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Ukraine-New Zealand Relations: Promise of a Date?

Introduction

Newly independent Ukraine has a growing international presence and an increasing ambition to be a member of affluent international associations and alliances. Since regaining its sovereignty in 1991, Ukraine has been outspoken in its desire to eventually join the European Union (EU). This aspiration is more meaningful with the country's current active involvement in the Council of Europe (CE).¹ Ukraine's image as an international actor is also shaped by its much debated intention of entering NATO, as well as its participation in the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism ('Nuclear Terrorism Convention').² Above all, Ukraine's firm will to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) engages the country with a system of economic, political, and legal co-ordinates understood and followed around the world.

Ukraine's persistence on the international stage indicates its commitment to become a part of an interconnected and interrelated modern world. Often described in terms of a global economy, this world presents a complex case of asymmetrical geometry where the global structure is seen to be organized around three major regions – Europe/the EU, North America, and the Asia-Pacific.³ In this context, Ukrainian foreign policy priorities are explicit with relation to the USA and Canada, as well as the EU.⁴ Consequently, Ukraine's

¹ Ukraine has offered to host the plenary meeting of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy in 2009. Borys Tarasyuk, 'Statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine', presented at the 116th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 19 May 2006, Strasbourg, France, <<http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/en/publication/content/5961.htm>> [accessed 21 July 2006].

² 'International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism', *UN Official Website*, <<http://untreaty.un.org/English/Terrorism>> [accessed 9 July 2006].

³ Manuel Castells, *The Information Age – Economy, Society and Culture: Vol.1. The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 145.

⁴ Borys Tarasyuk, 'Speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine at the Press Conference on Ukrainian Diplomacy Day', 22 December 2005, Kyiv, Ukraine, <<http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/ua/publication/content/4950.htm>> [accessed 23 December 2005].

political, diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural interactions with both North America and Europe are blossoming. By contrast, the Asia-Pacific vector of Ukraine's international co-operation (with the exception of China, India, and the post-Soviet Central Asian states) is not among Ukraine's priorities in foreign policy. This paper suggests that the new democratic polity of Ukraine, aspiring to be an equal unit of the international politicum, will benefit from a more intensive and productive dialogue with its previously overlooked partners in the Pacific, specifically with New Zealand.

The Ukrainian nation, culture, and statehood are well-researched areas in most new world countries.⁵ In contrast, Ukraine remains *terra incognita* for the majority of the New Zealand general public and national decision-makers. Moreover, New Zealand academia has not established its own tradition of Ukrainian Studies in any university. Throughout its history, New Zealand has been aggressively 'courting' the countries of Western Europe (both EU and non-EU states, and the UK in particular). The European political West, populated by consumers with high purchasing ability, has been largely viewed as a lucrative market for New Zealand's main trading commodities (lamb, dairy, venison, fruits, and, more recently, wine).

With the EU expanding by ten members in 2004 (eight of which are former communist Eastern-Central European countries), New Zealand is beginning a promising 'flirtation' with the newcomers. Traditionally almost unknown to New Zealand (with the exception perhaps of British Commonwealth members Malta and Cyprus),⁶ the EU's new member states are seen as transparent democracies, which present attractive new opportunities for New Zealand trade. In order to prove its commitments to these new partners, the New Zealand Government opened an Embassy in Warsaw in 2004 to serve

⁵ Almost every major organisation of Ukrainian Studies is situated in the USA, Canada or Australia, countries populated with millions of people of Ukrainian background. For example, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University, Yale-Ukraine Initiative at Yale University, Ukrainian Studies Programme at Stanford University, Ukrainian Studies Programme at Columbia University, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at University of Alberta, Ukrainian Studies Programme at Monash University, and Ukrainian Studies Programme at Macquarie University.

⁶ Phil Goff, 'Annual Europa Lecture to the NCRE', 9 May 2005, Christchurch, NZ, <http://www.europa.canterbury.ac.nz/europa/pdf/2005_goff_address> [accessed 5 August 2005].

the diplomatic region of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. With New Zealand's interests notably moving towards the east of Europe, and with Ukraine taking a prominent step forward onto the world stage after the events of its Orange Revolution in 2004, is there a promise for a New Zealand political 'date' with Ukraine?

The goal of this paper is to survey the history and current state of relations between New Zealand and Ukraine and to identify which factors in this interaction serve as obstacles to or triggers for a more intense and effective dialogue between the two distant partners. The study attempts to address the presence of an 'information deficit' impairing Ukraine-New Zealand interaction. The 'deficit' is acknowledged to exist on public, academic, and policy-making levels in both countries. Ultimately, this paper aims to inform New Zealand and Ukrainian policy-makers, as well as responsible officials within the countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and it suggests a set of concrete policy recommendations for improving the quality of such a dialogue. Three leading research questions guided the study, namely: what are the challenges impeding a New Zealand-Ukraine political 'date'; what are the promises indicating that a 'date' between the two nations takes place and, should the 'date' between New Zealand and Ukraine occur, how can the two partners make it successful?

It is necessary to note that an in-depth study of Ukraine-New Zealand relations is only one particular case of Ukraine's (or for that matter, New Zealand's) bilateral relations, and generalizations are difficult to make on such a basis. Yet, this paper argues that the case presents some valuable lessons for both sides and that these lessons do allow more general conclusions. If Ukraine is to raise its international profile and become an equal member of the globalized community *de facto*, it must re-visit and re-evaluate its interactions with the Asia-Pacific. In this perspective, New Zealand, a South-Pacific OECD country with traditionally strong European connections, could be a good place to begin. At the same time, if New Zealand is to conquer the new key markets in Central-Eastern Europe, the Ukrainian market of about 47 million potential consumers is a valid candidate for consideration.

The data for this research come from multiple primary and secondary sources, namely interviews with key New Zealand and Ukrainian informants

and international experts,⁷ government documents, and media texts. Correspondingly, various methods of analysis were employed. Being one of the first research works in the field of Ukrainian post-Cold War studies in New Zealand, this paper has had to face, and finally overcome, obvious limitations, such as a shortage of readily available data for analysis, terminological confusion in some existing data, as well as the tendency of some sources to over-generalize or over-simplify. To improve the validity of this research, the data were collected from a high number of sources. The interview sample design consistently ensured representation of a balanced view from both the New Zealand and Ukrainian sides.

Setting the context: New Zealand and its foreign policy priorities

As a relatively small and historically young nation, New Zealand is one of the world's most stable democracies. Despite its geographical distance from Europe, the former British dominion has traditionally emphasised the 'European vector' in its foreign policy. The current New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark specifically stated that:

While the logic of our geography leads us to focus a lot of attention on the Asia Pacific region and the Americas, our ties to and interest in Europe are just too important to let go. [...] Clearly Europe is a very natural partner for New Zealand.⁸

EU Commissioner Mariann Fisher Boel has pointed out that, as far as Europe is concerned, New Zealand is a reliable partner with whom the EU has 'shared commitments to supporting democracy, to the rule of law, to human rights, to environmental protection' to such an extent that both the EU and New Zealand 'see the world in essentially the same way'.⁹

After the first (or the so-called 'British') enlargement of the European Economic Community (the predecessor of the EU) in 1973, New Zealand's

⁷ See the interviewees named in the footnotes below.

⁸ Helen Clark, 'Annual Europa Lecture to the NCRE', 20 November 2002, Christchurch, NZ, <http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz/europa/pdf/2002_clark_addr.pdf> [accessed 9 June 2005].

⁹ Mariann Fisher Boel, 'Annual Europa Lecture to the NCRE', 6 March 2006, Wellington, NZ, <<http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz/europa/>> [accessed 7 June 2006].

exclusive economic connections with the UK were severed. This necessitated an extraordinary effort by the Pacific nation towards diversifying its exporting policy within a short timeframe.¹⁰ The approach resulted in New Zealand's 'strategic success in spreading its trade dependencies more or less evenly [...] between Asia, Europe, North America, [and] Australia'.¹¹ The times when the country kept 'all its eggs in one British basket' are now long gone, and New Zealand has successfully established a comprehensive foreign policy putting separate accents on dealings with different regions of the world.¹² Such an approach has led to some new elements in the country's foreign policy. Among these is New Zealand's growing interest in Central-Eastern Europe. This interest was formally expressed by the opening of a New Zealand Embassy in Warsaw, as well as by a number of visits by high-ranking New Zealand officials to the new Eastern European EU members.¹³

In the post-Soviet space, New Zealand has traditionally enjoyed active economic co-operation with the Russian Federation, before and after the collapse of the USSR. Moreover, New Zealand's recent surge of interest in Central-Eastern European states has not overshadowed its steady attention towards Russia, a major global power and an important trading partner. Arguably, the New Zealand Governor-General's visit to Moscow in May 2005¹⁴ indicated the importance of the 'Russian vector' in New Zealand foreign policy. Yet, Ukraine was not singled out in this approach. It is suggested that in neither a 'European' nor a 'post-Soviet' context has Ukraine been prioritized in New Zealand foreign and trading policies.

¹⁰ Terrence O'Brien, 'NZ: Does Distance Lend Enchantment?' in M. Ortega (ed.), *Global Views on the European Union*, Chaillot Paper 72 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, November 2004), 103-115.

¹¹ O'Brien.

¹² 'NZ Foreign and Trade Policy', *NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Official Website*, <<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/for.html>> [accessed 22 July 2006].

¹³ NZ Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade visited Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in September 2004; NZ Prime Minister visited Poland in April 2005; and NZ Governor-General visited the Czech Republic and Hungary in 2004. See Goff, 'Annual Europa Lecture'.

¹⁴ Goff, 'Annual Europa Lecture'.

Ukraine and its foreign policy priorities

Identifying his country's 2006 political *credo*, the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Borys Tarasyuk stated that Ukraine, 'being stateless and oppressed [...] by all kinds of empires, [...] developed strong immunity and aversion to political megalomania'.¹⁵ From this standpoint, Mr. Tarasyuk suggested a differentiation of Ukraine from global powers, either totalitarian or democratic, as well as from many of the EU states, which 'used to be powerful and have colonies' in the past. In his interpretation of Ukraine, Mr. Tarasyuk compared the country to the former stateless nations of the historical Habsburg Empire, which are 'set for democratic development'.¹⁶

In its progress along a democratic path, Ukraine participates in various international dialogues. Summarizing Ukraine's political year of 2005, Tarasyuk paid special attention to his country's interactions with the EU, NATO, the USA, as well as the country's active involvement with the various state groupings in Eurasia, namely, the *Weimar Four* (France, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine), the *Višegrad Five* (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine), *GUAM* (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), and the *Community for Democratic Choice* (Georgia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and others).¹⁷ Notably, there were only limited references to Ukraine's connections with Asia-Pacific countries in this report.

It is Ukraine's 'European vector' which has been particularly prominent in recent years. To illustrate the point, there were six summits at the highest level between the EU and Ukraine from September 2000. The last summit took place on 1 December 2005 in Kyiv and resulted in a Joint Statement in which Ukraine 'reiterated its strategic goal to be fully integrated into the EU', and the EU 'welcomed Ukraine's European choice'.¹⁸

¹⁵ Borys Tarasyuk, 'Speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine at the Institute of International Politics and Economy Ukraine – A New Democracy in Europe', presented 24 January 2006, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, <<http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/en/publication/content/5108.htm>> [accessed 21 July 2006].

¹⁶ Tarasyuk, 'Speech at the Institute of International Politics'.

¹⁷ Tarasyuk, 'Speech at the Press Conference on the Ukrainian Diplomacy Day'.

¹⁸ 'The EU Relations with Ukraine', *European Union Online Portal*, <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/ukraine/intro/sum.htm> and <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference>> [accessed 22 July 2006].

It can be demonstrated that neither Ukraine officially stresses the importance of New Zealand for its foreign policy, nor does New Zealand highlight Ukraine among its places of special interest in Europe. Arguably, there are some historical, political, and social barriers to overcome in order to bring the two countries closer to each other.

What are the challenges impeding a New Zealand-Ukraine political ‘date’?

Using the metaphor of romantic relations, this paper identifies a set of obstacles preventing New Zealand from inviting Ukraine on a ‘date’ in the international arena. These obstacles are: sporadic ‘encounters on the personal level’ between the two in the past; Ukraine’s ‘abusive marriage’ to Russia resulting in New Zealand’s confused perceptions of Ukraine; and ‘missed chances’ in communication on both sides.

Sporadic encounters: the personal level

The first obstacle to a more productive dialogue between the two states is the lack of strong ties in the past. Though a nation of immigrants of predominantly European heritage, New Zealand has never been among those host countries to which many Ukrainians moved to start new lives during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Several reasons account for this situation, not the least of which was a ‘highly selective and exclusivist’ New Zealand immigration policy in the past.¹⁹

New Zealand evidence of connections between the two countries in the twentieth century (pre-1991)²⁰ has been largely anecdotal and, when and if official, mostly incomplete. For example, Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler, a native of Ukraine and now a New Zealand resident, prepared an article recording the personal recollections of several New Zealand families of Ukrainian origin. Some of her findings provide a unique insight into the contribution of Ukrainians to New Zealand history. For instance, Anton Omelchenko, a Poltava-born man, while visiting Christchurch in 1910, was

¹⁹ Wolfgang Kasper, *Populate or Languish? Rethinking NZ’s Immigration Policy* (Wellington: NZ Business Roundtable, 1990), xiii.

²⁰ On 24 August 1991, the Verkhovna Rada declared the creation of an independent Ukrainian State ‘Ukraine’. See *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady*, Issue 38 (1991): 502.

responsible ‘for the supply of robust horses’ during Scott’s preparations for his expedition to the South Pole.²¹

World War II, in which Ukraine had official losses of up to ten million people,²² was a major historic event that brought Ukraine and New Zealand together. There is evidence that two groups of Ukrainian refugees (approximately fifty families) who had no desire to return to the USSR-controlled Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic came to New Zealand in 1949 and, possibly, in 1951.²³ Vladimir Oltarzhevsky describes them as ‘displaced persons’ and gives a figure of about 930 former Soviet citizens, including approximately 170 people of Ukrainian origin.²⁴ Most settled in Pahiatua and established ‘a friendly community neighbourhood’²⁵ that intended to preserve their national identity.²⁶ From the 1950s to the 1970s, Ukrainians of New Zealand’s North Island had ‘a choir, a children’s musical group and a church with Sunday school’.²⁷ In the same period, the total number of USSR-born New Zealand residents varied from 506 (in 1951) to 892 (1976). However, these data did not distinguish between the specific nationalities.²⁸

An ‘abusive marriage’ and confused perceptions

In the twentieth century Ukraine, one of the fifteen republics of the USSR, was not clearly distinguished from Russia in New Zealand perceptions. Moreover, because of the political isolationism of the former Soviet Union and

²¹ Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler, ‘Pro ukrainsiv v Novii Zelandii’, *Ukrains’kyi keramolohichnyi zhurnal*, 4 (2004): 156-159.

²² Yuri Shapoval, ‘Ukrains’ka Druha Svitova’, *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, 23 April-6 May 2004, 15.

²³ Poshyvaylo-Towler, ‘Pro ukrainsiv’.

²⁴ Vladimir Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii 40-80 godov XX veka* (Irkutsk: Ottisk, 1999), 59.

²⁵ Poshyvaylo-Towler, ‘Pro ukrainsiv’.

²⁶ Remarkably, before World War II ended, the same place was chosen for the settlement of 732 Polish children and their 102 guardians who arrived in NZ as refugees on 1 November 1944. A. Manterys (ed.), *NZ’s First Refugees: Pahiatua’s Polish Children* (Wellington: Polish Children’s Reunion Committee, 2004).

²⁷ Poshyvaylo-Towler, ‘Pro ukrainsiv’.

²⁸ ‘Russians, Ukrainians and Baltic Peoples’, *Encyclopedia of NZ Online*, <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NZPeoples/RussiansUkrainiansAndBalticPeoples/3/en>> [accessed 24 July 2006].

the low number of immigrants of Ukrainian descent, Ukrainian Studies has not developed as an independent field of research in New Zealand. Where it has been the subject of study, Ukraine has been largely investigated within its Soviet and/or Russian contexts – it was once noted that the Russian Federation used to be ‘perceived by most of the world as being the USSR’.²⁹ The negative connotations usually accompanying evaluations of the communist USSR were largely projected onto Ukraine’s images in New Zealand public discourse.

Nevertheless, existing New Zealand academic research in the field³⁰ provides evidence that New Zealand political elites were well aware of most of the USSR-related issues at the time, including the Soviet Union’s specific national structure. Desmond Costello, a diplomat in the country’s first Legation in the USSR in 1944, wrote:

The [...] Republics of the USSR are in no sense ‘daughter nations’ of Russia. Russia (RSFSR) is the largest of them, that is all. They are separate nations, often differing widely from one another in language and traditions and which have been linked together first by the historical accident of having formed part of the Tsarist-Russian Empire, secondly by their (more or less willing) acceptance of the ideology and purposes of the Bolshevik Party.³¹

At the same time, New Zealand scholars and the general public faced challenges in attempting to distinguish a specifically Ukrainian component in the ‘mega-construction’ of the Soviet empire. The leading geopolitical reason for such challenges was the fact that the Ukrainian nation, being a victim of the Soviet totalitarian regime, was scarcely recognizable when viewed through the

²⁹ Vladimir Pozner, *Eyewitness: A Personal Account of the Unravelling of the Soviet Union* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 3.

³⁰ In spite of some ideological differences between NZ and the former USSR, NZ academic research into the Soviet Union and NZ-USSR relations has featured several prominent names, among them Anthony Wilson, Malcolm Templeton, Barry Gustafson and John Goodliffe. H.W. Rhodes, a member of the executive of the NZ-USSR Society, was another valuable contributor with his historical review of the Society’s activity from its establishment in 1941 to the 1970s.

³¹ Desmond P. Costello, ‘The Constituent Republics of the USSR’, Appendix B in Malcolm Templeton, *Top Hats Are Not Being Taken: A Short History of the NZ Legation in Moscow, 1944-1950* (Wellington: NZ Institute of International Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations and Trade, 1989), 80-83.

prism of Bolshevik imperial control that was imposed by the central political elite.³² The larger part of Ukraine's territory was incorporated into the USSR in 1922 leading to several waves of migration of many Soviet nationalities (including Russians) to the 'western fringe'.³³ Soviet industrialization and Russification contributed to the 'melting pot' mentality in which national distinctions were seen as insignificant and artificial. With its identity characterized as predominantly focused 'on social and cultural issues', and not on political issues,³⁴ Ukraine was often seen in New Zealand as simply one part of the enormous Soviet political empire located somewhere in the east of Europe. Furthermore, by 1989, 18.9% of Ukraine's titular nationals (ethnic Ukrainians of the USSR) regarded Russian as their native language, making the Ukrainian Republic the second most Russified after Belarus.³⁵ No wonder that singling Ukraine out of the Russian shadow was almost an impossible task for outsiders, including New Zealanders.

In addition to the conceptual confusion, some researchers have noted a negative attitude in New Zealand society towards everything Russian, as evidenced in omnipresent Russophobia and its 'far less prevalent'³⁶ version Sovietophobia. Anthony Wilson explains Russophobia as a social reflection of 'the general Victorian dislike of [Russian] tsarist rule' brought to New Zealand by British colonists in the form of the 'anti-Russian sentiments they had felt at

³² Alexander Motyl and Bohdan Krawchenko, 'Ukraine: From Empire to Statehood', in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, I.A. Bremmer and R. Taras (eds), (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 235-275.

³³ Sarah Birch, 'In the Shadow of Moscow: Ukraine, Moldova and the Baltic Republic', in S. White, J. Batt, and P.G. Lewis (eds), *Developments in Central and East European Politics 2*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 59-80.

³⁴ Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 309-310.

³⁵ *Library of Congress Country Studies Online*, <[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+su0095\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+su0095))> and <[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+su0096\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+su0096))> [accessed 14 June 2006].

³⁶ Anthony Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union, 1950-1991: A Brittle Relationship* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with the NZ Institute of International Affairs, 2004), 189.

home'.³⁷ Arguably, this negative attitude towards Russia in the New Zealand psyche was projected on to other nations within the USSR, generically treated as Russians. Ukraine, as one of the closest neighbours of the Russian Federation, became guilty by association and inherited a significant amount of that negativity in the opinion of the average New Zealander.

The application of this overgeneralized Russian identity to all the republics constituting the USSR and thus obscuring the presence of many other nations and ethnic groups, is not unique to New Zealand only – it was (and remains) typical in the wider English-speaking world. Accordingly, the Ukrainian nation, like other USSR nations, was sloppily labelled as 'Russian' for decades and this has led to a profound terminological confusion in relevant New Zealand literature.³⁸ Wilson, for instance, while analysing facts related entirely to the former USSR as a whole, used phrases such as 'wartime supporters of Russia',³⁹ 'the Russian "image" of New Zealand',⁴⁰ and many other phrases where, for no scientific reason, the words 'Russia' and 'Russian' were used as synonyms for 'the Soviet Union' or 'the USSR'. John Goodliffe went even further, calling the USSR 'Stalin's Russia'.⁴¹ Adding to the confusion, Barry Gustafson wrote: 'Three times as many Russians were killed in the siege of Stalingrad alone than America's total losses'.⁴² Despite the fact that the Russian Federation was the largest and, without doubt, the most powerful republic in the former Soviet Union, fourteen other titular members comprised the USSR, and to uniformly refer to them as 'Russia' was and is incorrect.

³⁷ Anthony Wilson, 'Defining the "Red Menace": "Russophobia" and NZ-Russian Relations from the Tsars to Stalin', in A. Trapeznik and A. Fox (eds), *Lenin's Legacy Down Under: NZ's Cold War* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004), 93-114.

³⁸ The name 'Russia' should be used to refer to the Tsarist Russian Empire, the post-1917 Russian Republic, or the post-1922 Russian Federation only.

³⁹ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 18.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 49.

⁴¹ John Goodliffe, 'NZ Through Some Soviet Eyes During the Cold War', in Trapeznik and Fox, 153-168.

⁴² Barry Gustafson, 'NZ in the Cold War World', in Trapeznik and Fox, 17-33.

Missed chances in communication

The course of history in the twentieth century offered to both New Zealand and Ukraine several chances for closer co-operation on the international stage, and yet, those opportunities have never been fully realized. In 1945, the two countries became inaugural members of the United Nations. Ukraine's admission to the UN was 'sponsored' by the USSR⁴³ and reflected its important geopolitical role in the Union. The possibility of Ukraine's admission to the 'future League of Nations' was predicted by New Zealand diplomacy in 1944,⁴⁴ and, by 1945, the international status of Ukraine was changed 'under international law, from a Soviet province to an at least nominally sovereign entity'.⁴⁵ New Zealand and Ukraine, although serving on the UN Security Council as non-permanent members for three terms each, have never sat on the Council at the same time: Ukraine served in 1948-1949, 1984-1985, and 2000-2001; New Zealand in 1954-1955, 1966, and 1993-1994.⁴⁶

Later, in 1989, some scholars began to note signs that the USSR was 'inevitably going to collapse, peacefully or violently',⁴⁷ and Ukraine was specifically singled out in this context. Zbigniew Brzezinski identified the national problem of the Ukrainian people as 'the Soviet Union's crisis of survival'.⁴⁸ The Ukrainian 'massive endorsement of independence' was noticed in New Zealand too.⁴⁹ After Ukraine had proclaimed its independence in 1991, in March 1992 New Zealand cross-accredited its Ambassador to the five newly independent states of the former USSR – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus,

⁴³ Yaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine After World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 1.

⁴⁴ Costello, 82.

⁴⁵ Prizel, 341.

⁴⁶ Information obtained from the following UN-related online sources: <<http://www.un.org/Overview/unmember.html>> [accessed 23 June 2005], <<http://nzmissionny.org/firmstaff.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2005] and <<http://www.un.int/ukraine/Ukr-UN/SecCoun/seccoun.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2005].

⁴⁷ Patrick Brogan, *Eastern Europe 1939-1989: The Fifty Years War* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990), 258.

⁴⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1989), 98.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 185.

Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.⁵⁰ For the first time in history, New Zealand officially recognized Ukraine as a sovereign state, and New Zealand-Ukraine diplomatic relations were launched.

However, after the initial collapse of the USSR, New Zealand business circles did not return to the Ukrainian sector of the former Soviet market. The same was true of independent Ukraine, which failed to reach New Zealand economically. This occurred partly because Ukraine had chosen a path of slow economic and market reforms, which did not provide immediate positive results.⁵¹ Such a path decreased the purchasing ability of Ukrainian consumers many of whom might have been potentially interested in buying high quality products like those supplied by New Zealand. In 1991, an economic study intended to lighten Ukraine's coefficients of potential integration in the economic structure of Europe, showed Ukraine taking first place with 83 points out of 100.⁵² According to the study, the Baltic States (the most recent newcomers to the EU) obtained only 77 points.⁵³ However, the chance of an economic breakthrough was missed in Ukraine – until 1999 Ukraine experienced little success in transforming its former Soviet-style economic relations into a modern market economy. Father O'Malley, a Catholic priest from Christchurch, lived in Ukraine for the year 1995 to 1996 and noticed difficulties and challenges in Ukrainian post-independence existence (e.g. mafia, power-cuts, and daily water rationing).⁵⁴

Another post-independence problem for Ukraine was its autocratic political regime which caused severe damage to the polity's international reputation. The 'new old' Ukrainian political elite, due to its Soviet-style methods of administration and obvious lack of democratic experience, demonstrated an inability to face the challenges of an emerging civil society. The first two Ukrainian Presidents, Kravchuk (presidency: 1991-1993) and particularly Kuchma (presidency: 1993-2004), were both faced with

⁵⁰ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 187.

⁵¹ Daniel Gross and Alfred Steinherr, *Economic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Planting the Seeds* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 105.

⁵² Motyl and Krawchenko, 246.

⁵³ Motyl and Krawchenko, 246.

⁵⁴ Miles O'Malley, interviewed by co-author, 31 August 2005.

accusations ‘of using state media to their advantage’.⁵⁵ The 2004 *Transparency International* ‘Corruption Perception Index’ placed Ukraine at 122 out of 146 countries, while New Zealand enjoyed second position after Finland.⁵⁶ The Fraser Institute’s⁵⁷ comprehensive *Economic Freedom of the World* annual report for 2003 tied New Zealand, the USA, and Switzerland at third place in the world, with a rating of 8.2 out of 10.0 for economic freedom.⁵⁸ The same document located Ukraine’s economic freedom index (5.5) at one hundred and third place, tied with Benin, Columbia, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mozambique, and Vietnam.⁵⁹ Such indicators have prevented any potentially large-scale business and political initiatives between New Zealand and Ukraine, and avenues for closer relations have remained unexplored.

What are the promises that may lead to closer dialogue between New Zealand and Ukraine?

This paper argues that a number of factors exist which may bring the interests of Ukraine and New Zealand into line: the common interest in the EU (albeit for different reasons); the sudden popular appeal of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution (regardless of its apparent failure to bring about a complete liberal revolution of Ukrainian politics); burgeoning diplomatic contacts; on-going public diplomacy; and emerging concrete promises of economic and international co-operation.

The EU as a matchmaker?

The prospect of EU membership for Ukraine is suggested as one of the leading factors likely to influence New Zealand’s relations with Ukraine. The

⁵⁵ Tor Bukkovol, *Ukraine and European Security* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), 24.

⁵⁶ ‘Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2004’, 20 October 2004, in *Transparency International Official Website*, <http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2004/2004.10.20.cpi.en.html> [accessed 21 October 2005].

⁵⁷ *Fraser Institute Official Website*, <www.fraserinstitute.ca> [accessed 12 September 2005].

⁵⁸ James D. Gwartney, Robert Lawson and Erik Gartzke, ‘Economic Freedom of the World: Annual Report’, 8 September 2005, in *Economic Freedom of the World Network*, <www.freetheworld.com/release> [accessed 12 September 2005].

⁵⁹ Gwartney, Lawson and Gartzke.

grounds for such a suggestion may be found in New Zealand's positive reaction to the fifth EU enlargement – also its largest and most controversial. In May 2004, ten new members joined the EU, eight of which were formerly communist states of Central-Eastern Europe. The New Zealand Government predicted that such a massive enlargement of 'the world's richest trading bloc' would have significant consequences for New Zealand's strategic interests in Europe in general and in the EU in particular.⁶⁰ The major concern of the New Zealand Government was that 'it would be harder to make New Zealand's voice heard' in the enlarged EU.⁶¹ To face this challenge, New Zealand worked hard by doing its 'homework' on these new member states and established a presence in the region.

For New Zealand diplomacy there was much to learn, because not only were eight out of the ten newcomers formerly members of the communist bloc, but four of the ten were Slavic states, namely the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Furthermore, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, all predominantly Slavic states are among the next contenders for membership, and their chances of success are reasonably high. To some extent, their campaign for integration into the EU has been an inspiration to Ukraine, their large Slavic neighbour to the east.

In conducting its investigations, the New Zealand Government chose Poland, which now 'exerted an influence on the EU's foreign policy',⁶² as the main point of New Zealand interests in the region, despite the fact that the Polish economy, although now in the EU, still remains 'to some extent locked into trade relationships with Belarus, Ukraine [...] and Russia'.⁶³ Visiting Poland in April 2004, Prime Minister Helen Clark described Warsaw as a 'key

⁶⁰ Phil Goff, 'Statement on the Enlargement of the EU', presented 1 May 2004 in 'Goff Welcomes Enlargement of EU'. *Official Website of the NZ Government*, <<http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=19621>> [accessed 5 May 2006].

⁶¹ Goff, 'Annual Europa Lecture'.

⁶² Lech Mastalerz, 'Poland in the European Union: Experiences of the First Year of Membership', presented 20 May 2005, the National Centre for Research on Europe Round Table, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, NZ.

⁶³ Remy Davison, 'An Ever Closer Union? Rethinking European Peripheries', in P. Murray and L. Holmes (eds.), *Europe: Rethinking the Boundaries*, (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, USA: Ashgate, 1998), 63-91.

European capital' where New Zealand would have a voice through its Embassy.⁶⁴ Arguably, the diplomatic mission in Poland, Ukraine's long-term key partner in the region, gives New Zealand a unique geopolitical opportunity to understand Ukraine while considering perspectives complementary to a Moscow view.⁶⁵

Ukraine's move to independence in 1991 did not automatically put Ukraine on the EU's list of accession priorities. During the 1990s, Ukraine's prospects for entering the EU seemed unlikely. The authoritarian image of the country's political elites led one scholar to describe Ukraine, along with the Russian Federation, as one of 'the major countries *outside* the circle of prospective members [emphasis added]'.⁶⁶ Additionally, the then Head of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, pessimistically stated, not without irony, that Ukraine 'was [as] likely as New Zealand to become an EU member'.⁶⁷ Yet, it was noted that 'if Ukraine had been as successful in reforms as Poland (which would have been difficult, but not impossible), it would probably now be a [EU] member of the first wave'.⁶⁸

However, Ukraine did not completely vanish from the EU's radar in the early years of independence. A set of actions was implemented by the EU towards Ukraine in the mid 1990s, under the auspices of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between Ukraine and the EU (1994), Ukraine's membership at the Council of Europe (1995), the EU Action Plan towards Ukraine (1996), and The European Common Strategy on Ukraine (1998). The

⁶⁴ Helen Clark, 'Address at State Luncheon in Poland', 21 April 2005. *Official Website of the NZ Government*, <<http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument>> [accessed 5 May 2006].

⁶⁵ Poland was the first country to recognize its immediate eastern neighbour's independence in 1991, mentioned by Daniel Vernet, 'Verdun de l'Est', *Le Monde*, 28 June 2005, in *Le Monde Official Website*, <<http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/html>> [accessed 28 June 2005].

⁶⁶ Derek Averre and Andrew Cottey, 'Introduction: Thinking About Security in Postcommunist Europe', in A. Cottey and D. Averre, eds., *New Security Challenges in Postcommunist Europe: Securing Europe's East* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 1-25.

⁶⁷ Catherine Field, 'Brussels Walks Tightrope with Russia over Ukraine', *NZ Herald*, 16 December 2004, <<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/story.cfm>> [accessed 18 July 2005].

⁶⁸ Gross and Steinherr, 275.

2001 EU Summit in Göteborg extended an invitation of participation to Ukraine,⁶⁹ and the EU's attention to Ukraine became particularly acute in May 2004, when the enlarged EU stretched its borders to Ukraine's frontiers.

The chances of Ukraine's joining the community of the EU advanced significantly after the Orange Revolution, discussed at length subsequently, and Ukraine has officially announced that EU membership is the country's ultimate goal. Visiting the European Parliament (EP) in February 2005, President Yushchenko noted: 'I consider EU membership to be a just reward for the work we have already undertaken to bring about democratic changes in Ukraine'.⁷⁰ He also stated that 'I would like to see my country join the EU within four to seven years of starting accession negotiations which I hope will be by 2007'.⁷¹

Encouragingly, there are some strong advocates within the EU for Ukraine's accession to the EU.⁷² Charles Tannock, a British Member of the EP, noted: 'The promised EU assistance [to Ukraine] must also involve market economy status being granted by the Commission (something Russia was granted for political reasons in 2002)'.⁷³ However, despite announcing its intention to recognize Ukraine as a market economy,⁷⁴ the EU remains extremely cautious towards the country's EU-related aspirations. The Union is 'keen to ensure that Yushchenko's election [in 2005] is a breakthrough and not just 'a change of personnel' in an administration that used to be known as corrupt and non-democratic'.⁷⁵ Jan Marinus Wiersma, Deputy Socialist Group Leader in the EP, said: 'We believe that Ukraine has the right to apply for [EU]

⁶⁹ *UN Official Website*, <<http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2001/issue4/0104p66.html>> [accessed June 2005].

⁷⁰ Viktor Yushchenko, quoted by Martin Banks in 'Ukraine could join the EU by 2011, Says Yushchenko', *European Voice*, 24 February-2 March 2005, Vol. 11, Issue 7.

⁷¹ Yushchenko, quoted by Banks.

⁷² Milenko Petrovic, 'How Far and Soon to the East? The Prospects for Future EU Enlargement', in *Asia-Pacific Journal of EU Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 121-136.

⁷³ Charles Tannock, 'Ukraine Deserves to be Embraced', *European Voice*, 24 February-2 March, 2005, Vol. 11, Issue 7.

⁷⁴ 'Ukraine to Get EU Market-Economy Status', *International Herald Tribune*, 29 November 2005, <<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/11/29/business/hryvnia.php>> [accessed 5 May 2006].

⁷⁵ Andrew Beatty, 'EU Set to Grant Ukraine Market Economy Status', *European Voice*, 13-19 January 2005, Vol. 11, Issue 1.

membership but for such a request [to succeed], a lot has to change in Ukraine'.⁷⁶ Andrew Beatty, a journalist of the *Economist* and *European Voice*, expressed his opinion that Ukraine does not have to 'raise expectations about the prospect of [EU] membership too high', but 'just do the work and present it as a *fait accompli*'.⁷⁷

Some observers and officials cite the most recent developments in the EU (namely, the non-ratification of the EU constitution by France and the Netherlands, and the EU budget crisis of June 2005) as a period of 'paralysis and self-doubt'⁷⁸ – the 'reflection period' in Euro-speak⁷⁹ – that may become stumbling blocks on the way to further EU enlargement. However, others believe that the delay in ratifying the EU Constitution by all EU members does not necessarily mean the cancellation of further enlargement plans. Despite many challenges, the ongoing process of European integration still 'holds the promise of reuniting European cultural area on the foundation of political and economic pluralism'.⁸⁰ From this point of view, Ukraine's preparation for possible accession is not a road to a political *de facto* destination for Ukraine, but a period of time during which Ukraine will try to regain its strength and confidence, and become recognized as a truly European state not solely by virtue of its strategic location in Central-Eastern Europe.

It is argued in this study that Ukraine's political path towards EU membership brings the country closer, not only to its European 'home', but, paradoxically, to distant New Zealand. Firstly, political and civil values required of prospective members of the EU have traditionally characterized New Zealand civil society. Secondly, the EU's economic expertise, high standards, and volume of trade make the EU the second largest trading partner and the third largest investor in the New Zealand economy. A third party,

⁷⁶ Jan Marinus Wiersma, quoted by Martin Banks in 'Ukraine Could Join the EU by 2011'.

⁷⁷ Andrew Beatty, interviewed by co-author, 22 August 2005.

⁷⁸ Elaine Sciolino, 'European Union's Heated Budget Negotiations Collapse', *The New York Times*, 18 June 2005, A3.

⁷⁹ Lucia Kubosova, 'Brussels plans to boost EU press coverage', *EUOBSERVER*, 30 January 2006, <<http://euobserver.com/?aid>> [accessed 31 January 2006].

⁸⁰ Leonce Bekemans, 'Economics and the Comparative Study of European Societies', in L. Bekemans and R. Picht (eds), *European Societies: Between Diversity and Convergence* (Bruges: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes, 1993), 91-130.

successfully dealing with the ‘economic giant’ of the EU will, by association, have a good reputation with the New Zealand business community. Arguably, by closer association with the EU (and not necessarily just through membership of the Union), Ukraine becomes noticeably more visible and associated with New Zealand.

The appeal of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution

The second factor with potential to give a substantial boost to New Zealand-Ukraine relations is the outcome of Ukraine’s presidential elections of winter 2004-2005, namely, the broadening of democratization, crackdown on corruption, and economic restructuring. This event, known as the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, was led by a group of pro-Western Ukrainian politicians including Viktor Yushchenko, a presidential candidate, a former Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, and a former Prime Minister who ‘was generally credited for Ukraine’s economic recovery in 2000’⁸¹ and who was known as being ‘untouched by corruption’.⁸²

The Orange Revolution dramatically turned the world’s attention to Ukraine and accelerated the country’s chances of winning the battle against its communist past. *Time* magazine proclaimed Yushchenko as one of 2004’s noted personalities, describing him as a man ‘standing up to authoritarian powers with the help of demonstrations by supporters’.⁸³ Later, Chatham House awarded its inaugural 2005 Annual Prize to President Yushchenko, ‘in recognition of his contribution to the improvement of international relations and the considerable courage and skill he demonstrated in steering a peaceful process of political change in Ukraine’.⁸⁴ In addition, Yulia Tymoshenko, the charismatic leader of the pro-Western opposition and the first post-Orange

⁸¹ Paul J. Kubicek, ‘The European Union and Ukraine: Real Partners or Relationship of Convenience’, in P.J. Kubicek (ed.), *The European Union and Democratization* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 154.

⁸² David Cronin, ‘Orange Revolutionary: Viktor Yushchenko’, *European Voice*, 10-16 March 2005, Vol. 11, Issue 9.

⁸³ *Time*, ‘People Who Mattered 2004’, 27 December 2004-3 January 2005, 51-52.

⁸⁴ *The Chatham House Official Website*, <<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk>> [accessed 22 February 2006].

Revolution Prime Minister of Ukraine, was acknowledged by *Forbes* magazine as one of the top three most powerful women in the world in 2005.⁸⁵

Through the window of the Orange Revolution, Western-style democracies, including New Zealand, were able to see a new civil society emerging in the Central-Eastern region of Europe and actively react to the dramatic events in Ukraine. Undeniably, the Orange Revolution has raised Ukraine's profile among the New Zealand public and decision-makers alike. The country's media presented extensive coverage of the event, reflecting New Zealand's interest in the outcome of the contested Ukrainian presidential election campaign. Leading New Zealand metropolitan dailies as well as other smaller newspapers kept their readers well-informed about the situation in Ukraine during November-December 2004. The dramatic events drew New Zealanders' intense interest to a country that had seemed so politically remote before 'the highly sophisticated Orange Revolution' appeared 'on the streets of the Ukrainian capital'.⁸⁶

The New Zealand media took this opportunity to introduce Ukraine to its audience in relative detail. Before the conclusion of the Orange Revolution became clear, *The Press* reported that Ivan Shevchuk, a Christchurch resident of Ukrainian origin, was 'urging the New Zealand Government to speak out' regarding the situation in Ukraine.⁸⁷ Mr. Shevchuk stated through the newspaper that 'New Zealand's reaction to the [Ukrainian] civil uprising for democracy was weak compared with other international democracies, which had issued statements of concern'.⁸⁸ In response, the newspaper quoted a spokesman for Phil Goff, New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as saying that 'although the Government had not issued a statement, it was extremely concerned about the situation in Ukraine'.⁸⁹

On 5 December 2004, at the peak of the Orange Revolution, the Supreme Court of Ukraine ordered a re-run of the disputed presidential elections. The *Sunday Star Times*, one of New Zealand's leading weekend newspapers,

⁸⁵ *Forbes*, <<http://www.forbes.com/lists/2005/11/PGEZ.html>> [3 October 2005].

⁸⁶ Chris Trotter, 'Putin Won't Let Ukraine Go', *Daily News*, 31 December 2004, edn 1, 4.

⁸⁷ 'Ukrainian Asks NZ to Speak Out', *The Press*, 26 November 2004, edn 1, 4.

⁸⁸ 'Ukrainian Asks NZ to Speak Out'.

⁸⁹ 'Ukrainian Asks NZ to Speak Out'.

described this decision as ‘a resounding victory for the country’s opposition’.⁹⁰ The newspaper quoted Yushchenko as saying that ‘justice and freedom are coming back to Ukraine’.⁹¹ New Zealanders of Ukrainian descent and their friends of other nationalities expressed their full support for the pro-democratic movement in Ukraine through the media. Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler and Alex Melnychuk organised two mini-demonstrations of Orange Revolution supporters in New Zealand. Forty-six people turned out in Auckland and Christchurch, carrying New Zealand and Ukrainian flags as well as some of the main slogans of the Orange Revolution.⁹²

Undeniably, the Orange Revolution is receding in history. With some recent developments and potential setbacks for the fledgling Ukrainian democracy (the *Financial Times* for example, already declaring the ‘failure of the Orange Revolution’),⁹³ one may argue that the bright and positive memories of this event may fade in the Western psyche in general, and in New Zealand in particular. Another realism-driven argument claims that all progressive changes brought by the Orange Revolution (namely, freedom of press, free elections, and democracy) will need time to mature to have a significant impact on the long-term image of Ukraine abroad. Nevertheless, the massive media exposure of New Zealand society to the events of the Orange Revolution in December 2004-January 2005 did leave a deep imprint on the New Zealand public image of Ukraine as a promising European democracy. Ukraine’s on-going economic reforms and other social developments continue to be portrayed in the New Zealand media regularly and in detail. Arguably, Ukraine is becoming more transparent and, thus, more familiar to New Zealanders. The events of the Orange Revolution have irrevocably put Ukraine on New Zealand’s political map of the world.

⁹⁰ ‘Court Orders New Elections in Ukraine’, *Sunday Star Times*, 5 December 2004, edn. A, 23.

⁹¹ ‘Court Orders New Elections in Ukraine’.

⁹² Alex Melnychuk, interviewed by co-author, 24 August 2005.

⁹³ Anatol Lieven, ‘Failure of the Orange Revolution is a Historic Opportunity’, *The Financial Times*, 25 July 2006, <<http://www.ft.com/cms/.html>> [accessed 26 July 2006].

Burgeoning diplomatic ties

Official sources have documented the development of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Ukraine firstly in the context of New Zealand's interactions with the USSR. After World War II, the USSR became one of New Zealand's main trading partners, and by the end of 1954 occupied seventh place among all importers of New Zealand-produced goods.⁹⁴ In addition, the USSR valued New Zealand's role as an international mediator in the conflict between the Soviet Union and Australia and its contribution to 'an attempt to restore normal relations' between the two states in 1955.⁹⁵ To capitalize on these positive developments, the New Zealand Prime Minister Walter Nash made New Zealand's first official visit to the USSR in 1960. This event occurred ten years after the first New Zealand Legation in Moscow was closed.⁹⁶

When travelling across the USSR, Mr. Nash visited Ukraine where he met Ukrainian leaders and ministers of the Ukrainian Government.⁹⁷ *The Press* in New Zealand reported that Mr. Nash was welcomed to Ukraine by Nykyfor Kalchenko, the Ukrainian Prime Minister.⁹⁸ The Head of the New Zealand Government had a sight-seeing tour in Kyiv, laid a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Park of Eternal Glory, and later visited collective farms in the Kyiv region.⁹⁹ The Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* quoted Mr. Nash, in Kyiv, sharing his impressions of 'friendship', 'courtesy', and 'hospitality' demonstrated by 'local people' towards him.¹⁰⁰ This was the first and only visit to Ukraine by a New Zealand prime minister.

Later, in April 1973, New Zealand re-established its diplomatic mission in Moscow.¹⁰¹ Recognizing Ukraine's important role in the Soviet Union, New Zealand's Ambassador to the USSR Brian Lendrum went to Ukraine in 1974,

⁹⁴ Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia*, 144.

⁹⁵ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 31.

⁹⁶ Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia*, 94.

⁹⁷ Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia*, 139.

⁹⁸ 'Nash Leaves Kiev for Leningrad', *The Press*, 23 April 1960, 13.

⁹⁹ 'Nash Leaves Kiev for Leningrad'.

¹⁰⁰ *Izvestiia*, April 1960 as quoted in V. Oltarzhevskii (ed.), *Rossii i Novaia Zelandiia: 50 let diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii: Sbornik dokumentov* (Irkutsk: Izd-vo Irkutskogo Universiteta, 1995), 98.

¹⁰¹ Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia*, 178.

visiting Simferopol, Yalta, Odesa, and Kyiv. The current diplomatic *status quo* is that the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow is cross-credited to Ukraine, and Ukrainian interests in New Zealand are represented by the Ukrainian Embassy in Australia.

New Zealand political elites are increasingly identifying Ukraine as a sovereign nation. One sign of this recognition was a reference made to Ukraine by Phil Goff, former New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in his Europa Lecture delivered in Christchurch on 9 May 2005.¹⁰² Further proof that the two countries are ready for a more intense dialogue can be found in an official visit to Ukraine by Winston Peters, in April 2006, the first New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit independent Ukraine and meet the Ukrainian President.¹⁰³ During the visit the two parties agreed that New Zealand and Ukraine ‘should accelerate their political dialogue and economic co-operation and forge closer business and investment ties’.¹⁰⁴ A prominent milestone in the relationship was the signing of a co-operation agreement ‘to carry out projects in fishery, agriculture, environmental protection, and Antarctic research’.¹⁰⁵ By choosing Kyiv as his destination in a two-week journey across the European continent, Mr. Peters, it was stated, wanted to stress ‘New Zealand’s awakened interest in Ukraine’.¹⁰⁶

New prospects of economic and international co-operation

Relevant research has shown that ideas of the EU related to trade, the economy and agriculture are among the dominant public images of the EU in New Zealand.¹⁰⁷ Predictably, both New Zealand society and its elites would

¹⁰² Goff, ‘Europa Lecture’.

¹⁰³ ‘President Meets Winston Peters’, 20 April 2006, *Official Website of the President of Ukraine*, <<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/data/.html>> [accessed 21 April 2006].

¹⁰⁴ ‘President Meets Winston Peters’.

¹⁰⁵ ‘President Meets Winston Peters’.

¹⁰⁶ ‘President Meets Winston Peters’. See also ‘Foreign Minister Heading to Europe’, 13 April 2006, *Official Website of the NZ Government*, <<http://www.beehive.govt.nz>> [accessed 23 July 2006].

¹⁰⁷ Natalia Chaban, ‘The EU Portraits in NZ News Media: Media Contributions to Public Opinion Formation’, in *Asia-Pacific Journal of EU Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003): 179-203.

prefer to see a 'European' Ukraine primarily as a potential trading partner and reliable destination for New Zealand exports.

This study discovered that it was almost impossible to assess the figures for New Zealand-Ukraine economic interaction during the Soviet period. No exact statistics exist that allow a valid conclusion to be made regarding the volume of New Zealand trade with Ukraine as one of the republics of the former USSR. Nevertheless, it is known and recorded that New Zealand wool was one of the major New Zealand commodities exported to the USSR. According to Gustafson, in 1979 the USSR became the world's top consumer of New Zealand wool.¹⁰⁸ In 1980, John Henderson, a Christchurch-based businessman, had a business-trip to Ukraine during which he noted that Ukrainian enterprises were among the main consumers of New Zealand wool.¹⁰⁹

In the first years of independence, however, Ukraine was severely affected by an economic crisis. As a result, the country slowly lost much of its attraction to both former and future trading partners, including New Zealand. A brief comparative analysis of Ukraine-related macroeconomic estimates¹¹⁰ showed that the first sign of per capita GDP growth in Ukraine since 1991 had appeared only in 1998.¹¹¹ As a result of economic stagnation in the early 1990s, trade interaction between Ukraine and New Zealand could be described as chaotic, with both sides having to develop their current economic relations almost from 'scratch'.¹¹² On the macroeconomic level, the New Zealand-Ukraine trading relationship was described by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as 'relatively slight'.¹¹³ Ukraine, for example, was ranked only 136th on New Zealand's list of trading partners after 2004.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Barry Gustafson, *NZ International Review*, January-February 1980, as quoted in Oltarzhevskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Novaia Zelandiia*, 212.

¹⁰⁹ John Henderson, interviewed by co-author, 22 August 2005.

¹¹⁰ Agnus Maddison, *The World Economy: Historical Statistics* (Paris, Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003).

¹¹¹ The estimates use 1990 international Geary-Khamis dollars (IGHD) as a generic quasi-currency for all countries.

¹¹² *Statistics NZ*, <www.stats.gov.nz> [accessed 2 October 2005], 'table builder' service.

¹¹³ Deighton Conder, interviewed by co-author, 22 June 2005.

¹¹⁴ Conder.

By July 2004, though, Ukraine's economy was experiencing the highest GDP growth since the Soviet period. The *New Zealand Herald* reported that Ukraine's stock market, gaining 57%, became Europe's best performer in 2004.¹¹⁵ International experts noticed that the remarkable 2004 growth of 12% was a result of 'strong domestic demand, low inflation, and solid consumer and investor confidence'.¹¹⁶ Arguably, this positive expert evaluation provided the first encouraging sign to New Zealand business to consider Ukraine as a serious potential partner.

As a member of the WTO, New Zealand builds its economic relations with other members on the basis of the rules of the WTO.¹¹⁷ The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has confirmed that New Zealand and Ukraine have already concluded 'a bilateral agreement on goods access', and this legal document 'will come into effect once it [Ukraine] is a member' of the WTO.¹¹⁸ But even before Ukraine becomes a member of the world's trading community, there are strong possibilities for several economic projects between the two countries, all of which were largely instigated by the visit to Ukraine by the New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2006: namely, co-operation in the areas of satellites and aircraft building, informational technologies, fisheries, and agriculture. The rationale for New Zealand economic contacts with Ukraine is even more meaningful in the context of New Zealand's active involvement with the rapidly growing Eastern European economies. For example, *Fonterra*, New Zealand's largest enterprise, has already begun to 'eye up' several key players in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, with a view to establishing an integrated strategy for the region.¹¹⁹

A promising point of future contact for New Zealand and Ukraine is their comprehensive activities in Antarctica. Both countries have sizable scientific year-round bases on the White Continent. New Zealand's *Scott Base* was opened in 1957, and the Ukrainian *Akademik Vernadsky Base* was opened in

¹¹⁵ 'Ukraine Top Stock Market in Europe', *New Zealand Herald*, 6 July 2004.

¹¹⁶ *The CIA World Fact Book Online*, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/up.html>> [accessed 27 September 2005].

¹¹⁷ Conder.

¹¹⁸ Conder.

¹¹⁹ 'Fonterra Strategy'. *Fonterra Official Website*, <<http://www.fonterra.com/content/aboutfonterra/strategy/popup7.jsp>> [accessed 5 July 2006].

1996.¹²⁰ However, as noted by Neil Gilbert, Environmental Manager of *Antarctica New Zealand*, New Zealand has no history of ‘collaboration with Ukraine on Antarctic matters, either logistically or scientifically’, and ‘no Ukrainian scientists have ever participated in New Zealand’s programme’.¹²¹ At the same time, Serhiy Bilohub, Charge d’Affaires at the Embassy of Ukraine in Australia, made specific note of the fact that New Zealand supported Ukraine’s request to become a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty during the 27th Consultative Meeting of the Treaty Signatories in 2004 in Cape Town.¹²² The Ukrainian diplomat underlined that ‘Ukraine would appreciate New Zealand’s further support to the Ukrainian side within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty’.¹²³ Furthermore, as was confirmed by Mr. Gilbert, some noticeable moves towards co-operation are likely to be made during the 31st Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting that is scheduled to take place in Kyiv in 2008.¹²⁴

On-going public diplomacy

Never extensive, but, at the same time, never ceasing, the cultural and social links between New Zealand and Ukraine are another indication that this area of the relationship has a future. The first and only visit to Ukraine by a New Zealand Prime Minister in 1960 facilitated some cultural links.¹²⁵ In June 1964, the Auckland branch of the New Zealand-USSR Society commemorated the centenary of the death of Taras Shevchenko.¹²⁶ Also, public diplomacy efforts featured some charity initiatives (‘Operation Cover Up’ programme to

¹²⁰ See the *Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs’ Official Website*, <www.comnap.aq> [accessed 26 June 2005].

¹²¹ Neil Gilbert, interviewed by co-author, 14 July 2005.

¹²² Serhiy Bilohub, interviewed by co-author, 9 September 2005.

¹²³ Bilohub.

¹²⁴ Neil Gilbert, Conversation with co-author, 14 July 2006.

¹²⁵ Harold W. Rhodes, *NZ and the Soviet Union: An Historical Account of the NZ-USSR Society* (Auckland: NZ-USSR Society, 1979), 61-62.

¹²⁶ Rhodes, 84. However, Taras Shevchenko died in March 1861, and there is some question regarding the date of the event in Auckland.

help orphanages in Ukraine in the early 2000s).¹²⁷ Currently, high schools in Christchurch and Kharkiv are considering establishing contacts.¹²⁸

In addition, there have been signs of growing public interest in travelling to Ukraine. For example, in the second half of 2004, sixteen people went to Ukraine through *Beyond Tours Ltd*, an Auckland-based business, and that number grew to thirty-eight in the subsequent seven months.¹²⁹ Quoting Grant Browne, Statistics New Zealand, for the year July 2004-June 2005, the ‘number of New Zealand resident departures who stated their country of main destination as Ukraine was 335 people. This compares to the total New Zealand resident departures for the same period of 1,806,289 people’.¹³⁰

Thus, while there have been extended periods of political and economic stagnation in New Zealand-Ukraine relations (occurring either during Soviet times or during the first years of Ukraine’s independence), this paper argues that some efforts have been undertaken by public diplomats and non-governmental institutions in both countries to enliven their bilateral interactions, and that additionally, there are a several indications that personal, cultural, and educational links are beginning to be formed between Ukraine and New Zealand.

Discussion: Ways to Improve New Zealand-Ukraine Contacts

When dealing with the former USSR, New Zealand has always been driven by ‘hard-headed commercial advantage’.¹³¹ In the contemporary environment, in which the communism vs. capitalism clashes are now history, the Pacific country has been quick to express its interest in Eastern and Central European states, the newcomers to the EU. This suggests the possibility and even necessity of taking a closer look at one of the EU’s largest neighbours to the east, Ukraine. With a population of 46,725,693 people¹³² and territory of more than 603,000 square kilometres, reforming Ukraine has the potential to

¹²⁷ ‘Knitting for the Needy’, *Kaikoura Star*, 12 August 2004 and *The Timaru Herald*, edn 2, 17 March 2005, 3.

¹²⁸ David Adamson, e-mail to Vlad Vernygora, 20 September 2005.

¹²⁹ Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler, e-mail to Vlad Vernygora, 5 August 2005.

¹³⁰ Grant Browne, interviewed by co-author, 8 August 2005.

¹³¹ Wilson, *NZ and the Soviet Union*, 14.

¹³² *State Statistics Committee of Ukraine Online Database*, <<http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua>> [accessed 16 November 2006].

become one of the world's largest single markets. Equally, eager to be a visible player on the international stage, Ukraine could benefit from extending its circle of interactions worldwide. This may include activating its contacts with distant New Zealand, a prosperous democratic state in the South Pacific.

This paper has claimed that among past impediments obstructing more efficient linkages between New Zealand and Ukraine have been patchy contacts between the two nations, Ukraine's association with the Soviet Union resulting in New Zealand's confused perceptions of Ukraine, and missed chances for more productive ties on both sides. Encouragingly, there are now signs that these obstacles on the path towards a New Zealand-Ukraine dialogue are no longer dominant.

Firstly, New Zealand's recent immigration profile features an increase in the number of migrants from Ukraine: by 2001, there were 840 Ukraine-born people living in New Zealand.¹³³ There is a Ukrainian community association in Auckland as well as a small Wellington-based club.¹³⁴ Additionally, in July 2005, the Office of Ethnic Affairs (of the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs) published a booklet entitled *Portraits: Youth* with photographs of over twenty young people of different ethnicity 'to show the diversity in our country [New Zealand] and demonstrate the variety of ways ethnic youth contribute to New Zealand society'.¹³⁵ For the first time, Ukraine was featured in such a publication. It was represented by a Ukrainian migrant, a Kharkiv-born student of the University of Canterbury, Anton Suslov.

Secondly, there is now a positive indication that Ukraine has begun to move away from its corrupt past. The latest *Transparency International* Corruption Perception Index ranked Ukraine at 99 of 163 nations (with New Zealand, Finland and Iceland occupying joint first place). This ranking can be considered a slight improvement when compared with Ukraine's ranking of 122 in the 2004 Index.¹³⁶ Moreover, the Orange Revolution has resulted in the

¹³³ 'Russian, Ukrainians and Baltic Peoples'.

¹³⁴ 'Russian, Ukrainians and Baltic Peoples'.

¹³⁵ Cecilia Guridi, 'Informative letter' (generic printout) of the Office of Ethnic Affairs', July 2005, and *Portraits Youth* (concept and editorial: Office of Ethnic Affairs, Department of Internal Affairs, 2005).

¹³⁶ 'Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2005', 18 October 2005. *Transparency International Official Website*, <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006> [accessed 6 November 2006].

democratization of Ukrainian civil society and in ongoing economic growth – in January-September 2006; the real GDP in Ukraine was 106.2% if compared with the relevant period of the last year.¹³⁷

Thirdly, after the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine is becoming increasingly visible on the world's political stage. While the inaccurate over-generalized terms 'Russia' and 'Russian' are still often applied when identifying Ukraine in New Zealand public discourse, this notion, typical of the West, is slowly being ousted by Ukraine's changing international image. This shift in identification has been largely shaped by the outcomes of the Orange Revolution. However, in addition to the publicity and attention generated by the Revolution, in a world dominated by mass media and entertainment, Ukrainian celebrities claim more and more international fame. The country's win at the notorious Eurovision Song Contest (2005) and the European Footballer of the Year Award (2004) awarded to Andriy Shevchenko, for example, were both reported in the New Zealand media. Additionally, the Ukrainian soccer team's successes during the FIFA 2006 World Cup in Germany were widely broadcast on New Zealand national television and were instrumental in distinguishing Ukraine as an independent state.

This paper also argues that a set of factors have served as a counterbalance to the obstacles to more fruitful Ukraine-New Zealand relations. Those constructive factors are the shared interest of Ukraine and New Zealand in the EU, albeit due to different reasons; a surge in New Zealand's attention towards Ukraine in the context of the Orange Revolution; growing diplomatic ties and on-going public diplomacy; and, finally, tangible perspectives of economic and international collaboration in the future. Yet, there are some indications of hidden dangers threatening these promising developments.

One major obstacle to a more successful and frequent dialogue at a diplomatic level is the heavy workload of the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow. The diplomatic mission, in addition to covering the Russian Federation, is cross-credited not only to Ukraine, but also officially covers former USSR republics (now independent states) such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As well as these six countries, the

¹³⁷ *State Statistics Committee of Ukraine Online Database*, <<http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua>> [accessed 20 July 2006].

New Zealand Consulate in Moscow serves six other former Soviet states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan. As was stated by Stuart Prior, a former New Zealand Ambassador to Moscow, the Embassy’s staff ‘visit Kyiv on a reasonably regular basis to discuss issues of common interest’.¹³⁸ Mr. Prior described Ukraine as a ‘fascinating’ place, yet added that the Embassy’s resources are too limited to pay extensive attention to Ukraine in particular.¹³⁹ However, Mr. Prior stated that New Zealand diplomats are ‘doing their best in Ukraine’.¹⁴⁰

Christopher Elder, the current New Zealand Ambassador cross-credited to Ukraine,¹⁴¹ rated the state of the relationship between the two countries as ‘improving’. He noted that ‘the main barrier to carrying the relationship forward seems [...] to be a lack of knowledge on both sides’.¹⁴² Mr. Elder added that ‘many New Zealand companies are not aware of the promise of the Ukrainian market’, alluding this to ‘a sense of political risk which is perhaps exaggerated because of lack of a full understanding and up-to-date information’.¹⁴³

In June 2005, Deighton Conder, Policy Officer of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, described New Zealand-Ukraine relations as being only ‘in an early stage of development’.¹⁴⁴ A year later, in July 2006, Koro Dickinson, Policy Officer of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, suggested that ‘the thin bilateral relations that exist between our two countries’ can be treated as an ‘impediment to greater engagement and co-operation’.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Mr. Dickinson stated that ‘the relationship [between New Zealand and Ukraine] has not yet had a chance to

¹³⁸ Stuart Prior, in lecture ‘Russia Today: First Class Is Non-Refundable’, 3 August, 2005, University of Canterbury Staff Club, Christchurch, NZ, co-author’s notes.

¹³⁹ Prior.

¹⁴⁰ Prior.

¹⁴¹ Ambassador Christopher Elder presented credentials to Ukrainian President on 29 May 2006. *Official Website of the President of Ukraine*, <<http://www.president.gov.ua>> [accessed 22 July 2006].

¹⁴² Christopher Elder, interviewed by co-author 4 July 2006.

¹⁴³ Elder.

¹⁴⁴ Conder.

¹⁴⁵ Koro Dickinson, interviewed by co-author, 11 July 2006.

reach its potential, largely due to the lack of awareness of what we can offer each other'.¹⁴⁶

Hamish Finlay, Second Secretary at the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow, expressed the Embassy's vision that Ukraine's 'primary focus will be on its aspirations in the EU and its relations with its neighbours'.¹⁴⁷ Giving his further prognosis, Mr. Finlay concluded that 'New Zealand would need to put considerable effort into gaining [Ukrainian] attention to New Zealand proposals for [its] developing relationship [with Ukraine]' as Ukraine's focus in the Asia-Pacific will be 'on the established economies of North Asia and the rising powers of China and India'.¹⁴⁸

As argued above, heightened New Zealand interest in the newly enlarged EU may prove instrumental in directing its attention to Ukraine, a possible future member of the EU and a current neighbour of the EU. Yet, Ukraine's efforts to integrate into the EU in the future will depend not only on its own virtues, but also on 'intra-EU politics, trans-Atlantic ties, and perceptions of Russia's future'.¹⁴⁹ At present, Ukraine remains a sensitive issue for Russia 'wounded by the loss of its superpower status'.¹⁵⁰ Ukraine's moves independent from and opposing Russia – namely its intention to join NATO and its aspirations to gain access to the EU – consistently cause negative reactions from official Russia. It is suggested that New Zealand's attitude towards Ukraine's possible integrative links with the EU might be influenced by a 'Russian' factor. As noted above, New Zealand has preserved significant economic ties with the Russian Federation even after the collapse of the USSR.

Arguably, the major challenge in promoting New Zealand-Ukraine relations is the need for New Zealand foreign policy to establish its own understanding of post-Soviet independent Ukraine as a European polity. This understanding should be different from New Zealand's vision of its relations with Poland (a state which is used by New Zealand as a hub to communicate with the EU's Eastern European newcomers) and Russia (New Zealand's long-

¹⁴⁶ Dickinson.

¹⁴⁷ Hamish Finlay, interviewed by co-author, 1 July 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Finlay.

¹⁴⁹ Steven J. Woehrel, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution and US Policy*, CRS Report for Congress, April 1 2005, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Field.

term trading partner). However, in the nearest future, New Zealand-Ukraine interactions will be inevitably influenced by New Zealand's experiences in dealing with those two important immediate neighbours of Ukraine.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper suggests a range of measures that can enliven the already existing dialogue. Arguably, the two states are capable of more vigorous exchanges in the educational, scientific, and social spheres, since 'people-to-people links are often keys in generating demand for governments to develop inter-country relations'.¹⁵¹ With an on-going public diplomacy that has survived ideological and economic differences between the two countries, this avenue of co-operation seems to be a necessary condition for the establishment of closer contacts in the shorter term.

New Zealand universities, for example, may gain from establishing links with the numerous Ukrainian universities and scientific institutions. For example, agreements between the Governments of France and New Zealand and Germany and New Zealand mean that students from France and Germany attending New Zealand universities for postgraduate study pay fees at the New Zealand domestic rate,¹⁵² in lieu of much higher international student fees. Another example of such co-operation could be New Zealand's agreement with China in February 2006 to boost collaboration on scientific and technological research in areas with significant economic potential.¹⁵³

More active student exchange programmes (on various levels, from high school to university) will also be mutually beneficial. In addition, as English becomes very popular in Ukraine, better access to New Zealand-located English-language schools for Ukrainian students would be advantageous for both sides, as would the establishment of a reciprocal working holiday scheme for young people, similar to those already existing between New Zealand and the USA, Canada, Chile, Uruguay, Norway, some Asian countries (such as Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand), and

¹⁵¹ Finlay.

¹⁵² *University of Canterbury Official Website*, <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/intstud/scholarships/french_german.shtml> [31 July 2006].

¹⁵³ *Official Website of the NZ Government*, <<http://www.beehive.govt.nz>> [31 July 2006].

most of the EU countries.¹⁵⁴ The adoption of such a scheme between Ukraine and New Zealand could significantly contribute to the process of enhancing contacts between the peoples of both countries.

Finally, to support the development of public diplomacy, a New Zealand-Ukraine official diplomatic agenda might consider a discussion at the highest government level about the cancellation of the Ukrainian visa requirement for New Zealand citizens entering Ukraine, giving them status similar to that enjoyed by the citizens of Andorra, Canada, Iceland, the EU, Norway, Japan, San Marino, Switzerland, the USA, and the Vatican.¹⁵⁵ The present regulations and the inconvenience of obtaining a Ukrainian visa are seen as the principal reason why New Zealanders do not consider visiting or returning to Ukraine.

The aim of this paper was to introduce the two countries to each other. It has outlined factors that can facilitate or inhibit a more active dialogue between Ukraine and New Zealand; it has also discussed emerging trends that might remove the hurdles to more efficient communication between the two countries, as well as identifying some possible setbacks in the development of their relationship. The paper has offered a set of concrete measures intended to facilitate public diplomacy initiatives, contingent upon a more prominent interaction between the two distant partners.

What does Ukraine represent to New Zealand now? What do Ukraine's major political developments mean to New Zealand? Only after definite answers to these questions are given will New Zealand elites be able to make fully-informed decisions about possible large-scale co-operation with Ukraine. Now that New Zealand is aware that the Orange Revolution has presented Ukraine to the world as a new European civil society, both countries are confronted with a unique opportunity to bring their two nations closer together, two nations previously separated by distance and political barriers. Despite similar political and economic goals – to prosper, to live in peace, and to support democratic order – New Zealand and Ukraine remain unsure about whether they should begin a relationship. The obvious question must be posed: 'Why?' and there is one clear answer: 'Because the two nations have never been properly introduced to each other'.

¹⁵⁴ *Immigration NZ Official Website*, <<http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/workingholiday>> [31 July 2006].

¹⁵⁵ Tarasyuk, Speech at the Press Conference marking Ukrainian Diplomacy Day.