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## Ukraine in Modern International Relations: Eurasian Paradigm

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### Abstract

The article covers the main principles of foreign policy at the beginning of independence and their consistent implementation in Ukraine's practical activities in the coming years. The main focus is on the characteristics of the Eurasian vector, especially on the development of mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring countries and, first of all, with Russia.

**Keywords:** foreign policy, international law, geopolitics, Ukraine and Russia, geostrategy, crisis phenomena, democracy

### Introduction

The main goals, directions and priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy are set out in the Act of Independence of Ukraine on August 24, 1991 (the Verkhovna Rada of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic Resolution On declaration of independence of Ukraine, 24.08.1991) and in the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “To Parliaments and Peoples of the World”, adopted on December 5, 1991 (the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine “To Parliaments and Peoples of the World”, 5.12.1991), which indicates that Ukraine is building a democratic, law-governed state; ensuring human rights and freedoms is a top priority. Ukraine will strictly adhere to the norms of international law, guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, which Ukraine ratified, and other relevant international instruments. As one of the United Nations founding states, Ukraine, in full accordance with the purpose and principles of the UN Charter, will direct its foreign policy towards the consolidation of peace and security in the world, the intensification of international cooperation in solving environmental, energy, food and other global issues. Ukraine's foreign policy will be based on the international law principles.

## **Main part**

The proclaimed principles of foreign policy at the beginning of independence, were consistently implemented in practice: Ukraine has become an important subject of world politics, which even modern great powers can not ignore. One of the well-known American political scientists of Polish origin, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in the chapter “Geostrategic players and geopolitical pivots” assesses Ukraine's place in the modern world: «Ukraine, a new and very important piece on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot, because Ukraine as an independent state helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia still can fight for imperial status, but then it would have become largely an Asian imperial state and would be involved in debilitating conflicts with Central Asia...» (Brzezinski, 2000).

Today it is possible to state that, despite the extraordinary complexity of the internal situation, many gaps in the field of foreign policy, Ukraine has achieved certain results in the international arena. As an independent state, Ukraine has been recognized by more than 150 countries, of which 141 have established diplomatic relations. There are 42 foreign embassies in Kyiv, there are several consular offices. Ukraine is a member of many international, international non-governmental, regional and other organizations. It participates in the work of the UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the International Labor Organization, the International Monetary Fund, The World Intellectual Property Organization, etc.

At the Constitution of Ukraine of 1996 is marked that “Ukraine's foreign policy activities are aimed at ensuring its national interests and security through peaceful and mutually beneficial cooperation with members of the international community on the basis of generally recognized principles and norms of international law”.

In accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine, other official international legal documents, Ukraine in its foreign policy activities solves the following main tasks:

- support and approval of sovereignty, state independence of Ukraine;
- preservation of the territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders;
- ensuring economic and informational security of Ukraine;
- establishment and development of comprehensive mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries of the world;
- active participation in various international organizations, based on their national interests and to solve complex international problems;
- priority development of mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring countries and, first of all, with Russia;
- protection of the rights and interests of citizens and legal entities abroad;

- creating favorable conditions for maintaining contacts with the Ukrainian diaspora abroad, guided by the international law;
- activities on the international scene as a reliable and predictable partner.

There is a close connection, interdependence and interdependence between the external and internal policies of any state, including Ukraine. On the one hand, foreign policy, its direction and efficiency, is determined largely by the internal policy of the state: its economic and military potential, the scale of the territory, the population, as well as the political regime, state ideology, and so on. On the other hand, internal politics and the situation of the state depend to a large extent on its place and role in the system of international relations, participation in the international division of labor, the degree of participation in solving complex international problems, and so on.

A special significance of the connection between foreign and domestic policy is acquired by a state that is in a state of deep socio-economic crisis.

In order to solve many internal economic problems in Ukraine, foreign policy activities with such directions as export and import of goods, services, foreign investments, foreign exchange policy, scientific and technical relations, international industrial cooperation, international labor migration, etc. are extremely important.

The current international situation has changed, and this again forces Ukraine in the beginning of the XXI century to develop in foreign policy such rules of conduct that will be adequate to the new situation in the world and meet its own national interests at the same time. Ukraine urgently needs to clearly identify with a place in the world's geopolitical space, make the right choice of political orientation to the East or the West, to the North or the South and transform it into reality, and this issue is vital to Ukraine. Such a choice could determine for Ukraine the future nature of the social order, the choice of values, political institutions, the structure of social relations, the economic system, the role of the individual in society, the nature of power and control of it, social justice and economic efficiency. This choice can determine the existence of Ukraine as a sovereign, original and free society.

Ukraine, as a young state, try to find its geopolitical identity, to realize itself both in the geopolitical context and in the context of the development of world civilization, to identify real national interests, to develop a strategy and tactics for their realization.

From the standpoint of classical geopolitics, Ukrainian geostrategy today is characterized by two main paradigms - Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic, which will be discussed below; recently appeared the third paradigm – the Black Sea paradigm: Ukraine plays a leading role in GUAM, the political and economic unions of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, which is called on to oppose the spread of Russia's influence on the territories of the former USSR as

an alternative center of strength. This advisory forum has specific goals, including political and economic goals:

- creation of the Eurasian transport corridor, especially for oil and gas;
- peaceful settlement of conflicts and the fight against separatism;
- technical cooperation in the military sphere;
- coordination of actions at international organizations;
- economic cooperation, etc..

However, the GUAM association has not yet received a certain organizational design and is limited to holding meetings of leaders of these countries and ministers.

At the same time, the Baltic-Black Sea vector of Ukraine's foreign-political activity is very promising in view of the possibility of forming a geopolitical axis that unites independent states that seek to withdraw from Russia's political and economic control. Confirmation of this was the summit of democratic states (the Baltic States, Macedonia, Slovenia, Romania, Moldova, Georgia, Poland, Bulgaria, Ukraine), which took place in late 2005 in Kyiv.

The specificity of Ukraine's geopolitical coordinates lies in its membership simultaneously to two regions - Europe and Eurasia, and at the beginning of the 21st century in both regions Ukraine has a politically peripheral position. If Ukraine belongs geographically to Central Europe, then politically during the last century it was defined as the Dominion of Russia, was not only under its wing, but also in its shadow, and therefore perceived as the East of Europe. Western Europe, through the association of a number of states into a common currency community, politically taps over the geographical concept of "Europe" and is conceived as the center of the continent, while it is known that the geographical center of Europe lies exactly on the territory of Ukraine. Eurasia as a geopolitical (and not just geographic) term is used for countries that are grouped around a strong political center - Russia, which is geographically located in Europe and Asia.

Describing Ukraine's relations with Russia and the CIS countries, it should be remembered that all these countries historically have a common history, economy, but their political doctrines and general goal may not coincide. Therefore, the successful development of Ukraine's relations with Russia and the CIS countries depends on the transfer of these relations to the channel of a stable system of international cooperation, which will receive registration in international legal acts. Recently, this process is slow and controversial. One of the reasons for this is that the Commonwealth of Independent States, formed in 1991 after the dissolve of the USSR, can not act as a truly integrating institution that could lead to the creation of an example of the European Union, the Eurasian Union, which would include East European, Eurasian and Central Asian countries from the former Soviet republics. Academician B. Havrylyshyn

(Havrylyshyn, 2000) thinks that “the CIS can, in the best of cases, become a “disjointed” common market”. The status of an associate member of the CIS clearly defines the position of Ukraine in relation to the CIS: Ukraine denies giving the Commonwealth status of a subject of international law that does not suit Moscow.

Relations between Ukraine and Russia are a key element in the Eurasian paradigm of Ukrainian geostrategy, primarily due to economic ties between neighbors. Russia as a leading trading partner consumes one fifth (20.7%) of Ukrainian goods: the share of Russian goods in Ukraine's imports is 47.2%. Ukraine is in dire need of markets for its products and a lack of Russian energy resources. Ukraine was the largest consumer of Russian gas in Europe: if Europe consumed 110-120 billion cubic meters of Russian “blue fuel” a year, Ukraine alone - 55-60 billion cubic meters. Questions related to energy prices, their transit through the territory of Ukraine, the problems of “unauthorized gas selection” remained the most painful in relations between Russia and Ukraine. It is worth noting that the issue of supplying oil and gas to Ukraine was transferred to Russia from an economic to a political plane and was repeatedly used by Russian powers in order to exert pressure on the Ukrainian politics. At the same time, Russia consolidated its interests in the Ukrainian economy to dictate its policy to Ukraine from within.

In the political sphere, relations between Russia and Ukraine were defined by a number of interstate treaties on friendship, partnership and cooperation in trade, economic, military-technical and other spheres. However, this did not prevent the ruling circles of the Russian Federation from actively intervening in the conduct of the presidential campaign in Ukraine in the autumn of 2004, which is actually a handing in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Delaying the demarcation of the interstate borders was used by Russian politicians in the provocations in the Kerch Gulf in 2003.

The Ukrainian-Russian relations were significantly influenced by the domestic political situation in Russia. After Putin's election as the president of the Russian Federation, were resumed the imperial ambitions of the former superpower. The concept of a new Russian geopolitics, expressed in the quest for the restoration of a strong centralized state, claiming the role of one of the “poles of power” in world geopolitics, attaches great importance to the role of Ukraine. Russia wants to return Ukraine to its sphere of influence in order to achieve other, more ambitious national interests in the field of foreign policy. It finds expression in a more pragmatic and rigorous approach of Russian leadership at all levels of executive power, as well as at the level of economic agents in relations with Ukraine, the exercise of economic pressure. In practice, there is support for pro-Russian political forces calling for unification with Russia, the coverage of events in Ukraine in Russian mass media, the uncertainty of the

terms of lease by Russian Black Sea Fleet of Ukrainian military bases in Sevastopol, even provocative actions (construction of a dam to the Ukrainian island of Kos Tuzla) and controversial statements by Russian high-ranking officials about Ukraine and its territory. This can be explained by the fact that about 70% of Russians consider Ukraine not as an independent state, but as a temporary state formation, which should be dissolved as part of the newest “great Russia”.

Over time, discussion among the political scientists about the formation of the Customs Union revived. For Russia in such an alliance, despite the slight limitations, the benefits are obvious: the restoration of the status of a “great state” that could withstand Western alliances, the ability to control a large market with a practical monopoly in relation to Ukraine, etc. From the first glance, and for Ukraine, there could be some advantages in such alliance: the prospects of obtaining cheap energy, which prices will be set on the domestic market, free access to a large market, etc. At the same time, let us also mention a number of possible negative consequences for Ukraine in the event of such association:

- First, Ukraine has no strong pro-union feelings. According to B. Havrylyshyn (Havrylyshyn, 2000), a large part of the population, almost all people in Western Ukraine, a large number of people in Central Ukraine and some part in the South would be against reunification with Russia, even at the cost of a civil war.

- Secondly, Ukraine once again in its history will face the threat of the actual loss of state sovereignty. Due to the presence of three centuries in the status of the colony of tsarist Russia - with political, cultural and linguistic oppression, Ukraine's cultural, intellectual and political potential has significantly decreased. Seventy years of the Soviet regime led to the destruction of the class of peasants and the extermination of the cultural and political elite, either through physical destruction or through the migration of the brightest and most talented Ukrainians to Russia. Ukrainians do not forget about such a tumultuous tendency.

After the events of 2013–2014, the relationship between the two countries changed radically. Violation of the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state: military aggression in the east, annexation of the ARC exacerbated Ukrainian-Russian relations.

## **Conclusions**

Summing up the Eurasian direction of Ukrainian geostrategy, it should be noted that the political union would most likely lead to catastrophic consequences. Ukraine would be doomed to economic backwardness, political subordination and social conflicts. It would be deprived of the opportunity to develop a truly free, democratic society with an effective economy, a strong collective self-esteem, a sense of self-awareness and the ability to feel independent and an integral part of the progressive world community.

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