remove nuclear warheads from the Ukrainian territory, the country's denuclearization was not seen as extremely urgent because in the first months after the Union's collapse Ukraine was still regarded by many as a part of Russia, remaining a part of common security space under the CIS agreement.³⁴⁷ Therefore, it didn't matter how quickly the nuclear

³⁴⁵ Jalonen, 44.

³⁴⁶ Deyermond, 68.

³⁴⁷ Article 6 on common security was one of the most important and most detailed parts of the CIS Agreement. Taking into consideration the drafters were in the act of establishing their independence from one another, their decision to secure a single strategic space and coordinate their foreign policies, stipulated in the Article 7 of the CIS Agreement, made their intention to dissolve the Union and separate from each other even more questionable. Article 6 stated: "The member-states of the Commonwealth will cooperate in safe-guarding international peace and security and in implementing effective measures for reducing armaments and military spending.... The member-states of the commonwealth will preserve and maintain under united command a common military-strategic space, including unified control over nuclear weapons. [...] They also jointly guarantee the necessary conditions for the stationing and functioning, of the strategic armed forces and for their material and social provision." Text of the CIS Agreement, *CIS Executive Committee*, <http://www.cis.minsk.by/main.aspx?uid=78>.

arsenal would be transferred as long as its control was in the right hands and the weapons were targeted the right way.

Conclusion

First of all, delegating the bulk of the denuclearization efforts to the United States in the first year after the collapse of the Soviet Union can be partly explained by Yeltsin's liberal Westernist views. Yeltsin's decisive Westernism in 1992 was coupled with the lack of consistent purposeful goals for the CIS – the President's "family" that he sought did not need as much attention and effort because of the members' kinship. Yeltsin's Westernism also led to his endorsement of Kozyrev, liberal Foreign Minister, who regulated the formal aspects of US-Russia cooperation and Russia-Ukraine negotiations at the time. In accordance with the preferences of the early Yeltsin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev advocated liberal foreign policy with a distinct focus on relations with the United States, arguing that cooperation with the West was a natural consequences because "no developed, democratic, civil society . . . [could] threaten" Russia.³⁴⁸

Secondly, so as not to alienate Ukraine from participating in the CIS, Yeltsin had to be careful in pressing the denuclearization issue. Up to 1993, the United States restrained Kiev's independence ambitions urging it to remain in the CIS and coordinate its policies with Russia – just what Yeltsin and most Russian political actors, regardless of their association with the Westernist or the nationalist camp, wanted. On the other hand, completing the removal of strategic forces from the Ukrainian territory would eliminate one of the pillars of the Commonwealth, and forceful measures needed to achieve it would alienate Ukraine from

³⁴⁸ Jackson, 59.

participating in the CIS even further. In fact, the Commonwealth's prime passed once it stopped being the "caretaker of the former USSR's military assets."³⁴⁹

Thirdly, Yeltsin's preferences at the time coincided with those of the CIS High Command. The presence of the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory prolonged the lifespan of the CIS Joint Forces until their abolishment in the summer of 1993. In Mark Galeotti's words, "the role of the CIS command would steadily wither until it was nothing more than a transitional body supervising the destruction and transfer of nuclear weapons."³⁵⁰ Moreover, the military had never been supportive of disarmament goals as such, and its superior knowledge of the Ukrainian arsenal allowed the High Command not to worry about the security of the weapons on the Ukrainian territory. Therefore, concerned with self-preservation, the military had no interest in completing the weapons' transfer.

³⁴⁹ Galeotti, 150.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 152.

CHAPTER 5. DENUCLEARIZATION PROCESS IN 1993-94

Tracing Changes in Russia's Policies in 1993-94

On December 12, 1992, Ukraine's Supreme Council began debating the ratification of the NPT and START I, which would not come into force without Kiev's signature.³⁵¹ Two weeks later Yeltsin, surprising the White House itself, announced that Moscow and Washington agreed on the text of START-II and that he hoped to sign the treaty by the New Year's Eve.³⁵² On January 3, 1993, Bush and Yeltsin signed START-II.³⁵³ Upon the treaty's ratification, the two states would decrease their strategic nuclear arsenals to 3,000-3,500 warheads each. Russia would eliminate about 40 submarines, 1,500 ballistic missiles, and 7,000 warheads.³⁵⁴

When the Rada balked on START I ratification, senior Russian military officers accused Ukraine of trying to break the launch codes for the nuclear weapons located on its territory, estimating that their efforts would succeed in six months to a year.³⁵⁵ To calm the alarmed world community, Ukraine had to reaffirm its intention to become a nuclear-free state.³⁵⁶ Although the

³⁵¹ Radio Ukraine World Service (Kiev), December 12, 1992; in "Supreme Council Begins Debate On START Treaty," FBIS-SOV-92-240, December 14, 1992, 13. Cited in Skootsky, 71.

³⁵² *Izvestia*, December 28, 1992.

³⁵³ Ratification of the Treaty in the Russian Duma, pending since 1996, was finally completed on 14 April 2000. The Nuclear Information Project, "Ukraine Special Weapons," *Federation of American Scientists*, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/start2/index.html> (accessed on April 1, 2009).

³⁵⁴ *Rossiyskiye Vesti*, May 26, 1993.

³⁵⁵ Janice Castro, "It's The Nuclear Missiles, Stupid," *Time*, December 28, 1992, 11.

³⁵⁶ The Ambassador of Ukraine to Moscow Vladimir Kryzhanovsky explained the stalemate by the need for the treaty's review by the Ukrainian parliament. According to him, one of the biggest problems that held the deputies back was the absence of economic guarantees for the nuclear disarmament. Kryzhanovsky complained, "Our parliament is occupied with a normal process of reviewing the two treaties. He noted that the American and Russian experts were reviewing the CTR treaty for almost a year, and prior to that, the treaty was being prepared by the USSR and the USA for nine years. He argued, "Why do we need to ratify immediately, forgetting our responsibility for our people? A whole range of concrete problems of technical and financial nature exists. Unless they are solved, Ukraine's accession to the CTR is impossible.

Ukrainian leaders approved the treaty in principle, they demanded security guarantees, dismantlement assistance, and compensation for the nuclear weapons before START I could be ratified.³⁵⁷ The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Ukrainian National Committee for Questions of Disarmament Boris Tarasyuk met Bush on his three-day visit to Washington in January unsuccessfully repeating Kravchuk's May 1992 attempt to convince the US administration that Ukraine's "special status" required a more nuanced approach.

Ukraine's intransigence was starting to annoy the Russian leadership. At first Yeltsin tried to solve the impasse with carrots, agreeing to increase Russia's oil supplies to Kiev³⁵⁸ and offering Ukraine security guarantees.³⁵⁹ After the Rada suspended hearings on the ratification of START I on February 2,³⁶⁰ he started employing sticks. On February 22, Gazprom, Russia's largest gas company, warned Ukraine it may stop delivering natural gas.³⁶¹ In February, the

One of the biggest problems is the problem of economic guarantees for the nuclear disarmament." *Izvestia*, December 29, 1992.

³⁵⁷ Although Kiev viewed START II favorably, the head of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry's press service Yuriy Sergeyev stated, "However, it should not be forgotten that this [START II] involves a bilateral agreement signed between Russia and the USA. To link Ukrainian missiles to a treaty Ukraine has not signed is unjustifiable and senseless." Sergeyev added that Ukraine's missiles would be considered within the context of START I. Andrey Borodin, Dmitriy Voskoboinikov, Igor Porshnev, et. al., Interfax (Moscow), January 5, 1993; in "Ukraine To Consult With U.S. On START II," FBIS-SOV-93-003, January 6, 1993, 2. Cited in Skootsky, 72.

Kravchuk reiterated the Ukrainian view again in January 1993, "The Russian-U.S. Start-II Treaty does not assign any commitments to Ukraine and does not cover its territory Itar-Tass (Moscow), January 4, 1993; in "Kravchuk Says START II Does Not Apply To Ukraine," FBIS-SOV-93-003, January 6, 1993, 2. Cited in Skootsky, 72.

³⁵⁸ Ukraine asked for 45 million metric tons of oil a year, and Russia had said it could afford to provide only 15 million tons. As Ukraine was deliberating START I ratification, the ceiling was increased to 20 million tons. *The New York Times*, January 16, 1993.

³⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, January 16, 1993.

³⁶⁰ By then Minsk ratified the treaty, making Ukraine look backward in Washington's eyes. For comparison, Belarus received only \$7 million compared to the \$175 million received by Ukraine. *Izvestia*, February 4, 1993.

³⁶¹ To which Ukraine responded that it would not accord much meaning to the warnings that come from *Gazprom* as opposed to the Russian government. *Izvestia*, February 25, 1993.

experts of the RVSN headquarters reassessed Ukraine's nuclear complex in Pervomajsk, Nikolaevskaia oblast', publishing the sensationalist article "A new Chernobyl is ripening in Ukraine's nuclear shafts."³⁶² When two months later a working group composed of the members of the Ukrainian parliament, technical experts, and specialists convened to discuss Ukraine's START I ratification, Russia again raised concerns regarding the state of the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory.³⁶³ Yuriy Dubinin, head of the Russian delegation negotiating disarmament, spoke of Ukraine's moving away from its non-nuclear pledge, citing as proof the inclusion of the 43rd Missile Army and the 46th Air Army into the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Ukraine's establishment of the Center for Administrative Control of Strategic Nuclear Forces Troops in the Ministry of Defense.³⁶⁴

Despite Russia's warnings, on April 27, in a statement signed by 162 deputies, the Rada declared that the Security Council had to confirm Ukraine's right of ownership of the nuclear weapons on its territory before discussing the START I ratification.³⁶⁵ By now a much more

³⁶² Vladimir Litovkin quoted an officer of a high rank saying that he had never seen "such a mess" and that neither Belarus nor Kazakhstan had such problems with maintaining the security of nuclear complexes. Deputy of the Manager of RVSN on the exploitation of rocket weapons General Vladimir Nikitin said he was not confident that the problems may be solved because too much time had passed. He added, "Unfortunately not everything depends on the specialists. The politics of some leaders have become more important than nuclear security." Russian forces were said to have given 60 percent of special materials to fix the rockets out of their own scarce supplies and ordered a necessary number of warheads costing them 2,4 million rubles. *Izvestia*, February 16, 1993.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense shifted the blame on Russia since Russia refused to service the complexes until the status of other strategic forces was solved. *Izvestia*, February 19, 1993.

³⁶³ Interestingly, the group was chaired by Ukrainian Environment Minister Yuriy Kostenko who openly favored a nuclear Ukraine. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 27, 1993.

³⁶⁴ Viktor Zamyatin, *Kommersant-Daily* (Moscow), April 6, 1993; in "Differences Over START Viewed," JPRS-TND-93-010, April 16, 1993, 30-31. Cited in Skootsky, 74.

³⁶⁵ The statement also said, "Attempts on the part of some states to force Ukraine to immediately ratify START I, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and the Lisbon Protocol and to give up the status of a power that is, *de facto* and *de jure*, an owner of nuclear weapons are inadmissible from the point of view of international law." According to the statement, Ukraine should receive

active Russia expressed readiness to offer Ukraine additional security guarantees³⁶⁶ and upped its reports on the poor state of the Ukrainian weapons.³⁶⁷

In response to this situation, Washington began to soften its rhetoric and consider doubling carrots. A break-through was accomplished during the Kiev visit of the US Ambassador to the FSU States, Strobe Talbott, who promised to use the goodwill between Washington and Kiev to help normalize Kiev's relationship with Moscow.³⁶⁸ Les Aspin followed up with a visit and inquired about the possibility to start the dismantlement of Ukrainian weapons before the START I ratification, promising to store the warheads on the Ukrainian territory under international supervision before their transportation to Russia.³⁶⁹ Instead of processing the nuclear fuel in Russia and getting paid in rubles, Ukraine was invited to send its uranium to the United States and receive 2.8 billion dollars in return. Kravchuk and Konstantin Morozov, Ukraine's Defense Minister, agreed to Washington's proposal.

This is when Kiev-Moscow negotiations also became productive. Russia began to take noticeably more initiative in negotiating the denuclearization process. Shortly after Aspin's visit to Kiev, Kravchuk and Yeltsin met in Zavidovo, where the Russian president reaffirmed his

compensation for the materials removed from the warheads of the tactical weapons Ukraine had already transferred to Russia. *Molod Ukrayiny* (Kiev), April 27, 1993, 1, in "People's Deputies Advocate Country's Nuclear Status," FBIS-SOV-93-082, April 30, 1993, 51. Cited in Skootsky, 75.

³⁶⁶ *Izvestia*, April 8, 1993.

³⁶⁷ The chairman of the Committee for Defense and Security of the Russian Parliament, Sergei Stepashin, tells *Segodnya* that Ukraine is attempting to gain operational control of the nuclear weapons stationed on its territory. Stepashin states that Ukraine is attempting to retarget the nuclear missiles, most likely at Russia. Stepashin says that experts from the Russian Ministry of Defense believed that Ukraine could retarget the strategic missiles in eight months to one year. David C Isby, "The Targeting Of Former Soviet Ballistic Missiles," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1993, 496-498.

³⁶⁸ *Izvestia*, May 13, 1993.

³⁶⁹ *The New York Times*, June 9, 1993.

readiness to provide security guarantees to Ukraine.³⁷⁰ The two states decided that the dismantling process would be conducted by the better-prepared Russian strategic rocket forces, and Ukraine promised to lift customs and political barriers. Moscow would compensate Kiev for the removed nuclear warheads with the fuel for the Ukrainian atomic power stations. The swiftly concluded agreement between Kiev and Moscow made Aspin's proposal irrelevant.³⁷¹

On July 13, the Russian government approved a draft agreement with Ukraine, according to which Russia would convert HEU from dismantled warheads to LEU for Ukrainian nuclear reactors, store nuclear components from the warheads, and attach Ukrainian nuclear-engineering troops to the Russian Ministry of Defense.³⁷² Two days later, the dismantling of the first of five strategic rocket regiments in Pervomaisk, Nikolaevskaya oblast, began.³⁷³ On August 15, Kozyrev stated that a breakthrough had occurred in the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine and a final agreement would be concluded within the next few days.³⁷⁴

Russia's activism continued. On September 3, 1993, Yeltsin and Kravchuk met in Massandra to again discuss nuclear weapons and the fate of the Black Sea Fleet. At the summit, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma

³⁷⁰ *Izvestia*, June 18, 1993.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² "Russia Will Convert Warheads To Fuel For Ukraine," *Nuclear News*, August 93, 21.

³⁷³ Ukrainian Defense Minister Konstantin Morozov stated that the regiment would be "deactivated" by late September 1993 when work on a second regiment could begin. Russian and Ukrainian engineers and scientists would cooperate on deactivating the SS-19 ICBMs. Echoing Aspin's suggestion, the sides agreed that the warheads would remain in Ukraine under Russian supervision and maintenance until the Ukrainian Rada made a decision on START I. Under the agreement with Russia, the rocket fuel would remain in Ukraine. Dunbar Lockwood, "Ukraine's Position Hardens Despite Some Positive Signs," *Arms Control Today*, September 1993, 25, 30.

³⁷⁴ However, on the very next day his Ukrainian counterpart Morozov denied Kozyrev's statements, saying that while Russia did make a proposal concerning the dismantlement of the nuclear weapons in Ukraine, "there have so far been no talks with Russia." John Lepingwell, "Kozyrev's Comments On Nuclear Weapons Denied," *RFE/RL News Briefs*, August 16, 1993, 3. Cited in Skootsky, 76-77.

signed three agreements on the use and control of the nuclear weapons stationed in Ukraine and Russia. Russia was no longer shy to use pressure. As the two sides prepared for Massandra negotiations, Russia drastically cut back on the gas because of Ukraine's debts of nearly \$600 million. Ukraine was given another reminder of Russia's economic leverage when Yeltsin signed an agreement with Poland that would allow Russia to bypass Ukraine in transporting natural gas to Europe.³⁷⁵ Perhaps because the Massandra accords were signed under duress, the two presidents diverged on their understanding of the agreement when they were explaining it to the press. Jubilant Yeltsin announced that the two countries had "come to a complete agreement on the nuclear weapons" and that "the issue was solved." However, Kravchuk noted that the problem of dismantlement remained.³⁷⁶ In the end, the accord collapsed after the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Ukraine of altering the agreement.³⁷⁷

Bigger problems in Russia temporarily eclipsed its wrangles with Ukraine, as Yeltsin dismissed the Supreme Soviet.³⁷⁸ When the crisis passed, Russia returned to an assertive stance, although the results of its increasing pressure had mixed results. By the end of October, only two nuclear warheads – defective - had left Ukraine.³⁷⁹ When the Ukrainian Rada finally held the vote on START I in November 1993, it was ratified with thirteen conditions, including the removal of Article 5 of the Lisbon Protocol (which required Ukraine to join the NPT as a

³⁷⁵ *The New York Times*, September 4, 1993.

³⁷⁶ Kravchuk said he would be asking the USA to provide dismantlement aid in accordance with the previously concluded agreements. Kravchuk explained: "We have decided on the compensation to Ukraine for servicing the rockets. But this only concerns the warheads whereas the question of rockets themselves is yet to be raised and solved." *Izvestia*, September 4 and September 7, 1993.

³⁷⁷ Jalonon, 57.

³⁷⁸ *Izvestia*, September 25, 1993.

³⁷⁹ And even the removal of those two initially encountered resistance on behalf of the Ukrainian customs officers on the border demanding that demand that Russian officials again fill out the documentation authorizing export. *Izvestia*, October 26, 1993.

nonnuclear state) and claiming the weapons as the state property of Ukraine (which implied that Ukraine exercised administrative control over all strategic nuclear forces on its territory). In response, the Russian government threatened to impose energy sanctions and halt the maintenance of the arsenal.³⁸⁰ Previously soft, Kozyrev now officially warned of applying economic pressure.³⁸¹ The Kremlin issued a three-page statement rejecting the Rada's conditional ratification of START I,³⁸² and the military's reports on the dangers of aging warheads flooded the press again.³⁸³ If before the Russian Foreign Ministry was trying to sweet-talk Kiev into participating in the CIS and gradually solving the nuclear issue, now Kozyrev flew to Ukraine to convey to his Ukrainian counterpart Zlenko that it was "naïve" to hope that Russia would continue to provide Ukraine with free equipment for nuclear power stations and almost free oil and gas. Ukraine again complained of Russia's blackmail, but Moscow exerted increasing pressure on the intransigent neighbor.³⁸⁴

Despite Russia's redoubled efforts to secure Ukraine's denuclearization, the final act could not be played out without Washington. After Bill Clinton's meeting with Kravchuk in

³⁸⁰ *Izvestia*, November 23, 1993.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.* Also see Dmitry Voskoboinikov, Igor Porshnev, Vitaliy Trubetskoy, Interfax (Moscow), November 22, 1993, in "Kozyrev: Ukraine Violating Nuclear Treaty," FBIS-SOV-93-224, November 23, 1993, 17.

³⁸² The chairman of the Ukrainian parliament's Chernobyl Committee, Volodymyr Yavorivsky, reacted calling Russia's actions "dirty nuclear blackmail" that "could lead to a nuclear confrontation. Marta Kolomayets, "U.S. and Russia Pressure Ukraine To Withdraw Conditions On START," *Ukrainian Weekly*, December 5, 1993, 1,17. Cited in Skootsky, 81.

³⁸³ Major General V. Yakovlev, the deputy head of the Russian Ministry's nuclear weapons department, claimed that eight times more nuclear warheads were being stored at Pervomaysk, Ukraine than are allowed by safety regulations. Yakovlev stated that "it may prove dangerous to dismantle nuclear warheads" in such a state. "The Future Of Ukrainian Nuclear Warheads," *Jane's Intelligence Review-Pointer*, January 1994, 3. Cited in Skootsky, 84.

Later, Russia's top weapons designers warned that "serious infractions" in the storage and safety of Ukraine's nuclear warheads could cause a disaster on the same scale as Chernobyl. Martin Sieff, "Russians Criticize Ukraine Handling Of Nuclear Arms," *Washington Times*, December 10, 1993.

³⁸⁴ *Izvestia*, November 6, 1993.

Kiev, Russia, Ukraine, and the United States signed the Trilateral Agreement on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Means of Their Delivery on 14 January 1994. The Treaty committed Ukraine to transfer 200 SS-19 and SS-24 warheads to Russia over the next 10 months. Moscow and Washington granted Kiev security guarantees, contingent on Ukraine's joining the NPT as a non-nuclear state. To partially compensate Ukraine for the nuclear weapons on its territory, Russia promised to deliver 100 tons of LEU, for which it would be paid \$60 million by the United States.³⁸⁵ Kiev would also earn a billion dollars by selling the uranium extracted from the rockets to the United States.³⁸⁶

To be sure, signing the Trilateral Agreement did not mean that the Rada would become more pliant.³⁸⁷ However, the battle for non-nuclear Ukraine was largely won. On February 3, the Rada unconditionally ratified START I, in effect endorsing the Trilateral Agreement and Article 5 of the Lisbon Protocol.³⁸⁸ In accordance with the treaties, the dismantlement of strategic nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory began.³⁸⁹ In May 1994, in a protocol signed by Ukrainian acting-Prime Minister Yefim Zvyagilsky and Russian Prime Minister Viktor

³⁸⁵ *Izvestia*, January 19, 1994.

³⁸⁶ *Izvestia*, January 15, 1994.

³⁸⁷ For example, the Ukrainian deputy chairman of the parliamentary committee on foreign affairs Bohdan Horyn stated that the Treaty was "inadequate" and that its approval should be postponed until after the March 27, 1994 parliamentary elections. John Lepingwell, "Ukrainian Parliament And Trilateral Agreement," *RFE/RL News Briefs*, January 24, 1994, 7, cited in Skootsky, 89.

³⁸⁸ However, Ukraine's Rada failed to approve Ukraine's membership in the NPT by about 24 votes. Robert Seely, "A-Arms Pact Is Approved In Ukraine," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1994.

³⁸⁹ There were a few more stalemates. For example, Following *Gazprom's* (Russia's natural gas company) announcement that it would reduce its supply of natural gas to Ukraine by three-quarters until Ukraine pays for it, Ukrainian President Kravchuk announced that "Fulfillment of all agreements, including agreements on nuclear commitments, [was] possible only if the economy work[ed]." Less than a week after Kravchuk's announcement, Ukraine suspended its removal of strategic warheads to Russia. Dunbar Lockwood, "Ukraine Begins Transfer Of Strategic Nuclear Warheads," *Arms Control Today*, April 1994, 20.

Chernomyrdin, Russia and Ukraine even agreed to accelerate the disarmament timetable from seven to three years.³⁹⁰ On November 16, 1994, the Rada voted 301 to 8 approving Ukraine's membership in the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state, and Ukraine's ratification allowed START I to enter into force. On December 12, Kiev formally acceded to the NPT at the CSCE summit in Budapest, Hungary.³⁹¹ With that, strategic nuclear weapons effectively ceased to be an issue in the Russian-Ukrainian relationship.

Explaining the change in Russia's policies

Russia's increasingly active participation in the denuclearization process throughout 1993 resulted from the shift of Yeltsin's foreign policy line to the center that, in turn, was due to several factors.

1. Changes in Yeltsin's Perspectives on the West and Ukraine-US relationship.

By mid-1993 the Ukrainian nuclear diplomacy began to pay dividends as the United States softened its tactics. Throughout the denuclearization process, Ukraine craved recognition, compensation, and security guarantees. Now it seemed to be getting what it wanted. Ukraine not only decisively continued on the independence and neutrality path, but also was finally heard by the world community. The Clinton administration undertook a review of its policy with regard to the CIS states and "finally transcended the fixation on Ukraine as primarily an arms control problem and broadened relations as if it were a 'real' country."³⁹² As Leonard Spector explained in 1994, "We soon began to realize that we had made an error in concentrating too much of our

³⁹⁰ "Ukraine Said Ready To Speed Nuclear Disarmament," *Reuter*, May 19, 1994. Cited in Skootsky, 91.

³⁹¹ Jan Cleave, "Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan Accede To NPT," *RFE/RL Daily Report*, December 6, 1994.

³⁹² Solchanyk, 90-91.

offerings of positive incentives on Russia. We quickly tried to turn this around, and now I think we have a well-balanced policy.”³⁹³

Because of Ukraine’s intransigence, the United States was now much more active in the region: it mediated between quarreling Ukraine and Russia; almost invited the international observers to monitor the process in Ukraine; offered to pay for Ukraine’s uranium instead of sending it to Russia; and increased Ukraine’s proportion of aid to the CIS at Russia’s expense. If before whenever Kravchuk would complain about the Kremlin, the United States would point to Ukraine's intransigence on the nuclear issue, now Washington was becoming more receptive to Ukrainian requests.³⁹⁴ In August, America’s strategists developed a directive stipulating a more active US role in the conflicts between the newly independent states along Russia’s perimeter, which was met with suspicion by the High Command.³⁹⁵

In June 1993 the United States started talking about NATO expansion, inviting Ukraine to join the Partnership for Peace. When the Trilateral Agreement was signed in 1994, Clinton and Kravchuk unveiled the “Joint Statement On Development Of United States-Ukrainian Friendship and Partnership,” in which the U.S. granted Ukraine an additional \$100 million in 1994 and promised an additional \$75 million in Nunn-Lugar funds for 1995.³⁹⁶ The change of US attitude was noted in the Russian Press. *Pravda* wrote:

³⁹³ Hostile Nuclear Proliferants and the Nonproliferation Regime; An Interview with Leonard S. Spector; *The Nonproliferation Review*; Volume 1. 2. Winter 1994.

³⁹⁴ *Izvestia* reports: “Ukraine is the most reliable American Partner in Eastern Europe” In the spring of 1992 Washington’s priorities were clearly set on Russia. This is why to all complaints of the intrigues in the Kremlin Bush reacted the same: offered Ukraine to sign the NPT. Today the mood in the White House changed. *Izvestia*, March 5, 1994.

³⁹⁵ *Izvestia*, August 7, 1993.

³⁹⁶ “Letter Dated 18 March 1994 From The Representatives Of Ukraine And The United States Of America To The United Nations Addressed To The Secretary-General,” *United Nations General Assembly Security Council*, Item 72 of the preliminary list, March 24, 1994. Cited in Skootsky, 89.

More and more American political leaders prefer to revise the US relationship with Russia and focus on developing ties with the other FSU states. [...] Among the recipes proposed to Clinton is increasing aid to the other CIS states and strengthening of Washington's relationship with Kiev, Alma-Ata and Minsk, even if it means cooling off its relations with Moscow. [...] What used to be the containment of communism is now said to be the containment of Russia, the necessity to surround it with buffer states that are now knocking on NATO's door.³⁹⁷

The Russian leadership felt betrayed by this turn of events. Previously, Russia was Washington's top priority and the other republics were neglected. But for the United States securing Ukraine's nuclear warheads now seemed more urgent than going ahead with the recently concluded weapons reductions treaties with Russia, both highly symbolic and important for Yeltsin, who paid a high price for signing them. Even more frustrating was the realization that engaging Moscow no longer seemed essential for solving the problems created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

As Washington-Moscow relations were undergoing what *Izvestia* called "the most important crisis of the recent years,"³⁹⁸ the rapport between Ukraine and United States bloomed, and rumors that Washington was considering Kiev as a counterbalance to Moscow circulated. Yeltsin sensed the changing attitude of the United States to his leadership. Washington no longer viewed Yeltsin as a guarantor of Russia's democratization. For example, Zbigniew Brzezinski said in an interview that in the near future Yeltsin would either become a "nominal leader" or would "no longer be a leader at all."³⁹⁹ In the same spirit, Senator Lugar accused Moscow of

³⁹⁷ *Pravda*, December 3, 1994.

³⁹⁸ *Izvestia*, March 12, 1994.

³⁹⁹ *Pravda*, December 3, 1994.

imperialistic ambitions and warned that Clinton's tactics to lay all hopes on Yeltsin and the success of his reforms was getting old.⁴⁰⁰ This was a clear signal for Russia to defend its interests in the Near Abroad and to become more reflective when deciding on what issues to cooperate with the United States.

2. Tensions with the Parliament and Cultivating the Military

At the same time, the conflict between the executive and the legislature intensified, and Yeltsin needed to gather support for his policies in the increasingly conservative domestic political environment. By late 1992 Yeltsin was beginning to tire of the Westernist line as it was "providing a cause around which a wide range of his enemies and rivals could rally."⁴⁰¹ With Yeltsin reacting to the waning popular support for the liberals and the continued attacks by the communists and nationalists, the government incorporated more centrist members.⁴⁰² As Yeltsin found it harder to defend the notion of partnership, his rhetoric began to change. He criticized the USA for its tendency to "dictate its own terms" and declared that Russia's relations with the West "had to be balanced." He added, "After all, we are a Eurasian state."⁴⁰³ Yeltsin began to endorse a progressively interventionist policy in the Near Abroad⁴⁰⁴ and started to make nationalistic statements about Russia's "moral and political" responsibility to provide security for CIS countries.⁴⁰⁵

Yeltsin's reaction to the stand-off with the Supreme Soviet in September-October 1993 and the plurality won by the anti-regime nationalists and communists in the 1993 Duma elections

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Galeotti, 161.

⁴⁰² Jackson, 54.

⁴⁰³ Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity," in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, ed. Celeste A. Wallander (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 86.

⁴⁰⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 12, 1994.

⁴⁰⁵ Breslauer, 193.

was to retreat into a more authoritarian and reclusive management style.⁴⁰⁶ If he had been willing to compromise before, after the coup he went for a total victory.⁴⁰⁷ This change of mood was reflected in his remarks about the denuclearization of Ukraine, as he started losing patience with Kravchuk.

The input of the military was instrumental in forming the dominant perceptions of security threats at the time. While the military was more concerned with self-preservation in 1991-92, other political forces were able to participate in identifying what those threats were. Thus, the dominant view was that most of Russian security threats were internal (economic instability, insecurity of the governing regimes). When the role of the military in foreign policy decisionmaking increased by the fall 1993, the military's distrust of the United States that remained from the Cold War as well as its superior attitude toward the Near Abroad and Ukraine in particular convinced some of the Russian leaders that the threats to Russia's security lay closer to home and that the United States should not to be trusted.

As the legislature and the executive were competing for the military's support, the top brass would not shy away from conducting its own quasi-independent foreign policy and pressuring the government to honor its center and center-right preferences in dealings with the Near Abroad.⁴⁰⁸ As the nature of the US-Ukraine relationship changed, they could no longer tolerate the former adversary in Russia's backyard and pressured Yeltsin to intervene. Yeltsin knew that he had to retain the military's support if he wanted to stay in power, and he adapted his policies accordingly.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁰⁷ Colton, 274.

⁴⁰⁸ Alexandr Zhilin and Sergei Strokan, "Diplomacy in Shoulder Straps Comes Out into the Open," *Moscow News*, no. 45 (November 24-30, 1995): 5.

There were limits to the extent to which the military was prepared to tolerate US activity in Russia's backyard, even if the two countries saw eye to eye on the CIS integration. These limits were violated by Les Aspin's proposal.⁴⁰⁹ There also were limits to which the High Command was prepared to share information about the details of their nuclear weapons designs, and the United States was overstepping those limits by suggesting the international observers monitor the process. If before the military had tried to convince the West that their command over the weapons was strong and therefore there was no need to interfere in Russia-Ukraine "brotherly" relationship, now they realized that unless Russia promptly solved "the Ukrainian question", the United States would solve the problem on its own.⁴¹⁰

Seeing Aspin's suggestion as a masked attempt to get access to Russian nuclear secrets (conducting the dismantling of former Soviet rockets under the international control could make the secret codes, electromagnetic designs, and other information of critical importance and high cost to Russia available to the international community⁴¹¹), Russian military experts suddenly agreed that Ukraine needed six months to get access to the nuclear button.⁴¹² Irritated by the fact that Ukraine did not consult the Russian leadership either before or after Les Aspin's visit, Defense Minister Grachev told Americans that Russia and Ukraine would solve the issue between themselves.⁴¹³

After Yeltsin's efforts to maintain the Joint Command over the strategic forces -- in order

⁴⁰⁹ *The New York Times*, June 9, 1993.

⁴¹⁰ By the summer of 1993 Washington suggested that nuclear warheads temporarily remain on the Ukraine's territory under the international control instead of being transferred to Russia. Instead of processing the nuclear fuel in Russia and getting paid in rubles, Ukraine was offered to process it in the United States and receiving 2,8 billion dollars.

⁴¹¹ Before this proposal, a popular opinion was that Washington was too centered on Russia and was neglecting the other three republics. *Izvestia*, June 15, 1993.

⁴¹² *Izvestia*, July 27, 1993.

⁴¹³ *The New York Times*, June 7 and June 9, 1993. Also *Izvestia*, June 15, 1993.

not to provoke Ukraine into withdrawing from its obligations under the Alma-Ata and Minsk agreements – had failed, Yeltsin abrogated the post of the Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Joint Armed Forces, establishing a clear jurisdiction over the Soviet nuclear forces. As a result, there were no more military agencies interested in prolonging the stay of the weapons on the CIS territory.

Moreover, allowing the issue to drag on was becoming dangerous. In December 1992, Leonid Kravchuk officially confirmed that he was able to “block unauthorized use of nuclear weapons from the territory” of Ukraine.⁴¹⁴ If before Ukraine did not have control of the weapons by not participating in the CIS command, afterwards, on April 5, 1993 Ukraine incorporated the 43rd RVSN and the 46th air armies into the Ukrainian Armed Forces and asserted negative control over the nuclear weapons on its territory. The Center of Administrative Control over Strategic Nuclear Forces ("TsAU SYaS," in Ukrainian) was established in the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.⁴¹⁵ Several times Russian experts were denied access to the storage sites and Ukraine succeeded in reducing Russia's role to providing technical assistance for routine maintenance of the arsenal.

3. Yeltsin's Interest in the Quick Ratification of START I

Yeltsin's changed personal preferences played a significant role in his foreign policy. Once his cherished START II treaty became the captive of Ukraine's denuclearization, the successful solution of the problem started to really matter to him. START II, agreed upon at the June 1992 summit and signed on January 3, 1993 was one of the most controversial treaties in

⁴¹⁴ “The Concept of Ukrainian Leadership on Nuclear Weapons,” interview with Leonid Kravchuk, President of Ukraine, *Rossiyskiye Vesti*, December 24, 1992.

⁴¹⁵ Pikayev, 42.

Yeltsin's career. Bush and Yeltsin did not take a long time to discuss this treaty⁴¹⁶ that met scorching criticism in the Russian political circles. Although Yeltsin repeatedly assured the Parliament that the document did not undermine Russian national security, the deputies remained unconvinced.⁴¹⁷ Suspicion over US intentions inspired an active campaign against the agreement, in which Russia's military leaders were vilifying the treaty's terms. The author of *Pravda* article "START-II: untenable parity" writes, "The main defect of the START-II treaty as a foundation of the new world order is indeed a safe future, but only for the United States. Because it deprives Russia and Ukraine of the rockets SS-18 and SS-24, which used to 'discipline' our partner before."⁴¹⁸ Another article in *Pravda* went as far as to accuse the United States of trying to establish the "nuclear dictatorship." This time Yeltsin's critics made sense; START-II indeed favored the United States.⁴¹⁹

However, for Yeltsin START II was a trump card in the complicated political game. After the hostile Seventh Congress of People's Deputies, Yeltsin was trying to prove to the world that he remained a politician capable of achieving outstanding results, acting persistently and out of the box.⁴²⁰ START II was his chance to remind his legislative opponents that the West was on his side,⁴²¹ and Yeltsin wanted to proceed immediately. When Yeltsin announced he was ready to sign START-II and had "no reservations on the treaty" that American officials believed was still being negotiated, the surprised White House had to scramble for an appropriate response; his

⁴¹⁶ *Izvestia*, January 4, 1993.

⁴¹⁷ *Izvestia*, January 29, 1993.

⁴¹⁸ *Pravda* June 14, 1993.

⁴¹⁹ Jalonen, 12-13.

⁴²⁰ *Izvestia*, January 4, 1993.

⁴²¹ *The New York Times*, December 19, 1992.

statement was indeed “at odds with the understanding of American negotiators.”⁴²² Yeltsin insisted on signing the treaty, surprising his US partners no less than his Russian opponents.

However, the treaty could not go into force or even be submitted to the Russian parliament before Ukraine ratified START I, concluded earlier by Gorbachev. At this point, Ukraine’s holdup on ratifying START I became a serious impediment to Yeltsin’s plans. His lukewarm interest in Ukraine’s denuclearization was rekindled once Rada’s stubbornness could sabotage his treaty with the United States. Thus, Ukraine’s balking on START-I ratification (tied to the denuclearization issue) was frustrating Yeltsin’s plans.

Once START-II became hostage to Ukraine’s joining the NPT, the tone of Yeltsin’s diplomacy changed. As the Ukrainian Parliament was deliberating START I ratification – along with the related vote on joining the NPT – Yeltsin confirmed Russia's willingness to give Ukraine security guarantees.⁴²³ In the words of General Lieutenant N. Musienko, who opposed START II, “The Russian hassle over Ukrainian denuclearization is understandable [...] Until Ukraine ratifies START-I, Russia cannot think of START-II. In fact, Kiev’s stubbornness may save Russia from the quick and total disarmament.”⁴²⁴ Therefore, after Yeltsin signed the ambitious arms reduction treaty in January 1993, Ukraine’s endorsement of the nonnuclear status became a priority because until Ukraine ratified START-I, the sweeping START-II could not go into effect, even if ratified by the legislatures.

Conclusion

Russian involvement in the process of Ukraine’s denuclearization became increasingly assertive and active throughout 1993 and 1994; Russia started employing sticks and carrots and

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1993.

⁴²⁴ *Pravda*, March 16, 1993.

became wary of the US increasing engagement in its backyard. This shift in Yeltsin's policy is explained by several factors. Firstly, Yeltsin was aware of the changes in the nature of US-Russia and US-Ukraine relationship. Western political observers began to doubt his commitment and capability to actualize Russia's democratic transformation. By mid-1992, the United States was no longer orienting its negotiations with Ukraine toward Russia. At the same time, the US-Russian cooperation was weakened by the states' disagreements on several important foreign policy issues, including NATO expansion and Russia's plans to sell rocket technology to India. Secondly, in the face of increasing antagonism of the legislature, Yeltsin had to adapt his policies to consolidate a broader support base and secure the military's support by adopting a more assertive stance in the Near Abroad. The Ministry of Defense obtained more leverage and was often allowed to conduct quasi-independent foreign policy, leading to the increased attention to the CIS states and a less accommodative position in Russia's relationship with the United States. Thirdly, with signing the START II treaty in January 1993 Yeltsin became more interested in Ukraine's ratification of START I, which was held up by the nuclear dispute in the Rada.

CONCLUSION

A diplomat who preferred to remain anonymous said in an interview with *Izvestia*, “Russia would have had nothing against Ukraine possessing nuclear weapons had the problem been purely bilateral [...]. Rockets on the Ukrainian territory are not aimed at Russia, so it is others who should worry.”⁴²⁵ Of course, his extreme opinion was hardly shared by many of his colleagues, but the official was right in acknowledging that the nuclear weapons on Ukraine’s territory were much higher on the US list of priorities than on the Russian list.

In 1992, denuclearization negotiations with the former Soviet states were initiated and led by Washington. The few successes in the denuclearization process during that time can be credited to the US persistence and the desire of the newly independent states to be accepted in the international community— not Russia’s prodding. However, by 1993 Russia’s policy toward Ukraine had changed considerably, and Yeltsin became personally engaged in negotiations (which had been previously conducted primarily by his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev). Moscow was employing increasingly more sticks and initiating more bilateral negotiations to induce Kiev’s compliance throughout 1993 and 1994.

The above analysis demonstrated that Yeltsin brought his own independent policy views and goals into the dynamics of disarmament negotiations and played a crucial role in coordinating Russia’s policy on the international and domestic levels. He possessed the greatest autonomy in the beginning of his presidential term, and his independence noticeably decreased in the face of the growing pressure from the legislature, which starting in the summer of 1992 voted down every single reform measure introduced by the executive.⁴²⁶ As the first popularly elected leader of the Russian federation, Yeltsin faced challenges considerably different from those

⁴²⁵ *Izvestia*, November 6, 1993.

⁴²⁶ Aron, *Yeltsin*, 496.

faced by his Soviet predecessors and was making decisions in a volatile political environment, split between liberal Westernists, centrists, and national fundamentalists.

To Yeltsin, the transfer of the nuclear arsenal from the Ukrainian territory was not so much important in itself, but in its impact on the CIS integration, as well as on the balance of power between Russia and the former Soviet republics, Russia and the United States, and Russia and NATO. The primary motives that guided Yeltsin's foreign policy choices were: (a) to enhance his standing on the domestic level (which explains the change of his position in the face of the recalcitrant parliament and the need to woo the military); (b) to enhance his standing on the international level (which explains the change of his position upon signing the sweeping disarmament treaty *START-II*); (c) to pursue his own conception of Russia's national interest (which explains his cooperation with the United States, efforts to bring Ukraine back into Russia's orbit and implement massive disarmament).

In this thesis I have argued that Boris Yeltsin would have pursued a different course of action to achieve Ukraine's denuclearization in the absence of the US involvement, domestic struggle with the parliament, or the need to respond to the concerns of the Russian military. These three factors together with his personal interest in the ratification of *START II*, held hostage to Kiev's disarmament, account for the shift in Yeltsin's policy toward the denuclearization of Ukraine in 1993. The president's Westernism weakened his position vis-à-vis his domestic critics when cooperation with the United States did not pay off. In turn, his reaction to the changing domestic and international situation by co-opting centrist political actors and adopting a more pragmatic foreign policy line affected his relationship with the West.

Considered within the broader context of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, the changed stance toward the nuclear weapons on the Ukrainian territory was consistent with the general

tendency in Yeltsin's foreign policy in the early 1990s – a shift from liberal Westernism to pragmatic nationalism. Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, relationship with the West was dominant in shaping Russian security, geopolitical, economic interests, and the CIS states enjoyed secondary status.⁴²⁷ In this period Russia achieved acceptance as the successor of the Soviet Union in the West and joined many Western institutions. The lack of the administration's interest in the former Soviet Union states resulted in "an unwillingness to bring significant political, human and financial resources to bear" in Russia's relations with them.⁴²⁸ Although theoretically Ukraine and Belarus became Russia's immediate Western neighbors in 1991, Russian foreign policymakers were slow to formulate a clear policy line toward the new states, tellingly naming them "the Near Abroad." Viewed as not genuinely foreign, these countries initially received far less attention than "the Far Abroad." Gradually foreign policy became more balanced, and with ascendance of pragmatic nationalist views Yeltsin pursued a more assertive foreign policy and devoted more attention to the former Soviet Union.

As a result, the interdependence of foreign and domestic policy as well as the links between the Near and Far Abroad in the post-communist era were stronger than ever as Russia sought international support for its economic reform, reintegration into the international system, and redefinition of its relationship with the former Soviet Union states.⁴²⁹ The problem of Ukraine's denuclearization then moved to the center of Russia's struggle to reconcile its new role vis-à-vis the West with its new role vis-à-vis the states along its border. Its attitude to the West had evolved from the Cold-War hostility to unapologetic Westernism to pragmatic nationalism.

⁴²⁷ Bobo Lo suggests that the numerous agreements were a skillfully sustained "illusion of policy interest in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary" on behalf of the Yeltsin administration. Lo, 86.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Sakwa, 365.

Its view of the CIS (that incorporated the states that for centuries were the uncontested parts of the Russian empire) similarly evolved from seeing it as an entity resembling the reformed Soviet Union to envisioning a much looser structure, the *raison d'être* of which disappeared once the Soviet military assets were transferred back to Russia.

Upon the dissolution of the USSR, Russia acquired 14 new neighbors and lost its superpower status. It had signed radical disarmament agreements with its former enemy, the United States, using American aid to trim the remaining trappings of its grandeur – the world's largest nuclear arsenal. At the same time, the focus of Russian foreign policy hardly changed with the end of bipolarity. Admittedly, Russia's priorities have fluctuated in the 1990s as the Russian policymakers reacted to new international challenges in an "increasingly ad hoc fashion,"⁴³⁰ but the general spirit of Russian diplomacy has remained surprisingly consistent throughout history. Russian leaders continued to look to the West – hopeful, distrustful, disdainful, or reverential, depending on the time and their political affiliations, but never indifferent or oblivious. Since the times of Peter the Great, the West had been Russia's significant Other,⁴³¹ and at the end of the Second World War the United States emerged as its most prominent representative.⁴³²

This continues to be the case today. Moreover, it is when their incorporation into Western organizations like NATO looms on the horizon that the states along the Russian borders really begin to matter.⁴³³ It is when the West becomes involved in the Near Abroad without first soliciting an "indulgence" from Moscow that Russian policymakers (who otherwise see no need in wasting resources to maintain Russian supremacy in the region) react by devising sticks and

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁴³¹ Tsygankov, 17.

⁴³² Ibid., 1

⁴³³ Lo, 21.

carrots to ensure that their neighbors remain loyal. A more recent example of this is, of course, Russia's exploitation of Ukraine's energy dependency, which was first used to induce Kiev's compliance in the denuclearization stalemate and has now become much more effective because it affects the energy supplies in the rest of Europe. This sends a clear message not only to the state aspiring to escape Russia's "brotherly" embrace, but also to the West that is encouraging such "reckless" behavior. Another example is Russia's overreacting to the possibility of Georgia's NATO membership by invading the country in August 2008. Of course, Russia also rewards the states for their loyalty as is the case with Belarus, which has enjoyed low energy prices and loans for being Russia's staunchest acolyte.

The loss of a superpower status, the shrunken borders, the demise of the military, and the deep economic crisis has induced the debate over Russia's identity that continues until the present. The intent of this thesis has been to demonstrate that it was Moscow's interaction with Kiev and Washington, the two actors crucial to its self-definition, in solving the nuclear problem engendered by the dissolution of the USSR that played a vital role in shaping this debate as Russia entered the 21st century.

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Russian Papers Used In The Study

Izvestiya (centrist), Moscow

During the Soviet Period, *Izvestia* (fully named *Izvestiya Sovetov Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR*) expressed the official views of the Soviet government as published by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In the 1990s it was considered independent and generally favored Yeltsin. In autumn of 1992 Khazbulatov set up a 5,000-strong detachment of armed “parliamentary guards” to seize the editorial offices of *Izvestia*, which although independent

since 1989, was formally an “organ of the Supreme Soviet.” Yeltsin ordered the guards disarmed and disbanded.⁴³⁴

Krasnaya Zvezda (centrist), Moscow

Newspaper of the armed forces that is now the "Central Organ of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation."

Pravda (leftist), Moscow.

During the Soviet period, *Pravda* served as the official mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

Yeltsin closed down *Pravda* by decree in 1991; many of the staff founded a new paper with the same name.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta, Moscow

The paper was founded by the Government of the Russian Federation in November 1990.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta enjoys official status because acts of state come into effect upon their publication there.

Moscow Times, The (independent), Moscow

Nezavisimaya Gazeta (centrist), Moscow

Segodnia (centrist) Moscow, published by the Ministry of Defense.

⁴³⁴ Aron, *Yeltsin*, 499.