

Conflict Studies Research Centre



**A Strategy for Integrating
Ukraine into the West**

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Key Points

- * 'Ukraine fatigue' and doubts over Western commitment are hindering Ukraine's further integration into the West.
- * But the idea of integrating other central and eastern European countries was no less radical a decade ago.
- * That succeeded because:
 - they made difficult domestic reforms
 - they knew the prospect was real
 - the West dealt with Russia.
- * For this to work for Ukraine:
 - Ukraine needs to show it is serious about reform
 - USA and Europe need a new vision of a wider Europe
 - They must offer a credible prospect of membership
 - USA needs to refocus on this issue
 - A new policy for relations with Russia is needed.
- * The autumn elections in Ukraine may create this new dynamic.

Abstract

Several factors are pushing the West to clarify its thinking and strategy on Ukraine and its role and relationship within the Euro-Atlantic community. The completion of a "Big Bang" round of EU and NATO expansion has raised the issue of whether the West is now prepared to commit to anchoring and eventually integrating those countries east of the new border.

In parallel, the drift in Russia toward autocratic rule at home and assertiveness in the near abroad have raised questions over Moscow's future course – as well as the future of Western policy toward the Kremlin. Meanwhile, in Ukraine a major political battle is underway that can determine the future orientation of the country and its relations with the West, with crucial elections scheduled for the autumn of 2004.

This paper looks at the potential advantages of successfully anchoring Ukraine in the West. It examines the experience of NATO and EU enlargement from the 1990s and draws lessons that could be applied to Ukraine. It then lays out what the key elements of a strategy for integrating Ukraine in the West over the next decade or longer could be.

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Imagine the following scenario. It is the year 2010. Ukraine has just received an invitation to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at a NATO summit scheduled in Warsaw, Poland - in recognition of that country's championing of close NATO-Ukrainian relations. Following the election of a new President in Kiev during the autumn of 2004, Ukraine clearly shifted gears and chartered a new reform course at home and a clear pro-Western foreign policy abroad. Domestically, Ukraine surprised its critics by making rapid and real progress in overcoming its fractious domestic politics, cleaning up corruption and pursuing clear and credible economic reforms. The changes in foreign policy were equally exciting. Under a new pro-Western reform-minded leadership, Ukraine now became, along with Poland, a clear and consistent pro-Atlanticist voice in the region, a regional reform leader and a major contributor to Alliance peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Greater Middle East.

Ukraine's increasingly warm relations with NATO were matched by closer ties with the EU as well. With the issue of Ukraine's strategic place and role in Europe settled and Kiev making important progress at home, what once seemed out of reach was now seen as more and more likely. A recent EU Commission report confirmed the significant progress Ukraine had made in meeting the Copenhagen criteria. To be sure, there were still important disagreements in the EU over Ukraine's "Europeanness", how its entry would affect the Union's finances and just how many votes it would receive under the new European constitution. Nevertheless, numerous Western commentators were predicting that the EU membership was increasingly a matter not of whether but when and that the Union would soon announce its willingness to open accession negotiations as well. To many Ukrainians it was the fulfilment of a dream that many had harboured for years.

Ukraine's remarkable domestic and foreign policy success was producing strategic benefits for the region and beyond. It was starting to transform the geopolitical map of Europe and Eurasia in the same way that the anchoring of Central and Eastern Europe had a decade earlier. In addition to extending the borders of integration and stability further eastward directly to Russia's own borders, Ukraine's success was having a ripple effect across the region, enabling it to become the de facto hub of a new group of democratic and reform-minded states stretching from the post-Lukashenko Belarus in the north to Georgia and the Caucasus in the south. Commentators also agreed that Ukraine's successful democratic transformation was now having a positive impact in encouraging and motivating the democratic opposition in Russia as well, holding out the prospect that Russia's slide into authoritarian rule could eventually be reversed.

But Ukraine's successful transformation and its anchoring to the West was strategically important for other reasons as well. By anchoring this country of 50 million people, it further consolidated peace and security in this critical section of the Euro-Atlantic community and facilitated the Alliance's strategic shift away from

defending the old European heartland and created a new platform better positioning the US and Europe to tackle what everyone recognized to be the major challenge of the 21st century - dealing with the instability and threats emanating from the Greater Middle East. Ukraine's rising strategic stock was reflected not only by its active role in participating in NATO-led stability operations in the Greater Middle East. A successfully democratized and transformed Ukraine also gave the West an enhanced capacity from which to radiate its political influence and stability into the Caucasus and Central Asia and further into the Greater Middle East.

Is this vision far-fetched and completely unrealistic? Or within the realm of the feasible if Ukrainian and Western leaders were to boldly put their shoulders to the wheel and work to turn this vision into reality? To be sure, if Las Vegas were to put odds on this scenario today, they would not be particularly good. Many Western observers have become jaundiced about Ukraine's desire and capacity to reform itself along Western lines. Given the scandals, setbacks and disappointments of the last decade, the West at times appears to have succumbed to a massive case of 'Ukraine fatigue' as this country's future at times appears to have slipped from the agenda of the West. And growing Western lack of interest has not gone unnoticed in Ukraine either, where many doubt the commitment of the US or Europe to helping Kiev become a full member of the Euro-Atlantic community.

At the same time, anyone familiar with the fierce debates over NATO and EU enlargement in the 1990s can testify as to how radical and uncertain those policies initially were viewed when they first appeared. If Las Vegas had placed odds then on the likelihood of NATO and the EU embracing some ten Central and Eastern Europe countries from the Baltics to the Black Sea within the next decade, they would not have been very high either. The goal of fully integrating Ukraine into the West, while certainly ambitious, is not necessarily any more "unrealistic" than the objectives the West accomplished over the last decade. In many ways, it is the next logical step and project the Euro-Atlantic community should embrace.

Moreover, the strategic benefits that would flow from successfully anchoring Ukraine to the West are considerable. When one considers the strategic challenges the West must confront in the years ahead, clearly we would be better off tackling them with a pro-Western democratic Ukraine on our side. But if one thing is for sure, this won't happen on its own. It will only happen, if at all, if there is a new vision and leadership in Ukraine as well as a renewed commitment in the West to making this country's integration a top priority, a clear and realistic long-term strategy to implement that vision and a set of allies on both sides of the Atlantic who are determined to making it happen.

This paper attempts to step back and lay out the big picture of what it would take to come up with a coherent and realistic strategy to anchor and integrate Ukraine in NATO and the EU over the next decade. Drawing on the lessons and experience of the last decade, it shows what Kyiv as well as what the United States and the European Union must do to turn this vision step-by-step into reality.

Understanding the Ingredients of Past Success

Before tackling the question of what the key components of a strategy for integrating Ukraine must include, it is useful to go back and examine why and how the West succeeded in successfully integrating Central and Eastern Europe from the Baltics in the north to Bulgaria and Romania on the Black Sea in the south in

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the 1990s. After all, absent that success, the question of Ukraine's aspirations and place in the Euro-Atlantic community would not even be on the agenda today.

The first and undoubtedly most important of these ingredients was the will and drive of these countries - from both the leaders and their populations - to become part of Europe and the trans-Atlantic community. It is impossible to overstate just how important this factor was. The doors of NATO and the EU would never have been opened to these countries had the leaders of Central and Eastern Europe not knocked - and at times pounded - on them. The story of Presidents Walesa, Havel and Gonsz visiting Washington in the spring of 1993 for the opening of the Holocaust Museum and the impression they made on then President Bill Clinton by explaining why joining NATO was their number one priority is among the most vivid but by no means the only example of commitment and leadership in the region making a difference.

But it is and was not enough to simply *say* you want to join the West, no matter how eloquently this or that leader might put it. No country has an entitlement to join NATO or the European Union. The aspirations of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would not have been taken seriously until it became clear the leaders and populations of these countries demonstrated in word and deed their commitment to the values and interests of the Euro-Atlantic community. And there was no better bar to measure that commitment against than the willingness of these countries to take difficult reform steps and/or take foreign policy decisions to align themselves with the West that involved real costs and risks. Without Poland's successful shock therapy, Lech Walesa would have had a much harder time getting the West to pay attention to his country's desire to join NATO. Absent their remarkable success in reforming and reorienting themselves to the West, the Baltic states would never have been taken seriously as serious candidates for either NATO or the EU. The list could be continued.

To be sure, no one expected these countries to become like modern Western European democracies overnight. Everyone understood that consolidating democracy in the region could take a decade or more. What was critical was a tangible sense that they were setting the right course, establishing a credible track record that the West could build on and that there was a fundamental political will and commitment in these leaderships and societies to stay on course and see the process through to a successful completion. In other words, to become an ally, candidate countries had to start to look and behave like allies. Above all, they had to establish a track record that would create confidence and start to overcome the hesitation and opposition that was initially so widespread in the West.

Did the West deliberately try to leverage the desire of these countries to join our institutions to get them to transform themselves? Of course it did. Western officials at times joked that the prospect of NATO and EU membership was a "golden carrot" to incentivize countries to address or fix an array of problems and issues. Historians will no doubt debate how much of the successful transformation of Central and Eastern Europe - including domestic reform, the settling of border disputes or the granting of minority rights, etc - was due to this desire to join NATO and the EU and how much would have taken place anyway. But for anyone involved in the process, it was striking how often the need to take certain steps in order to qualify for NATO or the EU was used by Western governments or invoked by governments in the region to justify painful or controversial steps.

The critical point is that as these countries took these steps and demonstrated their will and willingness to reform and change, they started to gain in credibility and standing in Western eyes. Once they started to look and act like allies, it became increasingly easier for the West to imagine them as allies - and for politicians to start to make the case we should therefore make them allies. Eventually we reached the point where the act of making them members of our institutions went from being seen as a radical and almost silly idea to one that had become conventional wisdom and almost non-controversial.

This brings us to the second key factor - the need for the West to create the kind of clear perspective for these countries for ultimately becoming members of institutions like NATO and the EU that would help motivate them. By themselves these countries would not have been able to stay the course and achieve what they did. At times Western officials compared the process of integrating into NATO or the EU to a marathon race - which the countries themselves had to run but one in which the West would play the role of coach, trainer and at times cheerleader. But the Central and East Europeans had to know and believe that this perspective was real and that the door to our institutions was open if and when they made it to the end of the race.

Creating the will in the West to offer that perspective, in turn, required a vision and a convincing political and strategic rationale as to why the West had to undertake this project. Both involved winning a fight in the US and Europe over one's future definition of Europe and the future purpose of the Alliance in a world absent the old Soviet threat. The answers eventually provided by Western governments - namely to extend the structures of trans-Atlantic and European integration from the Western half to the eastern half of the continent - seem commonsensical or logical today. But they were not preordained. When the idea of NATO enlargement was initially raised, for example, it was widely opposed throughout much of the US government and strategic community and had almost no support in Western Europe. Turning that mindset around involved long and hard intellectual and political battles.

One element that was critical was a new definition of a wider Europe - of a continent whole and free in which the countries of Eastern Europe were as democratic, free and secure as those of Western Europe. After nearly a half century of forced partition, that concept was not immediately self-evident to many. When one spoke of "Europe" in the late 1980s or early 1990s, many in the West actually meant Western Europe. Central and Eastern Europe was often seen as a distant place or second class part of the continent. And newly established countries like Ukraine were largely unknown, countries whose very future, let alone their place in the West, seemed open to question.

The other key element was the strategic rationale underpinning NATO and EU enlargement. In addition to the moral and historical argument for reuniting Europe, there was an important strategic argument that had to be articulated and accepted. And, in a nutshell, that argument was that the West was much better off acting in advance to lock in peace and security in the west by bringing these countries under its wing rather than take the risk that future instability could again rise in a strategic no man's land or vacuum between Germany and Russia. It reflected the notion that in a new Cold War era institutions like the Alliance had to act and go to where the potential crises lay or they ran the risk of being overwhelmed and rendered obsolete - a point captured in the famous phrase that

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NATO had to go “out of area or out of business”. In a sense, NATO and EU enlargement were a giant act of crisis prevention.

To be sure, there were many other hurdles. Initially, neither NATO nor the EU had any standards for deciding or guiding when and how new members could join, and there was very real concern in the West that embracing these countries might simply end up importing the residual problems of the East rather than resolving them. This produced the need for a strategy to enlarge in a manner that created the confidence that enlargement would not dilute or destroy the basic effectiveness of these institutions. The list of questions the West had could be continued. The critical political mass required to move forward was achieved through the combination of the political and moral imperative to create a Europe whole, free and at peace in which wars had essentially become inconceivable - along with the strategic argument that we were much better off using the window of opportunity we had after the end of the Cold War to lock in peace on the continent once and for all. This tandem pushed and kept the question of anchoring Central and Eastern Europe to the forefront of the diplomatic agenda in the 1990s.

None of this would ever have happened without the sustained leadership of the United States over a decade and several Administrations. While individual European leaders played key personal roles in the process, it was Washington that played the key role in initiating NATO enlargement, coming up with the key conceptual and strategic moves as well as undertaking the heavy diplomatic lifting to turn vision into reality. And without NATO taking the security issue off the table, it is questionable whether the EU would or could have enlarged as well.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in dealing with Russia. The dilemma facing the West in dealing with Moscow was pretty simple. While we believed that anchoring Central and Eastern Europe to the West via NATO and EU membership was not a hostile act and that the creation of stability and integration on Russia's western border was actually very much in Moscow's own interests, the number of Russians who agreed with that logic could probably have been fitted into a reasonably small room. So the West had to pursue enlargement in the face of strong and, at least initially, growing Russian hostility and repeated threats that such a course would lead to a new confrontation or Cold War. To further complicate matters, many allies as well as a sizeable number of Americans were only willing to enlarge either NATO or the EU if they were confident that it would not lead to a new confrontation with Moscow.

As a result the question of how to deal with Russia was at the centre of western policy thinking from the very beginning to the very end of this process. And the closer NATO and the EU came to the actual borders of Russia, the more pressing that need became. To be sure, there were many arguments on both sides of the Atlantic over how to deal with the Russia factor. Was it better to try to negotiate a deal or understanding with Moscow? Or was it an illusion to think that such a deal on Western terms was feasible and was the West better off simply creating new facts on the ground over Russian objections - and then waiting for the dust to settle before trying to negotiate a new cooperative relationship?

The United States and Europe tried to manage this dilemma by adopting a dual track strategy of pursuing integration while offering Moscow its own new and cooperative relationship with an enlarging set of Euro-Atlantic institutions. At the same time, Moscow was fully aware that many in the West were only willing to enlarge if they knew that Russia would acquiesce, so it tried to exploit those

concerns to derail the process for as long as it could. It only became serious about negotiating a new relationship with the West once it was clear that enlargement was going to proceed no matter what. Even then negotiating a soft landing in Russia's relations with the West became a diplomatic high wire act.

What does this mean for Ukraine today? All of these questions and dilemmas are likely to repeat themselves as Kyiv and the West struggle to define and implement a common strategy that could successfully anchor Kiev to the West. First, if Ukraine today wants to be treated like a serious candidate for Western integration, it has to show it is serious about transforming itself along such lines and make the same kind of progress at home as Central and Eastern European countries made in the 1990s. Second, both the United States and Europe need a new vision of a wider Europe, one that includes Ukraine and explains in more political and strategic terms why embracing Kyiv now should become a top priority for the Euro-Atlantic community. Third, the question of Russia and how to deal with Moscow as we move to embrace Ukraine will, once again, be one of the thorniest policy debates of all across the Atlantic (as well as with Kyiv). Last but certainly not least, Washington needs to be refocused on this agenda at a time when its attention is increasingly focused not on Europe but on new challenges emanating from beyond the continent and in particular from the Greater Middle East.

What Needs to Be Done? A Strategy for Anchoring & Integrating Ukraine

The point of departure for developing a credible strategy to anchor and integrate Kyiv to the West must recognize the similarities and differences between the Ukrainian and Central and East European cases. In both cases, three components were and are necessary.

The first is motivation on the part of the aspiring country. Both the elites and society must have the will and motivation to pursue policies that de facto make them part of the West in both domestic and foreign policy terms. They need to become an ally in word and deed. The second is 'the carrot' - ie, a credible perspective provided by the West that the country can and will become a member if it meets the criteria set by either NATO or the EU. The third is a strategy to deal with Russia. That strategy is needed to help build and sustain Western cohesion and consensus, to protect the aspiring country as well as to preserve an overall positive and cooperative Western-Russia relationship.

The big difference between Central and East Europe on the one hand and Ukraine on the other can be summarized in the following sentence: in the case of Ukraine the internal motivation and drive to join the West is weaker, the carrot or perspective being offered by the West is smaller and less attractive or credible; and the Russian problem looms much larger. This means that the challenge in any strategy that seeks to anchor and integrate Ukraine must address this weakness. It must enhance the internal drive and will in Ukraine to transform itself into a more credible candidate. It must make the perspective of actually being able to join the West more credible than it is today. And it must deal upfront with the question of Russia.

Against this backdrop, what would a realistic strategy for integrating Ukraine into the key Euro-Atlantic institutions of the West over the next decade or so look like?

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The following five steps are critical if the West and Ukraine are to come up with a realistic strategy along these lines in the years ahead.

First, the place to start must be in Ukraine and its domestic and foreign policy track record and performance. If Ukraine wants to be treated like a second Poland it needs to start to reform and transform itself so that it starts to look and act like Poland in its domestic and foreign policy. It needs to do so not to do the West 'a favour' but rather because these changes are seen as fundamentally in Kyiv's own interest and reflect the aspirations of the Ukrainian people. Nothing will change Western attitudes toward Ukraine more quickly and thoroughly than success at home.

What Ukraine has to do is hardly a secret or mystery. It needs to become a democracy and fix its political system. It needs to reform its economy. It needs to address the problem of arms exports. It needs to come to terms with and tackle the corruption problem. The list could be continued. It needs to do the same things that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe did in order to successfully transform themselves. The West will ask no more but also no less of Ukraine than it did of Central and Eastern Europe.

Today Kyiv has lost much of the goodwill it once enjoyed in the West. Like many Ukrainians, the West has become frustrated at and fed up with the behaviour of the current leadership and government in Kyiv. Today many in the West suffer from what might be called "Ukraine fatigue". They have all but given up any real expectation that Ukraine, in the short term, is willing and able to truly transform itself in a fashion similar to, for example, Poland in the 1990s. The US and Europe will never make a far-reaching shift in our policy without a major shift inside Ukraine. This is why this year and the upcoming elections in Ukraine are of such critical importance.

While nothing is impossible, at least in theory, it is very difficult to imagine this kind of fresh start without a democratic and legitimate change of leadership in the country. That is why the upcoming elections are so critical. The only way to turn that image around is to close this chapter of Ukraine's history and to open up a new one with fresh leadership committed to true change. It is difficult to imagine the West seriously increasing its commitment and assistance to Kyiv without clear signs of the political will within Ukraine itself to change itself.

Ukraine also needs to develop a clear and consistent track record in its foreign policy as a Western ally. In this realm, Ukraine is perhaps better off than in the domestic one given its role in Iraq and elsewhere. But it would be a major mistake if Kyiv were to conclude that it has essentially "bought off" the West and the United States in particular, by sending troops to Iraq. There is so much more it could do to become an ally in terms of its concrete foreign policy actions, especially as the West seeks to develop a new strategy vis-à-vis Belarus, around the Black Sea region as well as in the Greater Middle East. Obviously the domestic and foreign policy changes needed are linked. If Ukraine were to start to seriously reform itself at home, it would enhance its foreign policy role as well and perhaps allow Kyiv to become an example and force for positive change to the north and south.

Second, turning Ukraine around will require the West creating a clear and credible perspective for Kyiv to eventually become a full member of our institutions - as well as the moral, political and economic support needed to help make that happen. Once again a coalition of like-minded and dedicated countries on both sides of the

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Atlantic will have to come together and commit to make the integration of this country the kind of strategic priority over the next decade that Central and Eastern Europe enjoyed in the 1990s. Ukraine's anchoring to the West must become the next step in the completion of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic community.

This will require creating the modern day equivalent of the perspective - or the "golden carrot" - that played such a key role in motivating Central and Eastern European countries a decade ago. This won't happen overnight or by simply waving a political magic wand. For the West to take such a bold step will require a further adjustment in our definition of what constitutes Europe and the Euro-Atlantic community. Today many people in NATO and the EU undoubtedly consider Europe to be more or less complete in terms of its current membership - and are quite content with NATO and the EU having their special cooperative partnerships with countries like Ukraine.

Indeed, quite frankly if someone had asked me five years ago - in 1997 for example - when I was serving in the State Department under Secretary Albright and responsible for NATO enlargement whether I would be content and consider Europe "complete" if we succeeded in bringing in all the countries from the Baltics to the Black Sea into NATO and the EU, I suspect that I along with many colleagues would have said yes - because our and their mental image of what Europe meant ended somewhere around the Polish-Ukraine border. But today, building on our successes of the last decade, it may be time to again recast and expand our definition of Europe to explicitly include and work for the perspective of Ukraine - just like many of us worked to recast and expand our definition of Europe a decade ago to firmly include Central and Eastern Europe.

This new vision of a wider Europe that must be created is, of course, not only about Ukraine. There is a similar set of issues that centres on the question of whether Turkey should become an EU member, whether other Black Sea states such as Georgia or even Azerbaijan or Armenia should have such a perspective. And one day - hopefully sooner rather than later - we will have to face the question of where we think a post-Lukashenko democratizing Belarus belongs as well. While working in the State Department in the 1990s, I would often tell my staff that we should think about policy in terms of a ten, twenty-five and fifty year plan. It reflected my view that the West would be considered to have failed if we could not anchor and integrate Central and Eastern Europe within a decade of their liberation from communism. The twenty-five year plan was a reference to the longer-term task of integrating Ukraine and the half century mark was for Russia.

In other words, today we have to fight and win the intellectual and political battle for a new definition of a wider Europe that includes Ukraine. And Ukraine will have to help us win that battle through its actions and performance. In my view, this wider vision should also include Turkey and have a place for the southern Caucasus as well. Such a new vision will also require strategic justification and a rationale that is convincing if one hopes to generate the consensus and political will to carry it out. That rationale cannot simply be a warmed over version of what worked a decade ago since the strategic context has changed so much, especially after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. It must consist of two key components which are pretty self-evident if one considers the map as well as the current strategic challenges confronting the West.

One is the point originally made by Zbigniew Brzezinski that Russia with Ukraine is an empire but Russia absent Ukraine is not. Or put somewhat more gently, a

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successfully democratized and anchored Ukraine is a very good incentive and guarantee that Russia will not again succumb to the imperial temptation in its relations with Europe and the West. This point deserves to be underscored at a time when there is a growing concern and debate in the West over whether Russia's experiment in democracy has faltered if not failed and whether Moscow is not drifting into a kind of new authoritarianism and neo-imperialism in what it still considers to be its near abroad.

The other and equally important reason why Ukraine is so important strategically has to do with the Greater Middle East. It is from this region that the greatest threats to future trans-Atlantic security are likely to emanate in the decades to come. And even a quick look at the map shows why the West is so much better off strategically if we can anchor Turkey, Ukraine and the Black Sea region as part of our community and as a platform from which to radiate stability and influence further east and south. As opposed to viewing this region as the far eastern periphery of the current West, we need to think of it as our strategic axis as the Western alliance pivots to be able to project influence and power south into the Greater Middle east.

Third, developing this vision will be an important challenge for both Americans and Europeans. And while the United States' role is crucial, an issue we will turn to later, several additional things also need to happen if key European countries, acting either in NATO or through the European Union, are ever to embrace this vision of a wider Europe and make Ukraine's western integration a top priority. Today many Europeans are fearful or intimidated by this vision of a wider Europe - just like they were initially ambivalent and intimidated by the vision of a Europe stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea in the early 1990s. The reasons for these concerns must be acknowledged and addressed in a straightforward fashion. They centre on power, money, efficacy and - at the end of the day - on identity.

They centre on power because Ukraine is a big country and based on its size and population it would be a major player in terms of votes in any future EU, presumably on a par with the other major players in the EU. It centres on money because of the size of Ukraine, its large agricultural sector and the amount of assistance it would theoretically qualify for. They centre on efficacy because many Europeans worry how a future European Union would operate and whether it would be more or less effective if Ukraine were at the table. And, finally, European concerns also centre on identity because many Europeans are not yet sure what kind of country Ukraine really is and how closely it would embrace the kind of values the EU espouses and is seeking to develop.

Perhaps the most important is for the EU to successfully resolve its current constitutional impasse and to come up with a better mechanism to ensure the new and enlarged European Union emerges as a successful actor capable of generating the kind of political will and resources necessary to develop and sustain such a course. Even more so than in the early 1990s, there is a fear in European countries today that further enlargement would dilute and possibly destroy the institution. To be sure, one can debate long and hard precisely how the EU can or should accomplish the goal of making an enlarged EU work better. But one thing should be obvious: a weak and divided EU focused on its internal woes is unlikely to generate the capacity and attention to be able to tackle this challenge. And it is therefore very much in Ukraine's interest to see the EU pull itself out of its current malaise.

Fourth, it is impossible to imagine Ukraine's successful anchoring and integration with the West without the active support and enlightened leadership of the United States. The American role is crucial for so many different reasons. It has to take the lead and help create the overall vision and strategic context in which Ukrainian integration becomes more feasible. If it plays its cards right, it can help overcome reticence in some European corners over Ukraine. By taking the lead through NATO, it can make it easier for the EU to move forward as well. And it must take a lead in tackling the issue of Russia - both via its leading role in NATO and as well bilaterally in its relations with Moscow. As the Central and Eastern European experience in the 1990s showed, Washington can use its political muscle and much smaller levels of assistance to nonetheless be a significant catalyst and force pushing for internal pro-democratic reform. And American NGOs and other private groups can also play a key role in assisting Ukraine.

But this simply underscores the need for a common and coordinated US and European effort. This is one of many reasons why it is so important to engineer reconciliation across the Atlantic in the wake of the Iraq war and the divisions which that conflict left behind across the Atlantic and within Europe. This is something the West has to do itself for its own reason. But there is little doubt that Ukraine could be a major beneficiary of such a move. A fractured Alliance along with a divided and inward-looking EU are far less likely to embrace the kind of bold but vital steps laid out in this paper.

Fifth, nowhere is the need for a coherent and reunified Western approach more important than when it comes to Russia and how to address Moscow in a strategy for Ukraine. Once again the West will face the dilemma that a strategy aimed at further extending stability and locking in a democratic Ukraine will in all likelihood be seen by many Russians as hostile. And once again the West will have to reject such zero-sum geopolitical thinking and instead be prepared to defend its own integrationist logic.

The reality is that NATO and EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe has not created the new threat on Russia's western border that many Russian leaders and commentators predicted. On the contrary, it has probably created a more enduring peace and degree of security in the region than at any time in recent history. The great paradox of course is that an enlarged NATO has de facto eliminated the worry, which has haunted Russian leaders since Napoleon, of the rise of an aggressive and hostile power on its western border that could threaten the Motherland. Moreover, since 11 September the United States and its allies have probably done more to reduce the threat to Russia on its southern border by the successful war against the Taliban and a NATO-led peace keeping mission there. Western encirclement, one might argue, can have its advantages.

Nevertheless, the political reality is that these facts and arguments, while valid, won't necessarily get you very far politically in Russia today. One doesn't need to be Clausewitz to expect that Moscow today is going to oppose any serious NATO and EU effort to anchor and integrate Ukraine with the West. The combination of Russian neuralgia, coupled with its proximity, leverage and entanglements in Ukraine, mean that addressing the Russian factor will be an essential component in any Western strategy vis-à-vis Kyiv.

The West basically has three strategic choices when it comes how best to approach Moscow in this context. The first is to basically ignore Russian anxieties and move to create new facts on the ground quickly. This is what might be called 'the Nike

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strategy' based on the motto of "Just do it". This strategy assumes that it is all but impossible to overcome Russian reservations by persuasion and diplomacy and that it is better to quickly and quietly create new realities, let Russia adjust and then pick up and build a new relationship. Once Moscow accepts this new reality its view will change and it will become more accommodating.

The second option is for the West to pursue the same kind of dual track strategy employed during the 1990s when NATO and the EU enlarged to Central and Eastern Europe. This strategy would mean that both NATO and the EU would pursue integration with Kyiv in parallel with a strategy of outreach to Moscow aimed at building a parallel, cooperative relationship. The latter relationship should not be seen as an effort to somehow buy off or appease Moscow in some crude fashion. Instead, it would be an effort to address what we would consider to be legitimate Russian concerns as well as to look for ways to ensure that Ukraine's going West also pulled Russia in its wake. At the end of the day the West's overall goal remains the same - to demonstrate to Moscow that we are prepared to take legitimate Russian concerns into account, to show that cooperation can produce benefits for it as well; and also to work with Moscow to try to get it to abandon a zero-sum mindset and encourage it to think in win-win integrationist terms.

The third option is to adopt an approach whereby the West only moves forward with integrating Ukraine once it has negotiated an understanding with Russia that defuses the risk of any confrontation or harsh retaliatory steps against the West.

The problem with the first strategy is that it runs the risk of scaring off allies as well as eliciting an unnecessarily harsh overreaction in Moscow. The problem with the third option is that it gives Moscow a clear incentive to stall. The track record of the last decade in dealing with Moscow on these matters suggests that Moscow will oppose such a policy unless and until it is convinced that the West is going to act anyway and in spite of its objections. But it also suggests that an intense policy of engaging Moscow while still protecting Western objectives may be the best way to achieve one's goals while engineering a "soft landing": and keeping the door open for future cooperation with Moscow.

It may be premature to decide which of these options would make the most sense today. Many in the West will undoubtedly be inclined to opt for the middle option because it worked in the past and led to success in the first round of NATO enlargement. But one should not overlook the fact that today one sees the early sign of a reappraisal of Western policy vis-à-vis Russia taking place. For the last decade Western policy has been premised on the assumption that Russia is - if only gradually and in fits and starts - moving in the right direction domestically and is interested in pursuing a cooperative relationship with the West. In spite of many setbacks on this or that front, people basically believed that Russia was moving in a positive and upward direction.

Today a growing number of people are questioning those assumptions. As opposed to viewing Russia as a country moving in the right direction with some setbacks, they are increasingly concluding that Russia is a country moving in the wrong direction with some successes. This shift in Western thinking is being driven by the trend toward anti-democratic and autocratic rule in Moscow and what is seen as a new, more neo-imperial, policy towards Moscow's immediate neighbours, including Ukraine. While it is too early to predict the outcome of this debate, it is plausible and indeed likely that some revisions and shifts in Western thinking and policy vis-à-vis Moscow are down the road.

Conclusion

The year 2004 is likely to be a pivotal year for Ukraine as well as the Euro-Atlantic community. The US and Europe are each moving in their own way to define new strategic agendas in two key areas. One area is what could be called the new eastern agenda - ie those countries to the east of the new members joining NATO and the European Union this spring. For perhaps the first time, serious discussions are starting to emerge in the West over how it could and should develop a more coherent policy toward the broader Black Sea region. At the moment much of this focus is on Georgia but it will spread to include the rest of the southern Caucasus. There are also signs of an effort to - finally - come up with a more effective strategy vis-à-vis Belarus and the continent's last remaining totalitarian dictator in President Lukashenko. A reconsideration or readjustment of Western policy toward Russia is also increasingly in the air in the wake of a growing trend toward authoritarian rule in Moscow under President Putin.

Equally if not more important, the West is shifting its focus to the problems we face beyond the confines of the continent - especially the Greater Middle East. When US and European leaders meet this spring at the G-8, US-EU and NATO summits, the question of the Greater Middle East is likely to be at the centre of their discussions for the simple reason that many of the greatest threats facing the West today emanate from this region. NATO is in Afghanistan and likely to be there for some years to come; it may very well end up on the ground in Iraq before the end of the year. There is growing talk of creating a new regional security system for the region drawing on the experiences of the OSCE. Increasingly, the US and Europe are looking for new ways to pool their efforts and resources to tackle the problems of this volatile region.

Where is Ukraine in the midst of this broader set of shifts and reappraisals? Are such reappraisals going to make Ukraine less or more relevant in the eyes of the West? The answer to this question depends in large part on what Ukraine does. This year is one of enormous opportunity for Kyiv. It has a chance to put itself at the centre of the first agenda mentioned as well as to make itself an important actor on the second. With elections in the autumn, it has the chance to send a clear message that the country is changing and returning to a Western pro-integrationist course. It can start to create a new dynamic where change at home starts to lead to changes in Western thinking and policy as well. While the path will be long and at times steep, it can start to create the dynamic that could bring the country closer and closer to the West - and perhaps eventually fully into the Euro-Atlantic community.

The author is a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. From 1997-2000 he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs responsible for NATO and European security. He is the author of *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) which provides a first hand account of the first round of NATO enlargement drawing on official archives of the US Department of State.

A version of this paper will appear in a future issue of *Perspectives*.

Want to Know More ...?

See: Ronald D Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001

James Sherr, *Transforming the Security Sector in Ukraine: What are the Constraints? What is Possible?*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central & Eastern Europe Series, 04/07, April 2004, <http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

James Sherr, *Ukraine: Reform in the Context of Flawed Democracy & Geopolitical Anxiety (for European Security)*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central & Eastern Europe Series, 04/08, April 2004, <http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

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