National Identity, Public Rhetoric, and Post-Soviet Foreign Policy – Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova compared

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Erin E. Baumann,
PhD Candidate, University College Dublin
School of Politics & International Relations
erin.baumann@ucdconnect.ie
Abstract

The stance of most traditional International Relations literature on the foreign policies of weak states is that they are overwhelmingly motivated, if not controlled, by systemic factors. While some studies have successfully debunked this line of thinking with regards to democratic small states, little has been done to understand what motivates the foreign policies of non-liberal democratic weak states. The trio of former Soviet republics between the EU and Russia – Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova – are a good example of three such states. Existing literature on the domestic politics of these three states points to the undeniable importance of national identity (or the lack thereof) in their populations’ and their governments’ political behaviour. Yet, studies of their foreign policies have made scant mention of the matter. It is the aim of this paper to explain if a domestic factor, such as national identity, has importance beyond domestic politics and into the realm of foreign policy in a non-liberal democratic weak state, such as Belarus, Ukraine, or Moldova, or if public rhetoric for the sake of public approval is really the end of the line in its actual impact.

In the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 a great deal of scholarly attention was turned to understanding the various national identities in existence within the now independent 15 former Soviet republics (FSR). In particular, many of these early scholars sought to understand the roles national identity played in bringing about the demise of the USSR. In the twenty years since that time a rich body of literature – crossing multiple disciplines from sociology to linguistics to history to political science – has emerged around the general topic of post-Soviet national identities. Yet, research emerging from the fields of International Relations (IR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) has paid little attention to this matter.

While the importance of national identity in influencing and shaping the domestic politics of post-Soviet states has been highlighted by Charles King (2010), Ronald Hill (2009), and Timm Beichelt (2004) as well as many others, far less has been done to develop an understanding of the role this factor plays in the international politics and foreign policies of these states. In large part this dearth can be explained by looking at the normative roots of much of the research that does exist on the foreign policies, alliance formation, and international behaviour of the FSRs. The realist paradigm has been at the core of IR and FPA research on the post-Soviet space and its constituent states since the early 1990s. Within the body of research that has focused on the non-Russian FSRs – small as it may be – the realist tradition has proven even more salient. In line with the central tenets of realist theory primary importance in these studies
has been placed on understanding the role of systemic factors, such as balance of power, balance of threat, and systemically oriented factors, such as elite-level concerns for sovereignty and national security, and the influence they have exerted on FSRs, their populations, their leaders, and their policies. As such, domestic factors, such as national identity, have tended to become lost in the larger picture of post-Soviet foreign policy.

The importance of domestic factors including national identity in analyses of the foreign policy of non-Russian FSRs has been further eroded in the past by the fact that most, if not all of these states, could be classified as ‘weak’. Under the classic definition outlined by Barry Buzan (1991)¹ all of the Central Asian states as well as Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova easily qualify as ‘weak’ states – only the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can escape this qualification by much of any measure. Within the realist paradigm, however, weak states are generally considered less worthy of scholarly attention than the ‘great powers’ of the world – the states that are “the shapers of the international system” (Waltz, 1979). Yet, for those realist scholars who have studied weak states and their foreign policies or international behaviour in the past, the importance of systemic factors has been paramount and, as such, domestic factors have once again gone largely unaccounted for in analyses of post-Soviet foreign policy.

This gap in our collective knowledge only seems to be exacerbated when placed in the context of states, such as those of post-Soviet Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, where domestic factors, particularly national identity, have been highlighted as central to issues of national politics by research from outside IR and FPA. It is the aim of this study to bridge this divide in our understanding of both post-Soviet and weak state foreign policy by moving the analytical focus from the systemic level to the domestic level and examining the role of national identity in the foreign policies of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova since 1991. While filling such a gap is, in and of itself, useful to the larger scholarly efforts of

¹ Buzan’s (1991) defines ‘statehood’ as a triangle composed the three element, the ‘idea of the state’, the state’s ‘institutional expression’, and the ‘physical base’ of the state. According to this definition, if any of these elements are weakened or missing then state itself is weakened.
IR and FPA, it takes on even greater utility by concentrating on these three countries. Not only have each of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova taken very different paths in the general orientation of national foreign policy since 1991, despite being located in the same geopolitical region and being exposed to nearly systemic forces, but all three are located along a critical political, economic, and cultural fault-line in the modern international system. They are all, as John Mearsheimer stated in 2009, located in “the most critical [region]” to Europe’s “future security”.

**Drawing on Existing Knowledge**

This study builds upon existing work from IR and FPA as well as the work post-Soviet area studies specialists from a broad range of fields, including Comparative Politics, Sociology, and History. It draws on elements from each of these fields to formulate a central research question, which asks *has national identity been a salient factor in motivating or influencing the foreign policies of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova since 1991*, and to develop two hypotheses across which the answer to this question will be developed. According to these hypotheses:

(H1) When *one individual or one small, unified group* leads the foreign policy executive, national identity will have *low salience* in the foreign policy of the state.

(H2) When *two or more individuals or small, unified groups* lead the foreign policy executive, national identity will have *high salience* in the foreign policy of the state.

The assumption underlying these hypotheses is that a domestic factor, such as national identity, is more likely to be a direct motivation in or to have a significant amount of influence on a weak state’s foreign policy when the foreign policy executive (FPE) is less autocratic and its leaders are less likely to be primarily interested in the preservation of their own power (Lobell, 2009; Hill, 2003; David, 1991). The basis for this assumption can be found in neoclassical realism (Lobell, 2009), the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy analysis (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Halperin, 1974), and Steven David’s (1991) theory of omnibalancing. Specifically, it extrapolates from omnibalancing, as well as
Migdal’s (1972) work on the effects of government structure on international behaviour in weak states, the idea that in non-autocratic weak states leaders will be motivated less by the desire to preserve their own power and the security of the state and will, in turn, be more likely to be motivated by other existing factors, such as national identity.

**Methodology**

The aim of this study is to understand if national identity has been a motivation or an influence in the foreign policies of post-Soviet Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. While it is believed that this is a not only a worthy, but a necessary undertaking, this study will proceed towards this objective in full recognition of the difficulties it faces in doing so and it will attempt to mitigate their effects to the greatest extent possible. Two difficulties are of particular significance. The first is in the region and the countries on which this study focuses. As Charles King (2010) once noted, “[t]he rapidity of change in eastern Europe – has meant that speaking of a political scientist’s favourite subject of study – “outcomes” – is [an] inherently slippery [undertaking]” (97). The rapidity of change in governments and administrative personnel, the ambiguity and ‘flexibility’ in institutional structure, and the general incoherence in policy platforms in each of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova during the post-Soviet period not only makes examining any specific policy difficult, but it also means focusing an analysis on one particular policy action – as is generally the method used in studies such as these – would be of marginal utility. In order to overcome this the study presented here will focus on one specific relationship in each state that has central to its foreign policy throughout the post-Soviet period. The relationships chosen – Belarus and the Russian Federation (and the Union State), Ukraine and NATO, and Moldova and the European Union (EU) – were selected because not only was each a major foreign policy priority over the full period under examination, but each was the primary relationship through which each state pursued its either more generally pro-Western (balancing) or pro-Eastern (bandwagoning) foreign policy orientation. While Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova have all engaged in both pro-Western and pro-Eastern foreign policy at some point during the post-Soviet period, the general trend in the states’ policy
orientations has been different; with Belarus having been generally more pro-
Eastern and Ukraine and Moldova more pro-Western. In choosing such cases for
examination this study will be able to look at the foreign policies of these states
over a longer period, while still maintaining a necessary degree of specificity, and
thus draw more robust conclusions.

The second difficulty this study is faced with lies at its very core in its attempt to
examine and measure influence. Understanding, analysing, and ultimately
measuring influence is a notoriously difficult undertaking – primarily because
tangible or observable elements of influence are hard to come by. Yet, this study
has attempted to overcome this difficulty by utilising a two-layered research
approach. The first layer is a process tracing analysis of the each of the three
case study relationships – from the respective Belarusian, Ukrainian, and
Moldovan perspectives. The second layer is an interview analysis. While the
process tracing analysis will form the core of the study and will be the primary
research from which conclusions are drawn, the interview analysis will be used
to fill in critical details where materials were unavailable or where context was
necessary. It should also be noted that for the purpose of these analyses scope
conditions have been added to specify the time period under examination in
each case. In all three cases the start point for the analyses is 1991. In Belarus
the period of study extends through the end of President Lukashenka’s third
term in office – December 2010. In Ukraine the period extends from 1991
through the end of President Yushchenko’s term in February 2010 and in
Moldova it extends through the April 2009 parliamentary elections and the end
of the Communist party’s power in government.

This study will proceed in a manner consistent with the hypotheses being tested
and the cases being examined. First, the institutional structure of each of
Belarus’, Ukraine’s, and Moldova’s FPEs will be outlined and examined. In the
next section the national identity, or identities, and the issues surrounding and
defining it in each state will be briefly outlined and the role of national identity in
each of the case study relationships will be examined. Finally, the study will
close with a comparison of the results of these individual case analyses and it
will be determined if broader conclusions on national identity’s role in the foreign policy of weak states can be drawn from this work.

**Institutional Structure**

"Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North, 1990:3). During the Soviet era such institutions were organised and devised at the centre, in Moscow, and distributed outward to each of the Union’s fourteen other republics. This meant the institutions that arose in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR), and the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) during the Soviet era were not organically developed to suit the unique social, economic, or political needs of the peoples in these republics, but rather were imposed upon them and organised to serve the needs of a larger body. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and Belarus and Ukraine became independent states the leaders of both countries chose to largely maintain the political institutions they had been handed by their Soviet predecessors; whether those institutions matched with the ethos or political direction of the new state or not.

**Belarus**

**Formal Structure**

Between 1991 and 2008 the FPE of the Republic of Belarus formally operated under two distinct institutional structures - one that divided decision-making power equally between two seats of authority and the other that placed the power almost entirely in the hands of one individual. In the years immediately following the state's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union the Belarusian government officially operated under the standards and protocols adopted in the 1978 Constitution of the BSSR and the 1991 Declaration of Sovereignty. The institutional structure laid out in these documents gave foreign policy decision-making power to the republic's permanent legislative body, the Supreme Soviet, and its dual leadership - the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the Prime Minister. When the state's new constitution was enacted in March
1994 it altered the institutional structures of the previous system more in name than in form. It left many of the old BSSR institutions intact, most notably the Supreme Soviet and it left areas in which the Belarusian state was already considered to have a 'working system', namely foreign policy, largely untouched (Interview 1, 2010). This meant that between 1991 and 1994, the formal institutional structure of the Belarusian FPE could be boiled down to two individuals and the groups that fell in behind each of them, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the Prime Minister.

Less than three years after Belarus’ new Constitution was enacted, however, it was dramatically altered. In November 1996 Belarus’ first President, Alexander Lukashenka, saw through a series of sweeping constitutional reforms that he said were aimed at ridding the government of the corruption that had become so rampant before his election in July 1994. The changes made to the Constitution after Lukashenka’s referendum dramatically “altered the paths and powers of decision-making” (id.) within the state, including those within the FPE. Under the new Constitution Belarus became a presidential republic in which the president was "the Head of State, the guarantor of the Constitution...and the personification of the unity of the nation" (Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, 1996: Art. 79). In addition, the president became the individual charged with the responsibilities of “conduct[ing] negotiations and sign[ing] international treaties” (id.: Art 84, sec. 20) and of “form[ing] and head[ing] the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus" (id.: Art. 84, sec. 27). The House of Representatives, the lower house of the bicameral National Assembly created in the November 1996 referendum, acquired the ability to "determine the guidelines of - foreign policy" (id.: Art. 97, sec. 2) and while the Government and the prime minister did not lose a great deal of formal power, their role in foreign policy decision-making was never too great to begin with. Thus, with the introduction of the 1996 constitutional alterations Belarus entered its second and lasting phase of formal institutional structure, one dominated by the President both in name and in word.
Informal Structure
The informal structure of the Belarusian government and more particularly the Belarusian FPE can best be described as a more exaggerated version of the state's formal institutional structure. Where formally, after the 1996 constitutional referendum, Belarus went from being a parliamentary republic to a presidential republic with a great deal of power vested in the office of the president; in practice the state had become a one-man political show before the 1996 constitutional changes even took effect (Interview 1, 2010). Before Lukashenka's election and before the enactment of the original 1994 Constitution, the informal structure of Belarus' FPE was divided by the ideological and personal differences between the two men at its helm, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Stanislau Shushkevich and Prime Minister Viacheslav Kebich. The diverging personalities and opinions of these two men exacerbated the division in formal foreign policy decision-making power established in the outdated and unclear guidelines of the 1978 BSSR Constitution and created an informal institutional structure that was chaotically divisive.

During his campaign for the presidency Lukashenka blamed the confusion in Belarus' institutional structure, in part, for the corruption that he said was destroying the state and hindering its growth and development (Ylakhovich, 2009). In order for Belarus to become a successful state, Lukashenka insisted, the government needed to be more effective and more efficient and in order for this to happen decision-making power needed to be consolidated (id.). Lukashenka started to consolidate his power by filling the largest portion of his first Cabinet with loyal cronies and creating a work environment driven by top-down authority (Interview 8, 2010). The FPE of Belarus between 1994 and 2008 was not an organ of bureaucratic processes or collective decision-making, it was an institution dominated by one man's thoughts, feelings, and whims (Interview 1, 2010). So although the formal structure of Belarus' FPE was, in and of itself, unbalanced and singular, an examination of the informal structure of the state's FPE exposes the even more extreme authoritarian nature of the state's decision-making apparatuses and the almost wholly individual nature of Belarusian foreign policy decision-making between 1994 and 2008.
Overall, the combined character of the formal and informal institutional structures of the Belarusian FPE from 1991 to 2010 can be divided into two distinct periods. The first, lasting from 1991 to Alexander Lukashenka’s inauguration as president in July 1994, was characterised by a bifurcated power structure and the division of powers across the offices of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the prime minister almost equally (see Figure 1a). As such, if the idea within H2 holds, we should expect to find national identity to be highly salient in Belarus’ foreign policy towards the Russian Federation during this period. Conversely, the second period in the history of the Belarusian FPE, which extended from Lukashenka’s inauguration through the end of his third term in office in December 2010, was characterised by a structure in which the president was the sole leader and, essentially, the sole influence within the FPE (see Figure 1b). From this point we should expect to find, if the idea within H1 holds true, that national identity played only a minor role in Belarus’ foreign policy towards the Russian Federation during this period.

(Figure 1a: Belarusian FPE structure, 1991-1994) (Figure 1b: Belarusian FPE structure, 1994-2010)
**Table 1: Periods in and characteristics of Belarusian FPE, 1991-2010**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Powerful President</th>
<th>Powerful Government &amp; PM</th>
<th>Powerful Legislature</th>
<th>Internal Cohesion in FPE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1991-1994</strong></td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1994-2010</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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* The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet acted in the same capacity as the president would have at this time.

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**Ukraine**

**Formal Structure**

Formally, Ukraine was a semi-presidential\(^2\) unitary republic for the entire period between 1991 and 2008. Before the introduction of the 1996 Constitution it, like Belarus, looked and behaved much like its Soviet predecessor (Åslund, 2009:32). In those times the powers of decision-making on foreign policy belonged largely to the President, with some rights to review belonging to the state legislature, the Supreme Council, and the Government. This formal institutional framework was largely maintained in Ukraine’s new constitution, which was adopted in June 1996. Under the new constitution the bulk of foreign policy decision-making powers were left in the hands of the president and the Cabinet of Ministers (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996: Art. 106,116). The president was charged, under Article 106 with the overall administration of the foreign policy of Ukraine, while it was the shared duty of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to oversee the implementation of foreign policy (id.: Art. 116). The legislature, the *Verkhovna Rada (Rada)*, was also given some formal powers over foreign policy in its ability to review and approve (or reject) all international

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\(^2\) In this categorisation of Ukraine’s governmental structure I use the classic definition of semi-presidentialism outlined by Maurice Duverger (1980), which states that a “political regime is considered as semi-presidential if the constitution – combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power” (166).
treaties (id.: Art. 9) and to "determin[e] the principles - foreign policy" (id.: Art. 85). This formal division of labour was intended to create an institutionalised balance within the FPE that would prevent any single member of government from taking control of the foreign policy of the state (Interview 10, 2011); although it eventually failed to do so completely.

As part of the resolution of the Orange Revolution in December 2004 a series of constitutional amendments were passed with the intention of rectifying this failing in the FPE’s previous structure by reorganising and restructuring it, albeit indirectly. These amendments increased the powers of both the Rada and the prime minister significantly, while decreasing the powers of the president somewhat. They removed the president’s power to appoint the prime minister, instead passing this power to the Rada and gave the prime minister the power to appoint all Cabinet ministers, except the minister of defence and the minister of foreign affairs; the power to appoint these individuals remained in the hands of the president. Although these constitutional amendments did not formally come into effect until January 1, 2006, they immediately began to constrain the informal structure and behaviour of the FPE.

**Informal Structure**

The informal institutional structure of the Ukrainian FPE between 1991 and 2008 mirrored the body’s formal structure quite closely. During the presidential administrations of both Leonid Kravchuk (1991 - 1994) and Leonid Kuchma (1994 - 2005) the informal institutional structure of Ukraine was distinctly presidential. The FPE was dominated by each of these individuals throughout their tenures and both took foreign policy on as their central policy focus for a large portion of their time in office (Interview 13, 2011). While the prime minister and the Cabinet maintained formal powers over foreign policy from 1991 to 2005, in practise their policy responsibilities dealt more with domestic issues than with matters of foreign relations (id.). Similarly, while the Rada maintained considerable formal powers over foreign policy during this time, the informal powers it wielded were rather weak. More often than not it was the president, and not the Rada, who determined the principles of Ukraine’s foreign
policy, with the Rada simply acting as a rubber stamp (Interview 15, 2011). President Kuchma even went so far in his aim to control the foreign policy of Ukraine that in December 1996 he informally altered the hierarchy within the Cabinet and declared that henceforth the minister of foreign affairs would report directly to the president and to the president alone (Wise & Brown, 1999:39). This decree, however, only served to reinforce the already informally institutionalised structure of practice within the Ukrainian government that gave controlling power of the FPE to the president.

This informal government structure that placed the president at the fulcrum of foreign policy decision-making was one of the key matters that the formal institutional changes enacted after the Orange Revolution attempted to deal with. The formal alterations made to the structure of the FPE and its decision-making mechanisms in late 2005 sought to distribute powers evenly across an expanded FPE (Interview 17, 2011). Yet, the overall weakness of the state's structures and the diverging personalities and opinions of the individuals within the FPE between late 2005 and 2008 served to create an informal institutional structure in which division was the primary characteristic. Although the formal structure sought to distribute powers and encourage negotiation and collective decision-making, the informal structure saw foreign policy decision-making power divided between two individuals, each surrounded by a group of steadfast loyalists, creating often competing individual policies. The informal structure that thus emerged from the Orange Revolution in Ukraine split power completely between two distinct groups and created a decision-making environment in which collective policy development was almost as rare as it had been before.

What this evidence shows is that the Ukrainian FPE, like the Belarusian FPE, went through two distinct periods of both formal and informal institutional structure. The first period, lasting from 1991 through the Orange Revolution and the end of Kuchma’s presidency in January 2005, was characterised by an overall FPE structure in which there was a very powerful president, a weaker government, and a very weak legislature (See Figure 2a). As such, if the strongly consolidated power structure there was a great deal of cohesion on the ideas emerging from
the Ukrainian FPE. As such, if the postulation made in H1 holds, we should expect to see national identity having little influence on Ukrainian foreign policy towards NATO over this period. On the other hand, during the second period identifiable period in the structure of the Ukrainian FPE, which spanned the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (January 2005-February 2010), the powers of foreign policy decision-making within the FPE were divided nearly equally between the president and the prime minister, who was backed on most occasions by the Cabinet of Ministers. As such, if H2 stands, we should expect to find national identity being highly salient during this period.

(Figure 2a: Ukraine FPE structure, 1991-2005) (Figure 2b: Ukraine FPE structure, 2005-2010)

Table 2: Periods in and characteristics of Ukrainian FPE, 1991-2010

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>2005-2010</td>
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Moldova

Formal Structure
At the outset of Moldovan independence in August 1991 the formal structure of the Moldovan government and its FPE were grounded in two documents – the
state's Declaration of Sovereignty and the 1978 Constitution of the MSSR. As such, foreign policy decision-making power was primarily vested in the leadership of the state’s legislature – the Supreme Soviet – the Cabinet of Ministers, the prime minister, and the president. During the Soviet era the staunch hierarchy within the political system meant that the power divested to each of these bodies and individuals was largely controlled from the top down and that internal cohesion was de rigueur. With the introduction of greater political freedoms during the late 1980s and the ability to elect non-Communist Party members to the Supreme Soviet during the final Soviet parliamentary elections within the MSSR in 1990, however, institutional cohesion became largely a thing of the past.

Between August 1991 and July 1994, when Moldova’s post-Soviet constitution was officially enacted, the Moldovan FPE was dominated by a disparate group of individuals who supported widely differing positions on the intended future of Moldovan foreign policy and the Moldovan state. The divisions within this system were entrenched through the rather ambiguous nature of the formal institutional structure outlined in the state’s guiding legal documents. Although, under the guidelines of the 1978 MSSR Constitution the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet were charged with the formal powers of foreign policy formation and decision-making (Art. 121, 131), many of Moldova’s early leaders felt the applicability of such laws was rather weak considering the pronouncement of full sovereignty from the Soviet system made in the state’s Declaration of Sovereignty (Interview 19, 2011). Therefore the formal institutional system within Moldova pre-1994 was rather undefined.

With the introduction of the new constitution in July 1994, however, the formal delineation of powers within the Moldovan FPE became considerably more clear-cut. The president, with the power to negotiate and conclude international treaties and agreements (Art. 86), and the Government, with the power “to carry out the – foreign policy of the State” (Art. 96), became the formal heads of the FPE. The nature of the relationship between the Government, the president, and the Moldovan Parliament, the Parlamentul, however, added a layer of
complication to the foreign policy process in Moldova that even further diluted foreign policy decision-making power. Under the constitution Moldova was a semi-presidential republic, in which power was divided between the *Parlamentul* and the executive, embodied by the Government and the president. Although a number of the post-Soviet states adopted semi-presidential systems in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union – including Ukraine – Moldova was one of only two (the other being Lithuania) to formally structure the relationship between the parliament and the president in what Shugart and Carey (1992) defined as a premier-presidential style (Roper, 2008:115). According to Shugart and Carey, premier-presidential regimes differ from the more traditional president-parliamentary regimes in that under such a system the president does not have the unilateral power to dismiss the prime minister (ibid.). This power, or lack thereof, gave the *Parlamentul* and the prime minister a certain degree of leverage over the president and made them relatively strong figures in the shaping of Moldovan policy; up to and including the state's foreign policy. Throughout the 1990s it can be noted that “the [Moldovan] president’s legislative powers were largely reactive” (id., 118). This power of the *Parlamentul* over the president also meant that the nature of politics within the legislature itself had a clear impact on the state’s policy outcomes and while constitutional changes implemented by the *Parlamentul* on 5 July 2000 redesigned the state’s executive-legislative relationship, making the semi-presidential republic into a pure parliamentary republic, the formal power of the *Parlamentul* remained great (id., 120).

**Informal Structure**
While the formal institutional structure of the FPE of Moldova gave the *Parlamentul* an exceptional amount of power throughout the full period from 1991 – 2008, the informal structure of the body was clearly divided into two distinct periods: One lasting from 1991 to 2001 in which the parliament and its leaders had clear but disparate control over the body. The other, initiating with the landslide victory of the Communist Party (PCRM) in the 2001 parliamentary elections and their election of Vladimir Voronin to the presidency and ending with the April 2009 parliamentary elections, in which the power of foreign policy
decision-making was consolidated within the hands of one individual and the unified group supporting him and his ideas.

Between 1991 and 2001, the informal institutional structure within the Moldovan government and more specifically the Moldovan FPE could best be understood as a muted version of the formal structure established by the state’s guiding legislation. While the Parlamentul did informally retain a relatively powerful position within the FPE its power was often exerted through other, more prominent members of the body such as the Parlamentul President, the prime minister, the minister for foreign affairs, or the president. As such, the major informal powers with the FPE could be limited to these individuals, and of course the groups within the Parlamentul that supported them. This still, however, remained a large and disparate power structure for any FPE. While each of these individuals held varying degrees of power over foreign policy decision-making they all had the ability to influence the eventual foreign policy outcome through deal making, coercion, or even parliamentary upset if the target was the prime minister or the Government.

When the constitutional changes of July 2000 were enacted, formally giving the Parlamentul even greater power over the politics and policy making apparatuses of Moldova the power of the FPE should have been diluted even further than it had been over the preceding nine years. With the landslide victory of the PCRM in the 2001 parliamentary elections, however, foreign policy decision-making power in Moldova became more streamlined and cohesive than it ever had been before. With 71 out of 101 seats in the Parlamentul, the PCRM held a controlling majority that was nearly impossible for any other party or faction to break. This power gave them the ability to elect a staunch Communist president, Vladimir Voronin, and to see through the appointment of a cabinet dominated by PCRM members. As such, the FPE of Moldova under the Voronin administration was, informally, characterised by its cohesive structure and unified policy platform.

When the informal and the formal institutional structures of the Moldovan FPE between 1991 and early 2009 are taken together it becomes clear there were
two distinct periods in this body’s structural history. The first, lasting from 1991 to 2001, was characterised by intense formal and informal divisions. It should, therefore, be expected, based upon the postulation set forth in H2, that during this period national identity was highly salient in Moldovan foreign policy towards the EU. The second period in this history, lasting from 2001 to early 2009, was, on the other hand, characterised by cohesion and uniformity. As such, we should expect, based upon the premise of H1, to find that during this period national identity was minimally influential on Moldovan foreign policy towards the EU.

(Figure 3a: Moldova FPE structure, 1991-2001) (Figure 3b: Moldova FPE structure, 2001-2009)

Table 3: Periods in and Characteristics of Moldovan FPE, 1991 – 2009

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<td>Yes</td>
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National Identity in Foreign Policy

Belarus and the Russian Federation (and the Union State)

1991-1994
When Stanislau Shushkevich returned from signing the Belavezha Accords to Minsk in December 1991 he stated clearly to the public the he would “warn against an incorrect understanding of the nature of the Commonwealth [of Independent States]” as a nationalist or ethnic union (Izvestia, 10 December 1991:2). This was despite the fact that the agreement itself stated that the CIS was “based on the historic community of our [Belarus’, Ukraine’s, and Russia’s] peoples” (Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 10 December 1991:1). Shushkevich was wary of the post-Soviet union between Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine being interpreted or developed as a Slavic or even a “greater Russia” union (Interview 1, 2010).

National identity was a rather confused issue within Belarus in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. Previous to August 1991 the area known as the Republic of Belarus had only experienced brief periods of independence in 1918 and, before that, in the 16th century (Zaprudnik & Urban, 1997:281; Martinsen, 2002:402). While the region had been populated for nearly 1000 years, the history of that land and the history of the people residing there were wrapped almost indeterminately up in the histories of other countries and other peoples in the area from the Germans, to the Poles, to the Lithuanians, to the Russians, and, finally, to the Soviets. This fragmented history and the weak collective national identity it left behind made the Belarusians particularly vulnerable to the effects of the Kremlin’s ‘Sovietisation’ policies (Potocki, 2002:146; Bely, 1997). During the course of the BSSR’s existence most of the independent ideas and myths upon which a Belarusian national identity might have been built were erased and, most critically, the Belarusian language slipped into near obscurity (Wilson, 2011:123-24; Marples, 1999:51-52). The repercussions of these elements of Soviet life after independence were immense and have made the identification, or even the formation, of a true Belarusian national identity extraordinarily difficult.
The national identity present within the Belarusian population and within much of the Belarusian FPE at the time of independence was less Belarusian and more Soviet (ibid.; Kuzio, 2003: 431). This identity was also largely intertwined with that of neighbouring Russia (Interview 5, 2010). While Shushkevich was hesitant to invoke these feelings, Prime Minister Kebich often utilised this ‘Soviet Belarusian’ identity as a foundation for his public calls for greater Belarusian-Russian cooperation. He commonly spoke of the ‘natural’ and ‘fraternal’ relationship between the two states and he often discussed the need for Slavic unity in the former Soviet space. These ideas Kebich put forward struck a chord with the largely pro-Russian population of Belarus in the early 1990s, of which 54%, when polled in 1992, believed that the future of the state lay in policies that would tie it more closely to Russia than any other state or organisation (Central and Eastern Eurobarometer, 1992:appendix 62). In the aftermath of Shushkevich’s removal from office in January 1994, in particular, and during his campaign for the presidency in early 1994 Kebich invoked the natural relationship between Belarus and Russia even more clearly and made it the cornerstone of his foreign policy platform. Yet, over the whole of the period between 1991 and 1994, non-rhetorical evidence of national identity playing a role in the actual foreign policies pursued by the Belarusian FPE is hard to find.

Between 1991 and 1994 Belarusian foreign policy towards Russia was largely centred on economic policy. Meetings between Yeltsin and both Shushkevich and Kebich throughout 1992 and 1993 were focused on the development of the CIS as a platform for continued trade between the former Soviet states and the state of Belarusian access to Russian resources, particularly petroleum and natural gas, and Russian markets. The first and only agreement signed between the two countries was also, in fact, singularly focused on economic and fiscal matters. The treaty on a monetary union between Belarus and Russia, signed by Kebich and Yeltsin in April 1994, was intended to limit the effects of customs restrictions on trade between the states and to, eventually, fix the exchange rate between the Belarusian and the Russian rubles (Marples, 1999: 110). While Kebich publically promoted this agreement with a continued emphasis on the naturalness of Belarus being closely aligned and partnered with Russia, the
treaty was void of any elements of ‘values’ or expressed ideas of identity. Yet, it is obvious from Kebich’s rhetoric that national identity did play a role in orienting his foreign policy in the Russian direction. Although Shushkevich avoided the factor almost all together, Kebich was motivated by a belief that Belarus was, if fact, a “Slavic brother” to Russia (Interview 6, 2010).

1994-2010

Alexander Lukashenka, like Kebich, was a firm believer in the ‘natural’ ties between the “fraternal nations” of Belarus and Russia (Interview 6, 2010). Although the new Belarusian Constitution, enacted in March 1994, pledged the country to neutrality (Art. 18) President Lukashenka made it clear through both his words and his actions that Russia would be Belarus’ most important foreign ally during his tenure. In promoting this foreign policy platform with the public Lukashenka often took a classically populist line and fostered the notion of pan-Slavism with the public (Eke & Kuzio, 2000:531). “President Lukashenka reinforced the – pan-Slavic, Little Russian historiography” (id., 529) in Belarus and used it to both frame and justify the integrationist policies he developed towards the Russian Federation between 1994 and 2010.

The notion of pan-Slavism continued to play well in Belarus during the first three Lukashenka administrations not only because of the president’s efforts to nurture the Soviet Belarusian identity within the population, but also because even years after the state’s independence a distinct and cohesive Belarusian national identity had yet to truly emerge. Lukashenka used this fact to his advantage from both the information supply side, by promoting and reinforcing a pan-Slavic identity through news media, school teachings, and public rhetoric, and the demand side, by using this identity he promoted to act as the rhetorical foundation for his pro-Russian foreign policy (Interview 6, 2010; Interview 5, 2010). While his early rhetoric was focused mainly on the natural nature of a relationship between Belarus and Russia as fraternal nations, Lukashenka’s emphasis on national identity and its intrinsic role in Belarusian foreign policy became greatest during the late 1990s and, in particular, during 1999 and 2000 following the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia. He openly criticised NATO for their “aggression” in “inflicting strikes against a sovereign state” (Izvestia, 26
March 1999:4) and threw his support behind the country’s Serbian leadership stating that Belarus would “give Yugoslavia – any form of support and aid that our Slavic brothers may need” (emphasis added by author) (ITAR-TASS, 6 October 1998). While this emphasis on the need for Slavic unity continued to play a role in Lukashenka’s public rhetoric surrounding the Belarusian-Russian integration project during the period following the NATO campaign, from 2001 to 2010, the nature of the national identity he promoted and the structure of Slavic unity he sought seemed to change from what it had been during the previous seven years.

Between 2001 and 2010 Lukashenka’s pan-Slavism took on a decidedly more sovereign tone, as he began to emphasise the need for independent Belarusian integration or even simple cooperation with Russia as distinct from pure unification. As one expert from a leading Belarusian think tank noted, with every passing year the idea of independent Belarus became more salient within the population and more and more individuals became committed to the idea of Belarusian sovereignty (Interview 5, 2010). This growth in the independent national identity of Belarusians was reflected in Lukashenka’s foreign policy throughout the 2000s as he became increasingly unwilling to compromise with Russian leaders on the structure of the Union State and absolutely insistent on the continued existence of a free and sovereign Belarusian state (id.; Interview 6, 2010). Throughout this period Lukashenka also became far more of a rhetorical champion of a truly Belarusian national identity, rather than the Soviet Belarusian identity that he had encouraged before, and as one high-ranking official from the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out in 2010, the development of a truly independent and unique Belarusian identity was a strategic priority of the president and the whole of the Belarusian government in the aftermath of their own “recognition that Belarusian national identity [was] very weak” (Interview 7).

While it is undeniable that national identity played a role in shaping the image of Belarusian foreign policy towards Russia under Lukashenka, the degree to which national identity actually influenced or motivated the policies that the Belarusian
FPE enacted is rather unclear. While Lukashenka’s nationalist rhetoric may have heated up during the late 1990s, his FPE developed only a few new or previously unscheduled policies on Russian relations during that period and the pan-Slavic beacon that was the Union State continued to suffer from a severe lack of funding from both the Russian and Belarusian sides and an ambiguous framework for further development (Martinsen, 2002:403-4; Rontoyanni, 2000:5). In addition, the idea of pan-Slavism played little-to-no discernable role in the actual policies formulated by the Belarusian FPE towards the Russian Federation or in the treaties signed between the two states between 1994 and 2010. While Lukashenka and other government officials may have spoken about the natural link created between Belarus and Russia by their peoples’ shared history, language, culture, and religion, these factors only appear superficially in any legislation and appear to have been, at best, a good foundation for cooperation rather than a real motivation for partnership and integration (Interview 4, 2010).

Ukraine and NATO

1991-2005

When Ukraine declared independence in August 1991, nationalists wielded the largest voice in the state’s political bodies (Interview 13, 2011). While Communists still held a majority in the Rada, the nationalist opposition was vigorous and “quickly showed [throughout 1990 and 1991] that they outclassed the Communists in political and oratorical skills” (Motyl & Krawchenko, 1997:248). During the months leading up to Ukraine’s declaration of independence nationalist ideology played a central role in the republic’s politics and policies. In the aftermath of independence and during the all-important period of state-building, however, nationalist ideology became an increasingly divisive issue within Ukraine and it was along the lines of national identity (and the linguistic and geographical lines that closely mirrored it) that the first major political cleavage in post-Soviet Ukraine developed.

The national identity based cleavage that developed in Ukraine, which actually manifested most clearly, as Arel (1995), D’Anieri (1999, 2006), Barrington
(2002), and Moroney (2002), have noted, as linguistic and geographic or regional cleavages, had crucial links to the state's foreign policy. While foreign policy in and of itself never appeared to be a particularly important issue for the Ukrainian public the foreign policy relationships that the state formed, particularly the issue of whether the FPE placed greater priority on the state's relationship with Russia or with NATO and other Western states and organisations, was a critical issue and it was an issue over which the Ukrainian population was acutely divided throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Interview 10, 2011; Interview 12, 2011). In its most simplified form the foreign policy division within Ukrainian society cut along the same lines as the linguistic and regional cleavages within the state; with members of the Ukrainophone population and those living in the Western regions of the state showing overwhelming levels of scepticism about a close relationship with Russia and being largely in favour of Ukrainian foreign policy being oriented in a generally Western direction and members of the state's Russophone population and those living in the Eastern regions of the country being generally in favour of closer relations with Russia as opposed to NATO, the EU, or other Western organisations or states (Chudowsky, 2002:15; D'Anieri, 1999:84; Galin, 1998). While the effect of such ground-level public opinion on its own may not have been a major influence on the Ukrainian FPEs' actively pro-NATO foreign policy between 1991 and 2005, the effect it had on the members of the state's government and FPE were significant (D'Anieri, 1999:84; Garnett, 1999:110).

As one expert noted, “divisions within [Ukrainian] society have crippled Ukrainian foreign policy because [the government] has no option but to look both East and West in order to satisfy the population” (Interview 13, 2011). Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s both President Kravchuk and President Kuchma, despite their firm holds on the foreign policy decision-making processes within Ukraine, were heavily constrained by the divided national identity within the state and the effects it had on the general political environment (id.; Interview 12, 2011). The constitutionally entrenched ‘multivectoral’ foreign policy platform invoked by both of these leaders can be seen as a direct result of their individual desires to avoid promulgating these
divisions further (Interview 12, 2011; Åslund, 2009; Fischer, 2008). Indeed, the relationship nurtured between Ukraine and NATO by both Kravchuk and Kuchma can be viewed as simply one of the many foreign policy relationships developed by the FPE across both the European and Eurasian regions under the guise of multivectoralism. Yet, over the course of the 1990s and the early 2000s the Ukrainian FPE was more proactive and more positive about the foreign policy relationship it pursued towards NATO than it ever was about the foreign policy it developed towards other states or organisations, particularly those in the East (Interview 14, 2011; Burant, 1995:1140). Although they could not say it publically, neither Kravchuk nor Kuchma were interested in establishing Ukraine as a “non-bloc state” (Interview 15, 2011). They wanted Ukraine to have a “Western or [specifically] a NATO orientation” (ibid.).

While an actively pro-NATO foreign policy was never a particularly popular idea among the Ukrainian public, even within the nationalist, Ukrainophone, and Western region’s more pro-Western populations, it was one of the key pieces, if not the key piece, of the Ukrainian foreign policy platform between 1991 and 2005 (Interview 13, 2011). Both President Kravchuk and President Kuchma actively sought increasing levels of cooperation, partnership, and even integration between Ukraine and NATO throughout their tenures in office and at the helm of the Ukrainian FPE, despite the fact that this policy served the interests of neither of the major groups within Ukrainian society at that time (Garnett 1999:111) and both shied away from nearly even invoking matters of national identity in their foreign policy rhetoric. A close relationship with NATO was decidedly outside the lines of what the state’s Russophone and Eastern populations desired, especially in that it risked provoking Russian anger and at the same time it was also far from being the policy option that the state’s nationalist, Ukrainophone, and Western populations preferred (ibid.). While a strong relationship with NATO did meet the nationalist goal of drawing Ukraine closer to the West and it allayed some of their fears over the possibility of Russian hostility by increasing at least the perceived strategic security of the state, it was not a popular policy nor was it a policy the state’s leaders aligned with matters of public sentiment or identity (ibid.; Galin, 1998). So, although the
role of national identity and the divisions that it created within Ukrainian society during the 1990s and early 2000s as an important mechanism for constraining the policy options available to the Ukrainian FPE can not be overlooked, the actual level of influence that this factor levelled on the FPE’s foreign policy behaviour towards NATO appears to have been relatively minimal.

2005-2010
Although the tide of public sentiment that the Orange Revolution’s leaders rode to power was largely focused on the corruption that had plagued the final years of the Kuchma administration, the core of the movement’s support came from Ukraine’s nationalist, Western, titular populations and was rooted in their desire to see the nature of Ukrainian politics and policy fundamentally changed. This mobilisation of the pro-Western nationalist Ukrainian population was one of the two leading factors contributing to the success of the Orange Revolution and its political leaders, Viktor Yushchenko, Yulia Tymoshenko, and Oleksandr Moroz (Kuzio, 2006:67). Yet, the Orange Revolution “did not appeal to traditional Ukrainian nationalism but instead called for the building of a new democratic Ukraine – inseparable [from] Europe [and the West]” (Petrov & Ryabov, 2006:149). This idea of Ukraine as an essential part of Europe and the Western sphere became a centrepiece of the Orange Revolution and of the policies eventually pursued by the government leaders it pushed to the fore (Kuzio, 2006:62).

The trials and tribulations of Leonid Kuchma’s final few years in the Ukrainian presidency, primarily embodied by the “Kuchmagate” scandal surrounding the murder of opposition journalist Georgiy Gongadze ³, revealed some key differences between the two main national groups in Ukraine. While the

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³ The murder of Georgiy Gongadze, a leading independent journalist known for his criticisms of the Kuchma administration and Ukrainian authorities, in 2000 brought forward serious questions about the levels of corruption and undemocratic practices in the Kuchma administration. After tapes containing evidence of President Kuchma’s having personally ordered the Ukrainian intelligence agency to “take care” of Gongadze were released, an event now commonly known as “Kuchmagate”, Kuchma’s popularity collapsed and his grip over the government became considerably more authoritarian-like (Åslund, 2009).
Russophone and Eastern Ukrainian populations found it difficult to coalesce around any particular issue or ideology in the wake of Kuchma’s demise – despite the hard fought efforts of Yanukovych – the nationalist, Ukrainophone populations proved to be easily mobilised (Arel, 2005:6). The Orange Revolution, and Viktor Yushchenko in particular, rode this wave of mobilisation within the nationalist community to eventual victory over Yanukovych and his dispersed Russophone and Eastern Ukrainian support bases in January 2005. Shortly after his inauguration that same month Yushchenko filled the new government with loyal friends and allies who publically favoured the nationalist position on Ukrainian alignment, which was oriented around pro-Western and specifically a pro-NATO foreign policy (Åslund, 2009:203). While this make-up of the FPE lasted, through August 2006, the Ukrainian FPE pursued the development of Ukraine-NATO relations fervently. Over this period alone the Ukrainian government formally entered into an ‘Intensified Dialogue’ with NATO specifically aimed at detailing the state’s aspirations for membership (NATO, 21 Apr 2005:1), oversaw the launch of the NATO PfP Trust Fund programme in Ukraine⁴, agreed to the state’s military participation in NATO’s anti-terrorist activity – Operation Active Endeavour (NATO, 2 Aug 2008), opened the state’s first and largest NATO resettlement and retraining centre at Khmelnytskyi (NATO, 18 July 2011), and shepherded the NATO strategic airlift agreement through ratification by the Rada (NATO-Ukraine News, 2006:5). All the while NATO partnership continued to be a generally unpopular policy platform within the Ukrainian population. Yet, Yushchenko insisted on promoting the new ‘intensity’ in Ukraine’s relationship with the organisation in terms of the state’s natural place amongst it ‘Western’ and ‘European’ members.

Yet, when Yushchenko’s ‘Our Ukraine’ party suffered heavy electoral losses in the March 2006 parliamentary elections and was eventually forced to accept the formation of a government coalition with the Socialist Party (SPU) and Viktor Yanukovych’s ‘Party of Regions’ and Yanukovych was elected Prime Minister the

⁴ The NATO PfP Trust Funds were established by the organisation to “support practical demilitarization projects and defence reform projects” in PfP NATO partner countries (NATO, 11 Dec 2008).
ardently pro-Western nature of the state's foreign policy was heavily curtailed (Åslund, 2009:215). During the sixteen month period from August 2006 to December 2007 in which Yanukovych sat opposite Yushchenko at the head of the FPE, Ukraine’s relationship with NATO became far more cautious and the focus moved from membership to cooperation (id., 217). At the same time, Ukraine’s relationship with Russia improved somewhat, although it remained less than friendly, as Yanukovych moved to stabilise the situation between the two states and make it clear to Kremlin officials that NATO membership was no longer a goal of the Ukrainian FPE (ibid.). While Yushchenko did continue to pursue the development of closer relations between Ukraine and NATO during this period, by at least continuing progress on agreements already made such as the dispatch of Ukrainian warships to the Mediterranean to assist NATO in Operation Active Endeavour (NATO, 24 Nov 2007), the political and ideological split within the FPE made greater pursuit of pro-Western and in particular pro-NATO foreign policy nearly impossible and it toned to FPE’s overtly national ideologically driven pro-Western rhetoric down with the addition of more identity-laden pro-Eastern language.

After Yanukovych and the Party of Regions were forced from government following the parliamentary elections of September 2007 and replaced by Yulia Tymoshenko and BYuT (Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko), however, relations between Ukraine and NATO once again picked up speed. Although Tymoshenko and BYuT espoused no public position on Ukraine’s relationship with NATO in the run up to these elections, they remained closely aligned with the pro-Western segments of the Ukrainian population (Åslund, 2009:221). As such, it was no great surprise to see pro-NATO foreign policies being pursued by the Ukrainian FPE in early 2008 when Yushchenko formally requested a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine at the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. While Yushchenko had been forced to work to convince Tymoshenko and the Speaker of the Rada, Yatseniuk, to agree to the request, it was a policy completely in line with the ethos of each of the members of the FPE and the larger societal groups that supported them (id., 227). Yet, after Ukraine’s MAP request was rejected, following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s stern warning against its granting
at the summit, neither Yushchenko nor Tymoshenko really seemed to know how to approach the relationship. The relationship was further complicated by the Russian-Georgian conflict that ensued the following August, as it became increasingly clear that Russia was a greater, or at least a far more imminent, threat than the administration had previously believed.

Over the course of the period between 2005 and 2010 Ukraine’s ‘Orange’ administration, led by President Yushchenko and a series of both Orange and opposition prime ministers maintained a generally pro-NATO foreign policy. While some periods, such as during Yanukovych’s premiership, saw relations cool, they were by no means cold and, it must be noted, that even during this period foreign policy was still often justified on national identity terms. Policies formed between Ukraine and NATO also took on a more values centred tone during this period, with many agreements and announcements citing the Western nature of Ukraine or the shared values of Ukraine and NATO member states. All of this indicates that during this period between 2005 and 2010 national identity crossed the boundary from simply being populist rhetoric to being policy applicable.

**Moldova and the EU**

**1991-2001**

During the earliest years of Moldovan independence national identity was both a highly salient and a highly contentious matter. The identity-driven policies of the Moldovan Popular Front (FPM) had been at the root of the civil war that erupted in 1992 and were central to the early debate in Moldova over the very existence of the state. For those associated with the FPM, as well as some others, there was no such thing as an independent Moldovan identity and there should really be no such thing as an independent Moldova – it should all be part of the greater Romania. Such beliefs were central to much of the early pro-Western

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5 Between March and July 1992 Moldovan forces clashed with those of the self-proclaimed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (“Transnistria”) along with divisions from Russia’s 14th Army, which were stationed in Transnistria. For further details see Kaufman & Bowers (1998) “Transnational dimensions of the Transnistrian conflict.”
foreign policy drive in Moldova, however, this drive was aided by the belief of some more moderate members of the early Moldovan FPE that pro-Romanian sentiments might be balanced with more independent or even pro-Russian identities in the country by pursuing this more neutral policy. As the influence of the FPM within the Moldovan FPE waned over the course of 1992\(^6\) so too did the impact of pan-Romanian ideology on the state’s foreign policy. President Snegur made clear in a speech to the Parlamentul in December 1992 that the future of Moldovan foreign policy lay in “the pursuit of national independence” (Crowther, 1997:323). Meaning he would no longer pursue policies aimed at bringing Moldova closer to reunification with Romania. While Moldova’s relationship with Romania cooled after this point and its relationship with Russia became slightly less confrontational, although the stalemate in the Transnistrian conflict and the continued presence of Russian troops in that region remained a matter of contention between the two states, the possibility of a relationship between Moldova and the EU appeared to be a priority for the Moldovan FPE, or at least for Snegur.

While President Snegur pleaded with the EU’s leaders to include Moldova in their negotiations on individual PCAs with the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe during late 1993 and early 1994, at home he was continuing to try and strike a balance in his relationship with the various political factions in government and the various ethnic factions in the population. The establishment of a strong relationship between Moldova and the EU seemed to play a crucial

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\(^6\) President Snegur had begun to distance himself from the FPM during the latter part of 1991 as the organisation became increasingly more ethnocentric and its leadership more staunchly married to the idea of reintegration between Moldova and Romania. His first move was to call for popular presidential elections to be held in December 1991. When Snegur won, having run unopposed and taking 98% of the vote, he established himself as an independent politician, no longer even officially associated with the FPM (Crowther, 1997: 322). The power of the FPM was further weakened by the replacement of Valeriu Muravschi with Andrei Sangheli, a member of the Agrarian Party and ‘prominent reform communist’, as Prime Minister in July 1992 (ibid.). The final stage in the FPM’s decent took place in January 1993 with the resignation of Alexandru Moghanu, the FPM member and Chairman of the Parlamentul, and the election of Petru Lucinschi, another reform Communist and former ambassador to Moscow, as his replacement (id., 323).
role in his balancing act. Specifically, Snegur appeared to use the developing relationship between Moldova and the EU to do two things, (1) balance out the relationship with Russia that other members of the FPE, specifically Sangheli and Lucinschi, favoured and that he knew was necessary for the continued security and economic survival of the state and (2) satisfy the anti-Russian sentiments of the remaining FPM supporters in government and in the population by establishing a strong relationship with a Western organisation. While Snegur led the charge in the pursuit of a relationship with the EU, it would appear as though the rest of the Moldovan FPE was either in on or at least complicit in his plan to use the EU as a balancing force in the state’s foreign policy. This balancing act that developed in Moldovan foreign policy during the mid-1990s, with the FPE situating the state independently between Europe and Eurasia, had clear roots in Snegur’s 1992 discussion of ‘national independence’ and it was this rather anti-nationalist platform, or as Charles King referred to it ‘Basarabism’ 7 , that became the dominant character of Moldovan foreign policy over the course of the next seven years (King, 2003).

Even after the rise of the more pro-Moscow Agrarian Party in the 1994 and 1998 parliamentary elections and the 1997 presidential elections, the Moldovan FPE continued to pursue integration with the EU along side its relationship with Russia and the CIS. It was, in fact, President Lucinschi who stated in December 1997 that it was Moldova’s greatest strategic priority to become a full member of the EU, despite being the leader of the Agrarian Party and the former ambassador to Moscow (King, 2003:79; Danii & Mascateanu, 2011). While national identity remained a critical issue within Moldova and an important influence in the state’s domestic policies after the political fall of the FPM, the balancing relationship that the Moldovan FPE’s developed with the EU between 1995 and 2001 was not clearly motivated by national identity issues. Although the influence of national identity was clear in leaders’ rhetoric on ‘European

7 King characterised the character of Moldovan foreign policy over the course of the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s as ‘Basarabian’ in that the main objective of the policies being pursued by the state’s FPE were aimed at establishing Moldova as a “distinct cultural and political space” aligned with no single state or region (King, 2003:69).
values’ and ‘European standards’, it would be difficult to categorize the salience of national identity – over the whole of this period – as high. While it is undeniable that the cleavages that national identity issues created within Moldovan society and within the informal Moldovan political structures had an impact on the policies that were formulated, the matter was far more of a constraint or an overarching influence than a clear motive (2003: 80).

2001-2009
With the victory of the PCRM in the February 2001 parliamentary elections and the subsequent election of Vladimir Voronin to the Moldovan presidency the character of both Moldovan foreign policy and the national identity question within the country’s government was altered. During the months prior to the parliamentary elections the PCRM had campaigned on a platform that emphasised the need for a more balanced national foreign policy and the party’s historic commitment to a truly multi-national Moldova in which no national or ethnic group was given a louder voice in politics and society than any other (Interview 20, 2012; Marandici, 2010: 44; Hill, 2001: 134). While both of the issues played a central role in the Communist’s substantial victory in the February elections (Hill, 2001) and while both would have an eventual impact on the politics and the policies of the PCRM government and the Voronin administration the interaction between them over the course of the next eight years was actually rather minimal. Although national identity undoubtedly constrained the foreign policy options of the Voronin-led FPE during the period between the spring of 2001 and the spring of 2009, there is little evidence to suggest that its role within Moldovan foreign policy and Moldovan relations with the EU more specifically did anything beyond this.

The PCRM had long been the most multi-national party, in terms of both its rhetoric and its support base, in Moldova. They were also the party most committed to the idea of the existence of a unique Moldovan identity rooted in the intrinsically multi-ethnic and multi-national character of the state – differentiating it from any other state or nation (i.e. Romania) (Marandici, 2010:26). This ideology – strongly rooted in Soviet thought – did not, however,
manifest itself in Voronin’s foreign policy as an overtly proactive nationalism. Rather, within the realm of foreign policy, national identity became a near null element. Although Voronin and the PCRM were clear supporters of a more Russian or ‘Eurasianist’ (King, 2003: 68) foreign policy, this platform was not oriented around or supported by an underlying nationalist belief in the ‘Slavic’, ‘eastern’, or ‘Russian’ identity of Moldova and Moldovans. Rather, the Eurasianism of Voronin and the PCRM was virtually void of any real ethnic or national character whatsoever (ibid.). As such, the de-emphasis of pro-EU foreign policy, in favour of a more pro-Russian and pro-CIS policy platform, during the first three years of Voronin’s tenure in the presidency and at the helm of the Moldovan FPE should not be seen as an identity driven alteration. Nor should the change in Voronin’s attitude and policy towards that organisation that began to take shape in the autumn of 2003.

When Voronin rejected the Kozak Memorandum in November 2003 it signalled a rather dramatic change in his foreign policy priorities and in the nature of relations between Moldova and the EU and Moldova and the Russian Federation. While some have suggested that the improvement in Moldova’s relationship with the EU during the second-half of Voronin’s tenure as president was triggered by the shift in power – towards the more nationalist, pro-Romanian, and pro-European parties – within the Parlamentul following the March 2005

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8 It should be noted that on some occasions Voronin and the PCRM did attempt to engage in some sort of nation building on the domestic level. The best example can be seen in the conflict over school history curriculums and textbooks in which the Communists tried to introduce an ‘integrated history’ curriculum (a curriculum that went against the standard “History of Romanians” course) in Moldovan schools (Marandici, 2010: 30). For more details see Solonari, 2007.

9 The Kozak Plan, or the Kozak Memorandum, was drawn up by the Putin administration as a solution to the frozen Transnistrian conflict. It called for the new government of Moldova to be divided into two houses, an upper house that would have “thirteen seats for Moldova, nine for Transnistria, and four for Gaugauz-Yeri” and a lower house, the members of which would be elected by proportional representation (Bruce, 2007:40). The problem with the plan, for most non-Transnistrians, was that under this structure Transnistria, which held only 14 percent of the total population of Moldova, would hold a ‘blocking minority vote’ in the upper house and it would “effectively provide[] Transnistria with official recognition as a state,” according to Voronin (ibid.).
parliamentary elections (PCRM went from having 71 seats to 56), the fact was that Voronin's foreign policy had already become increasingly more pro-European throughout the 12 months preceding this election. Even before his rejection of the Kozak Memorandum there had been indications that Voronin may not have been entirely happy with the relationship developing between Moldova and Russia (Interview 22, 2012). Thus, correlating Voronin's more active pursuit of relations with the EU during the second half of his presidency is difficult. While the increased power of the pro-European Christian Democratic People's Party and the Democratic Party – and their more identity and values based foreign policy platforms – in the Parlamentul did constrain Voronin's foreign policy options, it did not cause him to alter his previously established foreign policy platform towards the EU (Interview 20, 2012).

Although Voronin and the PCRM had gained power in 2001 on a platform of a more Eurasian Moldovan foreign policy, between 2001 and 2009 the foreign policy the Voronin-led Moldovan FPE instituted and engaged in was just as pro-EU as it was pro-Russia or pro-CIS. While the presence of pro-Romanian and pro-European attitudes within both the Moldovan population and the Parlamentul made it impossible for Voronin to orient his foreign policy in an entirely Eurasian direction there is little evidence to indicate that this was even an option Voronin was interested in. In increasing Moldovan engagement with the EU and placing greater levels of importance on the process of and program for European integration during the period between late 2003 and early 2009 Voronin was not working to satisfy the nationalist sentiments of these groups in Society and these parties in the Parlamentul nor was he working to develop a greater sense of 'European-ness' within the Moldovan population (Interview 21, 2012). Voronin and the PCRM, despite their identity and values laden campaign rhetoric in 2001, were not motivated in their foreign policy towards either the EU or Russia (or the CIS or GUAM) by the desire to cultivate a specific national identity within Moldova.
Comparison & Conclusions

Since 1991 the place of national identity in the politics and policies of the post-Soviet states has been a major topic of research. Yet, its role the foreign policies and international behaviour of these states has received minimal attention and analysis, in large part because of a tendency within existing analyses to focus more on systemic factors than on those located at the domestic level. It was the intention of this study to begin to rectify this shortcoming in the current research by analysing the role of national identity in a key relationship within each of Belarus’, Ukraine’s, and Moldova’s post-Soviet foreign policy.

The results of the analysis conducted in this study have yielded interesting and fruitful findings on the question of has national identity been a salient factor in motivating or influencing the foreign policies of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova since 1991. Firstly, the assumption postulated in H1, that when one individual or one small, unified group leads the foreign policy executive, national identity will have low salience in the foreign policy of the state, was denied in large part in all three cases. While it was found that national identity played little-to-no role in the foreign policy developed by the Voronin administration and the PCRM government in Moldova towards the EU between 2001 and 2009, its salience was not diminished due to the concentrated and cohesive structure of the FPE. Rather, national identity’s salience in Moldova’s foreign policy towards the EU during this period was mitigated by the values and the nature of the individuals in power. In the cases of both Belarus’ foreign policy towards Russia between 1994 and 2010 and Ukraine’s foreign policy towards NATO between 1991 and 2004 the assumption in H1 was denied as national identity proved to be of at least some significance in shaping, constraining, or motivating these policies.

Contrastingly, the postulation made in H2 – when two or more individuals or small, unified groups lead the foreign policy executive, national identity will have high salience in the foreign policy of the state – was largely confirmed in all three cases. In Belarus between 1991 and 1994 Prime Minister Kebich was clearly inclined towards the development of a pro-Russian foreign policy platform because of his belief that Belarus was a natural partner of its Slavic neighbour.
While Chairman Shushkevich may have purposely avoided being influenced or motivated by national identity, his quickly diminishing power in foreign, as well as domestic, policy over this short period gives Kebich’s position and his motives more weight. In Ukraine, between 2005 and 2010 national identity played a central role in the FPE’s foreign policy towards NATO in terms of both bringing the state closer to that organisation and farther from it. Yushchenko was rhetorically clear about his belief that Ukraine’s natural place in the world was in the West alongside NATO’s member states and, unlike his predecessors, he did not shy away from using such identity-laden language. On the other hand, as Ukraine’s foreign policy towards NATO became less ambitious between December 2006 and January 2005 the policies can be traced alongside Viktor Yanukovych’s premiership and correlatively related, at least, to his allegiance with the more pro-Russian constituencies of eastern Ukraine. Finally, in Moldova between 1991 and 2001 we can see another case of national identity having mid-to-high salience in foreign policy. During the earliest years of this period national identity was one of the most significant factors pushing the Moldovan FPE to pursue a pro-European foreign policy, as the FPM placed pressure on President Snegur and the government. Yet, the salience of national identity waned over the course of the period between 1996 and 2001. While it obviously continued to be a salient matter, particularly in the form of a constraint, and it continued to feature in public rhetoric, with politicians emphasising the independent nature of Moldova’s foreign policy and the importance of strong relations with the EU to maintaining this independent balance, it was not a clear motive. National identity was, however, still a central part of the package of factors driving the Moldovan FPE in the EU’s direction.

What can be gleaned from these conclusions on a broader level is that the simple assumption often made in research on post-Soviet foreign policy and on weak states more generally – that systemic factors are the dominant motivation or influence – must be questioned. While this assumption can by no means be overturned by a study such as the one presented here, this work does chip away at its strength and does make clear that more research must be done in future to
understand the role of national identity, as well as other domestic-level factors, in the foreign policies of the post-Soviet states and of weak states in general.

References

**Interviews**
All interview have been anonymised at the request of the interviewees.

Interview 1 - Former member of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet (1990 – 1995), secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations, and was involved in the designing of the 1994 Constitution.

Interview 4 - Professor of international relations from Belarus’ leading university department of politics and international relations, expert in international relations and foreign policy, and member of the government appointed Academic Council of Belarusian State University.

Interview 5 - Expert, non-resident, with Belarus’ leading state-funded international relations and foreign policy think tank, specialising in Belarusian foreign policy and diplomacy.

Interview 6 - Expert, non-resident, with Belarus’ leading state-funded international relations and foreign policy think tank, specialising in the sociology of Belarusian politics and national identity and post-Soviet integration.

Interview 7 - High-ranking official from the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former member of Belarusian delegations to Moscow and Brussels.

Interview 8 – Former high-ranking civil servant with the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Interview 10 - Former high-ranking Ukrainian civil servant within the Cabinet of Ministers, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs under Yushchenko, and former Vice Prime Minister under Tymoshenko.

Interview 12 - Director of social research with one of Ukraine’s leading non-governmental public policy think tanks and expert in political sociology of Ukraine.

Interview 13 - Former Commander within the Ukrainian Air Force, former First Assistant to the Minister of Defence.

Interview 14 - Former high-ranking Ukrainian Naval Commander.

Interview 15 - Former Ukrainian Ambassador to Benelux, NATO, and the UK.

Interview 17 - Former official within the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and member of the staff of the Mission of Ukraine to NATO.

Interview 19 - Former head of Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Division for Regional and International Economic Cooperation and senior diplomat.

Interview 20 - Political analyst with Moldova’s leading independent think tank for economic, legal, and political reform research.

Interview 21 - Former high-ranking official with Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to a major EU member state.
Interview 22 - Former high-ranking official with Moldovan Academy of Public Administration, local UNDP official, and local EU project coordinator.

**Texts**


