CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

The evolution of foreign policy of independent Ukrainian started with its emergence in 1991, in the geopolitical space of Central and Eastern Europe as a result of the disintegration of Soviet Union. As its sudden appearance left no clues in the matter of foreign policy making for the Ukrainian leaders from where to start with, it has passed through difficulties of internal turmoil and external pressure. Due to the absence of experienced foreign policy elite Ukraine faced the problem of defining and articulating its national interest. As such interests were based on understanding of its own identity as a people and state, its search for national identity led it to its century old historic connection with Russia and Europe. Ukraine’s Eurasian and Central European lineage however created a clear cut division in Ukrainian society in relation to the issue of national identity and had a direct impact on the formation of foreign policy. Those who are trying to co-exist with Russia, find it difficult to develop a Ukrainian identity completely different from Russia, and try to justify their togetherness with Russia from Kievan Rus state formation to Pereyaslav agreement. On the contrary, the nationalist minded Ukrainians those who want to cultivate an identity distinct from the Russians and more specifically look for a Central European identity, try to influence the course of foreign policy formation of Ukraine citing their historicity of Europeanness with the medieval princedom of Kiev, and view the Pereyaslav memory as disastrous for Ukraine’s independent existence. Thus, the issue of national identity became the determining factor in the formation of Ukrainian foreign policy and its geopolitical orientations after Soviet disintegration.

In this context the transitional prospective of Ukrainian society has contributed to the Europeanization of Ukraine and the formation of basic values such as democracy, freedom, tolerance and multiculturalism in Ukraine. But the geo-political prospective revealed the difficulties for Ukraine’s adherence to either Eurasian or European identity. Geographically as Ukraine is located in the East-Central Europe, bordered by Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova to the West, by Belarus to the North-East, and with its location at the crossroad of Europe and Asia, its geo-political uniqueness is
described variously by different writers as the Moscow’s bridge to the West, buffer against invasion from the West, Europe’s linchpin and a strategic pivot in Europe. Thus, the acceptance to Eurasian or European identity sets the dilemma for defining the foreign policy course. The economic perspectives, security aspects and ethno-cultural factors further contribute to this dilemma. The century old economic dependence of Ukraine upon Russia inhabited by a large number of ethnic Russians and Russified Ukrainians, forced the policy makers not to sever all ties with Russia. But on the other, the security aspect compelled them to develop a close co-operation with the West in order to remain away from any possible imperialistic design of Russia to save their newly born independence.

Sitting on the helm of dilemmas, Ukraine however demonstrated a far greater interest in establishing a European identity for it in order to revitalize its culture and language distinct from Russia. Ukraine’s pursuance of European identity thus clearly reflected in its definition of national interest. Ukraine defines its national interest in terms of its national security, which can ensure the state’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, development of market economy, creation of civil society, rule of law and integration into the European and World community.

To maximize its national interests, Ukraine in its 1990 Declaration of National Sovereignty proclaimed to become a non-nuclear, non-bloc regional power. Though Ukraine’s policy of Europeanization and its objective to uphold the status of non-bloc regional power seems quite contradictory, Ukraine adopted this policy in order to avoid an East-West confrontation and a new division in Europe centered on Ukraine’s alignment with any bloc. To achieve its foreign policy objectives, Ukraine adopted the means like good-neighborly relations and friendship with all countries, mutually beneficial economic cooperation, temper for peace and above all the policy of neutrality. By upholding the policy of neutrality, Ukraine tried to ensure an independent approach to foreign policy, a dynamic role in the security and stability of Europe and a due place in the international community. To Ukraine, these are the pre-conditions to its independence, territorial integrity, political stability and economic development. In this
backdrop the evolution of Ukrainian foreign policy completed its first four years under the leadership of Leonid Kravchuk. But the issue of national identity continued to play a vital role in the evolution of Ukrainian foreign policy during the period from 1994-2004.

To strengthen its European identity and to define its national interest through the process of foreign policy formation, Ukraine however faced the widespread skepticism concerning the very viability of Ukraine as an independent nation state. Though Ukraine adopted its constitution in 1996 and has a semi-presidential form of government with unitary territorial structure of local government which has given a constitutional basis for the development of a free market economy and provisions of separation of power between the legislative, executive and judicial branches, the lack of determination, half hearted persuasion of the path of building an independent, civic, democratic state raised the very question of the nature of Ukrainian state and sovereignty. Further, the approach which both Presidents adopted (Kravchuk’s policy of ‘movement in all direction’ and Kuchma’s ‘multi-vector’ foreign policy) very much exposed the nature of Ukrainian State and sovereignty.

The transitional nature of the state (both economic and political) having possessed an uneven national identity also faced a lack of deep knowledge of the conditions that exist in Ukraine. Its vulnerability towards Russia for economic development and toward Europe for security and political support exposed Ukraine’s weakness as both Russia and the West put forth condition to extend their help and support. In spite of the adoption of a policy of Europeanism Ukraine’s inherited quasi-state features i.e. its continual high levels of interdependence, principally with Russian Federation prevented a radical re-orientation of its foreign and defense policies away from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Further, having possessed the features of negative sovereignty, which includes a deficient political will and authoritative institutions, a deficient organization of power to protect human or socio-economic rights (that was exposed in the murder of opposition journalist Gongadze, and Kuchmagate tapes scandal), Ukraine lost its international reputation and by the way unwillingly adopted a pro-Russian foreign policy. The pro-European vision of Kravchuk administration upon which Kuchma completed
both of his Presidential terms almost remain unrealized as its national interest took a ‘U’
turn in due course of time. But such vulnerability clearly exposed the domestic
compulsions of Ukraine.

Having a legacy of external domination and inheritance of an unevenly developed
national consciousness, the cost of the economic and political transition became
particularly cumbersome for Ukraine and has a direct impact upon its foreign policy
making. An analysis of the domestic scenario of Ukraine in relation to its foreign policy
almost revealed the substantial gap that exists between the official position and course of
the presidential administration and the government, on the one hand, and the spectrum of
sympathies of the various political parties, movements and those of common citizens.
The East-West division in the Ukrainian public opinion and in the opinion of the elite on
the matter of security and foreign policy also clearly reflect the socio-economic and
political environment existing within the state.

The political structure of Ukraine in the first five years of its independence almost
faced a constitutional crisis as it was operating under a modified version of the 1987
constitution, and proved its little applicability for independent Ukraine. The incorporation
into administration of the bureaucrats retained from the Soviet era (communist party
functionaries), who often upheld ideological goals, did not meet the requirements of the
policies necessary for independent Ukraine. Thus, whenever the President took any
decision along with the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) and the Foreign
Ministry, the parliament challenged the President on many issues, leading to
inconsistency in the matter of foreign policy formulations. The presence of different
interest groups in Ukrainian society of military, nationalist, regional and of separatist
nature, and their indirect role of pulling the government in different directions also
affected the policy making process.

Further the presence of competing elites in the political spectrum of Ukraine
having leftist, rightist, centrist and regional origin, and the continuing tug of war between
them and above all the split consciousness of Ukrainians and their dual loyalty in relation
to the question of Eurasianism and Europeanization severely affect the making of Ukrainian foreign policy. However the diverse nature of the domestic factors which pulled Ukraine in different directions in the matter of foreign policy has their linkages to the circumstance in which it came into existence as an independent state and their historic Eurasian and European lineage.

The coming to existence of an independent Ukraine on the one hand proved to be of great importance for the Central European countries as they regard it a natural shield against their main perceived threat the unstable Russian Federation with imperialistic designs. To maintain stability and security in the region the West also likes to see Ukraine as a kind of ‘buffer’ that would block any possible attempt of new imperialist expansion by Russia. On the other, for Russia and Russians an independent Ukraine which is no longer a part of Russia became difficult to accept as its borders without Ukraine are pushed back weakening its ability to project its power and influence on to Europe. Thus Russia with its super power complex sees Ukraine as its trusted and close friend without which it can hardly turn to be a superpower. This new environment however put forth some fundamental questions in relation to Ukraine’s geo-political choices and to whose sphere of influence does Ukraine belong.

As it lies at the crossroad of two civilizations Western and Eastern, it has got two basic choices of geopolitical orientations: the geographically integrated Europe confirming and installing Ukraine’s historic place in it or to be integrated into the Eurasian geo-political environment constituted by the post Soviet states with Russia as its nucleus. Keeping in mind its geopolitical location, historical experience, cultural traditions, security options and the challenges and opportunities that may come forth, Ukraine chose its historic path of development through European integration. Ukraine’s adoption of such a policy however gave birth to the leftist-rightist debate in Ukrainian political and social sphere of life centered on the question of ethnic Ukrainians and aliens, Ukrainianisation and de-Russification etc. In spite of leftist reservations over the issue of Ukraine’s European orientations, Kiev continued its pro-European policy. But
the irony was that it got less success due to its failure to implement economic and political reforms of European standards.

In the presence of an aggressive Russia, without having any security assurances from the West Ukraine thought of its own security in terms of its military reforms. To avoid an East-West confrontation centered on Ukraine in the phase of NATO’s eastward expansion, it adopted the policy of non-alignment to maintain equidistance from both Russia and the West. To pacify Russian concerns in relation to NATO enlargement, Ukraine suggested for non-deployment of military weapons in the territory of newly member countries of NATO and for the creation of a Nuclear –Free- Zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

Upholding the principle of neutrality, Ukraine under the pragmatic leadership of Leonid Kuchma managed to reap the benefits from both East and West. As part of its efforts of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures Ukraine attempts to develop mutually beneficial relations with neighboring states of Central and Eastern Europe with the hope that regional stability and security and unity of the continent will ultimately increase its chances for full-fledged integration into Europe. To raise its regional and sub-regional profile and to counteract the influence of Russia Ukraine thought of creation of regional and sub-regional economic and security mechanisms. Though Ukraine’s plans to stand-out a Polish initiative in the shape of ‘NATO-B’ and the ‘Ukrainian Zone of Stability and Security’ remained yet to born due to Central and East-European countries’ acceptance of NATO membership, it has got some success in the formation of sub-regional institutions. Cooperation between Kiev and Ankara within the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), served their strategic objectives. The very existence of the BSEC is a testimony to the extent to which Russian interests were neglected and even counteracted. Through BSEC as a link in the transportation of Caspian oil was expected to facilitate Turkey’s entry into European Union, Kiev thought its closer ties will contribute for an eventual integration. Primarily membership of BSEC becomes a means by which Ukraine tries to demonstrate its pro-Western geopolitical preferences and thereby underlines its commitment to ‘return to Europe’. Ukraine’s effort in the
formation of GUUAM and backing of a foreign policy strategy of integration with Europe are a part of its policy priorities to diminish Russian influence within the CIS.

Further, in its pursuit of Euro-Atlantic integration Ukraine continued its policy of cooperation and formation of legal ties with prominent European institutions like Central European Initiative (CEI), Visegard & CEFTA, Council of Europe (CE), West European Union (WEU), NATO, European community (EC) and European Union (EU). To Ukraine, these institutions are just like windows to the West through which it could see the potential benefits that may increase gradually the pro-Western line and could differentiate itself from the old Soviet and Russian political structures for the creation of a distinct political identity for itself. Ukraine managed to join the Council of Europe and Central European Initiative but its relations with EU and WEU remain less advanced than those with NATO. This is because Ukraine’s fortune of Euro-Atlantic integration was revolved around its domestic realities of economic reform, democratization, human rights etc.

Due to the lack of a clear cut constitutional distribution of powers, the constant conflict between different branches of the political system led to political and economic instability, and obstruction to privatization. As a result, Ukrainian economy faced high rates of inflation, rapid growth of shadow economy and a sharp rise in debt to Russia and Turkmenistan. This economic instability also gave birth to monetary indiscipline, huge and erratic fiscal deficit, unemployment, corruption and the dramatic downfall in standard of living. All these problems further compounded due to lack of proper Western assistance and slow down of the inflow of foreign direct investment into Ukraine.

Political infighting, vested interests, persistent problems with Western investors have slowed down the reform process in Ukraine and the country got swamped into a protracted period of reform stagnation (1998-1999), followed by non-transparent political processes, lack of responsibility and accountability. Further, the Kuchmagate tapes scandal, the secrecy of the sale of military technology ‘Kolchuga radar equipment to Iraq in contravention of U.N. sanction in summer 2000, high level corruption, the defection
of former Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko and his trial in the U.S. and increasing restrictions on the media, became serious challenging factors to the process of democratization in Ukraine. This worsened Ukraine’s international image. Side by side, Ukraine’s foreign policy became more confusing to domestic elites, foreign governments and international organizations. Kuchma’s adoption of ‘multi-vector’ foreign policy and changing geopolitical orientation from West to East with confusing and ambivalent statement, ‘To Europe with Russia’, made Ukraine’s foreign policy more unpredictable, unreliable and distrusted. Along with this, the discrepancy between domestic policies and foreign policy goals and constantly shifting objectives became major factors for the U.S and the West to no longer treat Ukraine’s foreign policy in a serious manner. Therefore, Ukraine’s threatening to ‘return to Russia’ no longer was seen as a credible threat to obtain unconditional support from the West. After September 11 terrorist attack on the US, as Washington has been discovering ‘new geopolitical pivots’, Kiev’s importance declined considerably. In such a juncture, Ukraine could no longer play off Russia against the USA to obtain geopolitical advantages for itself, and thus Ukraine-West relationship end up with mutual unhappiness.

Simultaneously, Ukraine’s poor transition performance resulted in an imbalance between European foreign policy ambitions on the one hand, and the actual state of its economic and political transformation, on the other. This imbalance and inability to advance European integration internally has especially harmed Ukraine’s relations with the EU. Therefore, the European Union viewed Ukraine’s membership ambition as nothing more than exaggerated demand, and continued to be lukewarm in its response to Ukraine’s European aspirations.

Though Ukraine managed to continue its cooperation with NATO in the spirit of Partnership for Peace (PfP) and outlined its desire to seek NATO membership in May 2002, NATO expressed its concern about Ukraine’s domestic situation and warned Kiev to display a sustained commitment to the implementation of political, economic and defense reforms and uphold human rights, rule of law and freedom of media. Further the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan that had been adopted at the Prague NATO summit 2002,
also devoted to internal political, economic and information issues. As far as Kiev’s membership in the alliance is concerned, NATO believes that, Ukraine’s membership remains ‘hypothetical’, ‘long-term’ and that is not in the agenda right now.

When Ukraine-West relationship was slowly but gradually deteriorating, Russo-Ukrainian relations moved into a realistic plane. In spite of being aware of Russian imperialistic attitude, keeping in mind the domestic realities and Ukraine’s continuing energy and industrial-military dependence and a huge energy debt to Russia, the Kuchma administration made efforts to improve relations with Russia. However, the Ukrainian policies towards Russia were not exclusive in nature but a part of its policy to overcome its domestic problems. Thus, to alleviate economic pressure, Ukraine, remain engaged with greater CIS political and military integration. Accordingly, Kuchma enhanced Ukrainian cooperation with Russia and other CIS states on military-industrial projects. He signed Customs Legislation and joined the CIS Common Air Defense Structure in February 1995. Later on, in May 1997, Russia – Ukrainian negotiation and eventual rapprochement in the Black –Sea-Fleet-Accord took place in order to strengthen bilateral relations.

However, as a consequence of all these, Ukraine’s Foreign policy took a more moderate pro-Russian orientation towards greater CIS cooperation. Further the willingness of Kuchma to stay engaged in the CIS enabled Ukraine to continue to obtain economic resources from Russia and at the same time Ukraine was successful in resolving the border question with Russia prior to the departure of Boris Yeltsin in 2000. However, Kuchma’s more pro-Russian orientation led to stagnation in economic reforms and limited Ukraine’s access to Western economic resources. Later on, as the availability of Western economic resources decreased, Kuchma increasingly turned to Russia for assistance, and in the process adopted an even stronger pro-Russian orientation on economic, political and military issues.

At such a juncture, as Ukraine’s borders were secured by 1999, Kuchma took no more interest to orient Ukraine Westward to balance against an unfriendly Russia. By the
way, the shift toward Russia in Ukraine’s ‘multi vector’ foreign policy that had taken place in 1999-2000 further deepened in November 2000 by the Kuchmagate Crisis as Russia offered political support to the embattled President Kuchma who was isolated by the West. Ukraine-Russian relationship strengthened further when Ukraine increased its participation in the CIS Anti-Terrorist Centre; encouraged Russian investors to take part in the privatization of lucrative Ukrainian enterprises and appointed Viktor Yanukovych, a pro-Russian leader, as Prime Minister in November 2002. This pro-Russian policy became clearly visible in January 2003, when Kuchma was elected to head CIS Council of Heads of States. Since, Ukraine’s foreign policy has been tied to Kuchma’s political survival this pro-Russian foreign policy continued till Kuchma was in power.

Taking above points into consideration in relation to the evolution of Ukrainian foreign policy from 1994-2004, which was alternated between the West and the East, the thesis draws two basic propositions as central to Ukrainian foreign policy i.e. formation of Ukrainian identity and the economic necessity. The first one led to Europeanization of Ukraine and ended in mutual unhappiness. The second one led to Ukraine’s improved mutual relationship with Russia.

While drawing some conclusions in relation to the first one, it is very much clear that, despite a few examples of positive cooperation and partnership, a lot remains to be achieved in Ukraine-West partnership. Thus the way in which the Ukraine-West relations progressed and came to a closing point during the period of 1994-2004, has left behind the question of sincerity on the part of both sides in relation to their relationship. So far as the West is concerned, most of the time its policies towards Ukraine have remained conditional to the progress of Ukrainian transition and the formation of its foreign and security policy. The way West had responded to Ukraine being declarative in its statements on Ukraine’s significance and its promises of support, make it clear that the West really lacked sufficient vision, long term commitment and the practical action needed to help a country like Ukraine.
On the other hand Ukraine's amorphous and declaratory policies under the leadership of Kuchma clearly showed that Ukraine has no desire to be European and destined to be Eurasian. This was reflected in Kuchma's attempt to go back to the July 1994 election platform for the re-orientation to Russia and the 'normalization of Ukraine-Russia relations'. Kuchma's new foreign policy paradigm was displayed his changes to Ukraine's multi-vector foreign policy from Western to Eastern orientation and the adoption of a more confusing and ambivalent policy of 'To Europe with Russia'. So also Ukraine showed its inability to effectively organize itself at home and implement necessary political, economic and social reforms. Its movement towards democracy and market economy was extremely slow, its policies were often declarative and its willingness to change itself was often questionable. This slowness and indecisiveness on the one hand and complexity and uncertainty on the other became the main source of Western displeasure and frustration.

Ukraine-West relationship left certain implications to be considered for both, West and Ukraine. So far as the West is concerned the failure of relationship raised some fundamental questions like: Are the policy objectives and national interests of the US, NATO and the EU in relation to Ukraine being fulfilled?; What would be the policy measures of the West in Central and Eastern Europe in the absence of Ukraine?; and, Do the objectives of the West promote or curtail the development of geo-political pluralism in the post-communist world? The broken relationship has also let the West to be aware of the loss of a strategic ally in relation to Russia in the Central and Eastern Europe. It let the West to adopt pro-active foreign policy steps in future in relations to Ukraine which would lead to weakening of Ukraine's 'third way' policy (neutrality/ non bloc status etc) forcing it to be a more reliable strategic partner for the West. Finally, the truncated relations called for a fourth phase of West's relations with Ukraine that meets the West's geo-political interests in Ukraine to move towards a qualitatively new stage of strategic engagement in the pursuit of Ukraine's integration into Trans-Atlantic and European structures.
So far as Ukraine is concerned, without the support of the West, Ukraine has little chance for ultimate success in its transition and for obtaining an adequate international support. Though Ukraine’s basic foreign policy objectives remain the same, i.e. integration into Europe, unwillingly or willingly Ukraine at last came under the influence Russia and remained far behind the process of transforming its politics from the squabbling of a few vested interests into a transparent, value based and issue driven vibrant multi-party system. But questions remain about Russia’s ultimate goals in relations to Ukraine, and what this shift might mean for Ukrainian sovereignty.

Further the conclusions drawn in relations to the second one showed that, dealing with Russian challenges became difficult for Ukraine because of its domestic realities and proximity to Russia. So it can not afford to have a hostile relationship with its Western neighbor. As the recent history of Ukraine-Russian interaction suggests, the interdependence and the similarity of the two Slavic countries make military confrontation, especially war, between them unthinkable. Thus, in spite of the existence of contentious issues and contradictions the worst scenarios in the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations have not thus far taken place. There has been no civil disorder or insurgency in eastern Ukraine or in Crimea, inspired or supported by Russia. Nor have there been threats of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine or even Russia-Ukrainian nuclear exchanges. Despite the aggressive rhetoric and recurrent tensions between the two countries, their unresolved disputes have not become fatally deadlocked i.e. Moscow and Kiev have not adopted extreme confrontational attitudes towards each other. But instead, during some of the crises over the Black Sea Fleet both sides have appeared to be making sincere efforts to avoid direct military confrontation.

Several factors have contributed to this aspect of the behavior of the two. Economic difficulties, weakness of state authority, and explosive domestic situations produced a kind of mutual vulnerability in both the countries. As a result, Kiev and Moscow showed a lot of understanding of each other’s internal difficulties. Ukraine, for its part, firmly supported President Yeltsin during his domestic difficulties, except for the Chechen war. In the international sphere both Russia and Ukraine have shown their
understanding as they are parties to several international security and arms control agreements, which, despite all the difficulties with their implementation, have contributed to stability in security relations between the two countries. So far as CIS is concerned, Ukraine could not dare to leave the CIS as it would strain its relations with Russia, and its economy would be badly affected, and thus prefer to remain a member of the CIS opposing its centralizing tendencies at least so long as it is not in a position to deal with Russia on terms of equality.

To conclude herewith as regards to Ukraine’s vision of Euro-Atlantic integration and its pro-Russian foreign policy, it can be said that Ukraine’s Europeanization lies in its will and ability to accelerate domestic reforms, increased transparency and openness of its political and economic systems, reduce dependence on Russia, and deeper integration into international and regional economic, political and security structures. Otherwise, Ukraine’s dependence upon Russia for aid, assistance, technology, energy supply and market for its products will force it to tie its fortune with Moscow in a stronger way.