

This article was downloaded by: [90.198.75.44]

On: 19 December 2014, At: 02:40

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Europe-Asia Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceas20>

Russian Policy Concerning the Black Sea Fleet and its Being Based in Ukraine, 2008-2010: Three Interpretations

Rasmus Nilsson^a

^a Independent Scholar

Published online: 30 Jul 2013.

To cite this article: Rasmus Nilsson (2013) Russian Policy Concerning the Black Sea Fleet and its Being Based in Ukraine, 2008-2010: Three Interpretations, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:6, 1154-1170, DOI: [10.1080/09668136.2013.813119](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2013.813119)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2013.813119>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Russian Policy Concerning the Black Sea Fleet and its Being Based in Ukraine, 2008–2010: Three Interpretations

RASMUS NILSSON

Abstract

This article analyses Russian policy concerning the Black Sea Fleet and the question of its being based in Ukraine in the period between Dmitrii Medvedev's inauguration as Russian President in May 2008 and the Russo–Ukrainian agreement in April 2010 to prolong the base in Ukraine until 2042. The article explores three different interpretations of Russian policy which see the fleet in turn as a preserver of the peace, as a projector of Russian power and as protector of the Russian nation.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE ARE THE TWO MILITARILY MOST significant post-Soviet states. Although weakened since 1991, the military forces of Russia and Ukraine remain among the largest in the world. Relations between these forces may significantly influence the European security scene, especially in the Black Sea region, which also contains several NATO member states. In recent years, no military topic has been more prominent in Russo–Ukrainian relations than the Black Sea Fleet (hereafter BSF) and its bases in Ukraine, particularly in the Crimean port of Sevastopol', which has been so significant historically to Russian identity. Yet despite this prominence academic debate until now has largely avoided the subject.

My analysis in this article relates to the period beginning with Dmitrii Medvedev's inauguration as Russian President in May 2008 and ending in 2010 with the Russo–Ukrainian agreement to extend the base of the BSF in Ukraine by 25 years.¹ I present three interpretations that are found in Russian views of the BSF: first, seeing the BSF as a preserver of the peace, which should only operate and be based in Ukraine in accordance with Ukrainian wishes; second, considering the BSF as a projector of Russian power in relation to the West, with Ukraine placed as a subordinate to Russia; and third, seeing the BSF as a protector of the Russian nation, in which Ukraine is seen as an enemy and the duty of the BSF is to protect Russian regional hegemony against Ukrainian and, arguably, Georgian challenges.

¹The issues and concepts employed in this article are based on research in my doctoral thesis which covered the period up to the end of Vladimir Putin's first presidency (Nilsson 2010).

Although academic debate has generally avoided the topic of the BSF, James Sherr (2010) provides a detailed analysis of the 2010 agreement and outlines a number of reasons why the agreement was harmful for Ukraine. Yet Sherr mostly focuses on the energy aspects of the agreement, and is primarily interested in the Ukrainian context of the agreement, thus neglecting several aspects of the Russian position. He provides insufficient indications of what motivated Russian elites, vaguely mentioning ‘geopolitical advantages’ gained by Russia through the accords (Sherr 2010, p. 3). By doing so, Sherr seems to assume that Russians view the BSF as a projector of Russian power as I define it in this article. Arguing along somewhat similar lines, before the 2010 agreement was signed Dmitrii Trenin warned that the BSF might become an ‘irritant’ in Russo–Ukrainian relations while uncertainty remained about the presence of the BSF in Ukraine beyond 2017. Trenin noted, too, that the Russian government sought and largely gained a subservient Ukraine (Trenin 2007, p. 209). Thus, Trenin and Sherr both assume Russian dominance in relation to Ukraine on the question of the BSF. What neither considers is the possibility that the BSF could function either as an object of cooperation, or as an object of open strife, between Russia and Ukraine. Most scholars seem to agree with Bertil Nygren that the BSF largely ceased to be a significant issue in the 1990s and early 2000s (Nygren 2007, p. 64), but as I demonstrate in this article, the issue retained substantial importance in Russian policy under Medvedev.

In order to evaluate the relative significance of the three interpretations mentioned above I need a measuring stick, which is based on three criteria. First, I take into account any material developments related to my topic. For instance, although several members of the Russian political elite avowedly accepted the eventual departure of the BSF from Sevastopol’ the fact that the BSF extended its lease of facilities by 25 years must be given substantial analytical weight. Rhetoric does not trump empirical developments, although rhetoric in itself can be a significant political factor. Second, I identify narratives united around specific points of reference. Third, I claim that some Russian actors have inherently more influence on foreign policy towards Ukraine and that their perceptions of the BSF, in turn, should be given particular attention.

Constitutionally, the president has overall responsibility for the direction of Russian foreign-policy making.² Furthermore, the president is the supreme commander of the Russian armed forces.³ Therefore, President Dmitrii Medvedev’s perception of the BSF is important to my analysis. Still, perceptions held by a number of other actors must be considered, too. As head of government Vladimir Putin had a constitutionally wide-ranging brief covering military and security matters, as well as economic and cultural matters;⁴ and while Putin was formally subordinated to Medvedev, a number of studies demonstrated the unprecedentedly high political profile of the prime minister during Medvedev’s presidency (De Haas 2010). Thus, while Putin has commented on the BSF to a lesser extent than Medvedev, his perceptions cannot be overlooked. By extension, perceptions held by other members of Putin’s government could also be valuable, but just as the brief and interests held by individual ministers differed greatly, so did the significance of their perceptions for

²*Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 12 December 1993, article 80, paragraph 3, available at: www.mid.ru, accessed 5 October 2010.

³*Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 12 December 1993, article 87, paragraph 1, available at: www.mid.ru, accessed 5 October 2010.

⁴*Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 12 December 1993, article 114, available at: www.mid.ru, accessed 5 October 2010.

my analysis. Statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, were certainly particularly relevant to relations with Ukraine. Given the military nature of the BSF, the viewpoints of the Russian Ministry of Defence also remained important. Finally, whereas his brief as Deputy Prime Minister ranged somewhat wider than the issue of the BSF, Sergei Ivanov combined a previous tenure as Defence Minister and a continuing involvement in Russo–Ukrainian relations, which made any perceptions held by him relevant for this article. In contrast, perceptions held within the legislature were generally less important for my analysis. This was both because of the constitutionally limited role of the legislature in the formulation of foreign and military policy,⁵ and because the legislature was largely controlled by the executive (Donaldson & Noguee 2009, p. 125). Nevertheless, the legislature was at times used by the executive as a testing ground for opinions, which could become state policy in future, and therefore its perceptions could be relevant.

Preserver of the peace

The first interpretation, that the BSF was perceived by Russian political elites as a preserver of the peace, assumes elites in Russia and Ukraine paid little heed to any historical importance of either the BSF or its location in Sevastopol', while focusing instead solely on future bilateral relations. By extension, this interpretation would indicate that Russian elites accepted Ukrainian post-Soviet sovereignty. One reason provided in Russia for retaining the BSF in Ukraine was that the fleet would foster regional peace and be in the mutual interest of Russia and Ukraine. Arguably, this was supported by events taking place during Boris Yel'tsin's presidency. In 1997, the two states agreed to transfer the majority of the BSF to Russia and to allow it to remain at Ukrainian naval bases until at least 2017. In return Ukraine received financial compensation and official Russian recognition of its sovereignty (Rossiya–Ukraina 2001b, pp. 125–41). Thus, the two states demonstrated peaceful resolution of a post-Soviet dispute. Eleven years later, when Dmitrii Medvedev was inaugurated as Russian President, these agreements remained in force, and within the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, prolongation of the agreements was seen to be advantageous for both Russia and Ukraine. In June 2008, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, thus urged the Ukrainian government to make decisions concerning the BSF on a 'reciprocal basis and on the basis of the existing accords'.⁶ Later that summer, following the use of the BSF in the Russian invasion of Georgia, the Ukrainian authorities briefly challenged the return of the fleet to its base in Sevastopol'. Yet the dispute was quickly resolved and the BSF was allowed back to Crimea. Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigorii Karasin, was satisfied that the Ukrainian challenge had been a temporary aberration:

Today the BSF is satisfactorily fulfilling its tasks in full compliance with the basing agreements of 1997 and with international law in general. On August 19 the Ukrainian side officially stated that those vessels from the BSF, which had previously left Ukrainian territory, would be allowed to return to their bases. This is as it should be.⁷

⁵*Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 12 December 1993, articles 102, 103, available at: www.mid.ru, accessed 5 October 2010.

⁶*ITAR-TASS Daily*, 6 June 2008.

⁷*Ogonek*, 25 August 2008.

Certainly, the Medvedev administration appeared convinced that the beneficial nature of the BSF would continue to be recognised abroad.

In September 2008 a similar attitude was visible following the appearance of US navy vessels in the Black Sea. The US Navy was bringing humanitarian supplies to the Georgian port of Poti, which remained partly occupied by Russia. However, despite this potentially provocative presence the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs swiftly announced that the BSF contemplated no military action in the Black Sea (Gorst 2008). While armed resistance against American forces would never have been viable anyway, the Russian statement underlined as a matter of principle that the BSF would not be used to defend any Russian sphere of interests. Seemingly, this was the case for Russo–Ukrainian affairs, as well. In October, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov underlined that the BSF would not remain in Ukraine beyond 2017 ‘if the government in power in Ukraine at that time does not extend the lease’ (Rudakov 2008). Russians would have to convince their neighbours that the BSF was mutually beneficial. Certainly, the peacemaking and peacekeeping role of the BSF in the Russo–Georgian conflict was promoted by the Russian government and non-military benefits of the BSF for Ukraine were presented. The fleet provided a notable input to the economy in Sevastopol’, where the BSF remained one of the largest employers (Gorenburg 2010). Furthermore, in December Medvedev even offered the assistance of the BSF in rescue operations following the collapse of an apartment building in the Crimean city of Evpatoria.⁸ Although the offer was declined, Medvedev had ostensibly demonstrated the good intentions of the BSF to people in Ukraine in general and to Crimeans in particular.

In 2009 the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to advocate the peaceful and protective nature of the BSF, which was claimed to constitute ‘a link between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, and a stabilising factor in the region’. Indeed, while some Ukrainians continued to challenge the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol’, the Ministry noted that ‘the presence of the BSF in Ukraine not only does not evoke resentment in the local [population], but is welcomed by them’.⁹ Indeed, how could the BSF evoke Ukrainian resentment while it remained in such a decrepit condition? In September 2009 the *Moskva*, the flagship of the fleet, suffered the explosion of a boiler, wounding nine members of its crew and starting a fire, which other ships had to help douse (Shirokorad 2009). Two months later the *Alrosa*, officially the only operational submarine in the BSF, had to abort a training mission and return to Sevastopol’ due to mechanical problems.¹⁰ Under such conditions the BSF did not appear very threatening to many people in Ukraine and elsewhere, despite its substantial manpower. Successive post-Soviet Russian governments had shown little inclination to change this even if the 2008 Russo–Georgian war had indicated that the BSF might still have a regional role to play. Yet despite providing some assistance in the fight against Georgia the fact remained that no significant BSF vessels had been built following the Soviet collapse and that one ship within the allegedly active part of the BSF, the *Kommuna*, had existed under various names and guises since 1912.¹¹

⁸‘Prodolzhayutsya Spasatel’nye Raboty na Meste Vzryva v Zhilom Dome v Evpatorii’, *Radio Svoboda*, 25 December 2008, available at: <http://www.svobodanews.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

⁹*ITAR-TASS Daily*, 21 April 2009.

¹⁰‘Podlodka “Alroza” Prervala Pokhod i Vozvrashchaetsya na Bazu’, *Radio Svoboda*, 21 November 2009, available at: <http://www.svobodanews.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

¹¹*Chernomorskii flot: informatsionnyi resurs*, available at: <http://flot.sevastopol.info/>, accessed 5 October 2010; see also McDermott (2010).

To preserve and secure the position of such a weakened fleet Russia needed Ukrainian cooperation, which was achieved with the April 2010 bilateral agreement to prolong the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol' by 25 years. In exchange for allowing this presence, Viktor Yanukovich's new Ukrainian government would receive natural gas at a price of \$230 per 1,000 cubic metres, compared to the \$330 previously paid. The reduction in price would apply to 30 billion cubic metres in 2010 and 40 billion from 2011 to 2019. The sides officially agreed that this agreement amounted to a discount of \$40 billion over 10 years.¹² Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin claimed that: 'This is not just a matter of money for us, but of cooperation with Ukraine, and certainly military cooperation increases the level of trust and the ability to work in trust on economic and social matters, and this is really the main thing'.¹³ In July Putin was to remark that Russo–Ukrainian relations had now returned to their natural peaceful state of cooperation between two equal parties:

Tomorrow [on the annual Russian Navy Day] Ukrainian and Russian sailors will be together as our peoples have been together for centuries. I want to give a big thanks to the leadership of Ukraine, especially President Viktor Yanukovich—both for the decision concerning the Russian BSF and for the atmosphere, which he creates in relations between our brotherly nations of Russia and Ukraine.¹⁴

Thus, especially following Yanukovich's election as Ukrainian President in February 2010, cooperation on the BSF now symbolised the rational equality and cooperation of the two nations, while any temporary obstruction witnessed under Viktor Yushchenko had been an irrational interlude.

Projector of Russian power

The second interpretation of Russian policy is that the BSF was perceived by Russian political elites as a projector of Russian power. As has been well documented elsewhere (Lieven 1999, pp. 105–33), the BSF, Sevastopol' and Crimea retained a central place in the Russian national identity following the Soviet collapse. Although the peninsula had officially been transferred from the jurisdiction of the Russian to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954 the Russian identity of Crimea remained a given for many in Russia and Ukraine alike, following a century during which the central place of the peninsula and Sevastopol' in Russian identity had been repeatedly stressed (Plokhly 2000, pp. 374–81). Thus, Russian leaders would always be reluctant to withdraw the last, sizeable and symbolically important presence of Russia in this Black Sea port. In addition, Russia gained notable material advantages from retaining the BSF in Crimea. Putin and other Russian officials were correct in stating that the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol' could bring some benefits to Ukraine or at least to Crimea. Nevertheless, during the first two years of Medvedev's presidency it was clear that for many Russian elite members any benefits

¹²'Yanukovich Obminyav Has na Flot', *UNIAN*, 21 April 2010, available at: <http://www.unian.net/>, accessed 4 October 2010; 'Ekspert: viddaty Krym—maizhe te same, shito Kuryl'ski ostrovy', *UNIAN*, 23 April 2010, available at: <http://www.unian.net/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

¹³'Putin Schitaet Zapredel'noi Tsenu za Arendu Bazy v Sevastopole', *RIA Novosti*, 27 April 2010, available at: <http://www.rian.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

¹⁴'Putin Priekhal na Baik-shou pod Sevastopolem na "Kharli Devidsone"', *RIA Novosti*, 24 July 2010, available at: <http://www.rian.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

accruing to Ukraine were subordinate to what the BSF might do for Russian power projection abroad. In this context it is important to remember that the military value of the BSF always consisted of more than just the somewhat unreliable ships described above. This value was particularly marked as long as the BSF remained in Sevastopol'. Here, the harbour was much deeper and more suited to larger military vessels than Russian Black Sea harbours at Novorossiisk and elsewhere. In addition, the conspicuous presence of land-based missiles and other Russian artillery as well as the permission for stationing up to 25,000 Russian military personnel in and around Sevastopol' further signified why Russia might have an interest in retaining the BSF facilities. Arguments combining material and symbolic elements were advanced in Russia. Shortly after Medvedev's presidential inauguration, Russian Defence Minister Anatolii Serdyukov called for the BSF to remain in Sevastopol', stressing that the BSF had 'constantly played an important role in the fate of Russia and Ukraine' and promising that the leadership of Russia 'shall do everything' to increase the military capabilities of the BSF.¹⁵ Thus, the Sevastopol' facilities might become the centre for renewed Russian naval dominance in the region and a symbol of the continuation of the Russo–Ukrainian alliance.

Medvedev also emphasised that Sevastopol' had an importance for the BSF and Russia, which could not be ignored. In June he noted how:

Sevastopol', a city of heroes, a city of workers, took part in truly landmark events. It is the 'cradle' of the Russian BSF with which it has always shared everything equally—both bitter losses and great victories. And no matter what happened to the fleet, Sevastopol' and its inhabitants they always prevailed, only gaining in strength and fortitude of the soul.¹⁶

Combining Soviet-era rhetoric with an emphasis on the Russianness of the BSF, Medvedev indicated that without the BSF there would be no Sevastopol'. Certainly, the Russian President had to stress Russian claims to military facilities in Crimea to secure the future of a powerful BSF. Notably, the shipyard in the Ukrainian city of Mykolaiiv had been used to build all Soviet aircraft carriers and had subsequently witnessed repairs and modernisation of the *Moskva*, the BSF flagship. The Mykolaiiv shipyard would be lost together with the facilities of the BSF in Ukraine, and Russia would be hard pressed to build larger ships for any future BSF, in Novorossiisk or elsewhere (Felgenhauer 2008). At the very least, in such a situation the future of the BSF would depend on goodwill shown by administrations in Kyiv. Members of the Russian government were unprepared to allow such an influence to what they perceived as mere provincial authorities which should be subordinate to Moscow.

The fact that Ukraine under Yushchenko remained a province in the eyes of Russian elites was demonstrated following the outbreak of the Russo–Georgian war in August 2008. Numerous vessels from the BSF sailed off to blockade the Georgian coast. Yushchenko had already demanded that any BSF vessels in future should apply ten days in advance for permission to leave Sevastopol'. Now, as the BSF took part in combat operations in Georgia, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that any BSF vessel returning to Ukrainian waters from combat operations in Georgia might not be allowed back onto

¹⁵*Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 12 May 2008.

¹⁶'Sevastopol' Yavlyaetsya "Kolybel'yu" Chernomorskogo Flota Rossii—Medvedev', *Interfaks*, 14 June 2008, available at: <http://www.interfaks.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

Ukrainian territory.¹⁷ This threat of Ukrainian obstruction, however, did nothing to prevent BSF vessels from returning to Crimea. Furthermore, Serdyukov immediately dismissed the decree as ‘not serious’ (Olearchyk 2008), while Medvedev was even blunter: ‘I will not support such speculations about the periods and the term of the Russian BSF’s presence in Ukraine ... they should not tell us what to do. We will act in strict compliance with the directives issued by me as supreme commander-in-chief. Unqualified interference will not lead anywhere’.¹⁸ In late August the Russian President took his criticism a step further: ‘Any international agreement has more validity than the decrees from a local power ... the Russian fleet is part of the Armed Forces and subordinated to the [Russian] High Command’ (Myasnikov 2008). Suddenly, it was an obstinate local centre in Kyiv that was interfering in military manoeuvres on its territory while Russia apparently had a legitimate claim on Crimea and most of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast within a military power vertical radiating from Moscow.

For much of the Russian political elite Ukraine was supposed to unquestioningly support the BSF and Russia against the real adversary of the West, NATO and, particularly, the USA. The invasion of Georgia earned Russia substantial criticism in the West. In Moscow fears appeared that the USA would take advantage of the situation to insert a military presence in the Caucasus in particular and in the Black Sea region more generally. Thus, although the Russian leadership eventually accepted the arrival of American emergency aid on military ships to Poti in Georgia, as mentioned above, the immediate Russian reaction had been to dispatch the flagship of the BSF, the *Moskva*, to tail the American vessels. While the BSF officially stated that the *Moskva* was on a training exercise this appeared incongruous in light of recent events (Tran 2008). At the same time Russian political elites knew that American influence in the Black Sea could best be countered with Ukrainian assistance. The Russian government waited a little to allow Russo–Ukrainian disputes to diminish in the wake of the Russo–Georgian war. Then, Serdyukov presented a detailed offer to Ukraine:

We wish for the BSF to remain in Sevastopol’ after the 2017 deadline in the current agreement with Ukraine. In order to ensure that, we wish to present a number of offers, which would be beneficial to both countries and relate both to the lease paid for renting the base in Sevastopol’ and to the development of socio-economic infrastructure and the cooperation of military–industrial complexes, shipbuilding etc.¹⁹

Certainly, Serdyukov’s offers might signify financial benefits for Ukraine. At the same time, though, the impression of Ukraine as a favoured province receiving handouts from the centre was reinforced while Serdyukov’s offer also seemed to be targeted at Ukrainian regions such as Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, which were already closely aligned with Russia. In this way the Russian government was showing Ukrainians that financial advantage would accrue to the latter to the extent they subordinated their policies to Russia.

Throughout 2009, Russian elite members continued to advocate subsidising the Ukrainian economy in return for the BSF retaining its facilities in Sevastopol’, even if most Russian politicians did little to understand the intricacies of ownership in the opaque gas trade and,

¹⁷*Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 11 August 2008.

¹⁸*ITAR-TASS Daily*, 20 August 2008.

¹⁹*Vremya Novostei*, 24 September 2008.

by extension, did little to ensure that the Ukrainian economy would, in fact, benefit from such subsidies. As on most issues, majority opinion in the parliament did not deviate from government policy. While some deputies welcomed the invitation from Abkhazian leaders to construct a new BSF base in Ochamchira the central importance of Sevastopol' was noted in February by the Chairman of the Federal Council Committee on Defence and Security, Viktor Ozerov: 'We must do everything depending on us in our bilateral relations with Ukraine to ensure that the BSF after 2017 will remain where it has historically been based' (Matveev 2009). In the rhetoric and actions of Russian decision makers there was a sense that the BSF would inevitably remain in Sevastopol' and that Ukrainian elites did not have anything to say in the matter. In late July, Special Forces from the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior intercepted a BSF weapon transport. The transport was moving short-range and medium-range missiles through Sevastopol' to a technical repair base 30 km outside the city. The medium-range missiles, capable of carrying nuclear warheads, had been used against Georgia the previous year. After the transport had been halted the first reaction of Andrei Nesterenko, from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was to claim that such transports were permitted under the 1997 BSF agreements.²⁰ The Russian government seemingly argued that Russia had sovereignty not only over the BSF base, but over the city of Sevastopol' and over the surrounding countryside, too. When subsequent BSF missile transports were discovered and intercepted by Ukraine this impression was reinforced.

At the same time the Russian military worked to incorporate the BSF more in the Caucasus region. In September 2009 a presidential decree created the position of Deputy Commander for Naval Affairs in the North Caucasus Military District subordinating the BSF as well as the Caspian flotilla to the Caucasus military commander (Tarasov 2009). This meant that the BSF had officially become part of Russian plans to extend control over the Caucasus and that Russian elites would be even more reluctant to withdraw the fleet from its advantageous position in Sevastopol'. The increased importance for Russia of the BSF might have rendered the fleet more susceptible to Ukrainian pressure, yet Russian government officials and members of the security services had hopes that the forthcoming Ukrainian presidential elections would present a more amicable administration in Kyiv. At this point Russian elites would have welcomed most alternatives to Yushchenko as President of Ukraine. Notably, while former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko had been a central actor in the Orange Revolution, even she was now viewed in Russia as more willing and able to listen to Russian concerns regarding the BSF and other sensitive issues than Yushchenko had ever been. Consequently, while Yanukovich may have remained the Russian favourite, the Russian executive did indicate willingness to cooperate with a Tymoshenko presidency if necessary.²¹ At the same time Russian elites wanted to hedge their bets. Thus, while Russian security services did see fit to leave the BSF and Ukraine in December in compliance with Ukrainian demands, this was almost certainly done to avoid unnecessary Russo-Ukrainian tension in the run-up to the Ukrainian presidential election; tension which might have damaged the chances of Viktor Yanukovich, who agreed with the Russian position on the BSF and whose political party, the Party of Regions, had formally established a cooperation agreement already in 2005 with United Russia, the political party allied with the Russian executive. As of late

²⁰*Ukrainska Pravda*, 21 July 2009.

²¹*Interfax*, 19 January 2010.

2009 this agreement remained in full force.²² Indeed, BSF officers admitted hoping that the position of their fleet would be better following mooted Ukrainian parliamentary elections,²³ let alone the scheduled presidential election.

Certainly, the election of Yanukovich as Ukrainian President meant that Russia could now work with a politician who had consistently courted Russia from the Ukrainian opposition since 2005. It might be expected that Medvedev would address Yanukovich quite differently from how Yushchenko had been treated. By March, Medvedev and Yanukovich were deeply involved in negotiations on the BSF, basing these on existing agreements,²⁴ but not denying that they were working towards an extension of the latter, particularly the 1997 lease agreements. Good relations between Russia and Ukraine would finally allow the BSF to become the basis on which Russian activity as a great power could be projected abroad, for instance in south eastern Europe and the Middle East and envisaged in February by *Duma* member and former BSF commander Admiral Vladimir Komoedov:

Strengthening the [naval] component in [the Black Sea] region, where all the world politics are concentrated today in view of the proximity of Iraq and new NATO countries is something one should think about today so that it isn't too late tomorrow ... the fleet should be reinforced with ships and a more extensive system of bases because we mainly concentrate all our forces in Sevastopol' and that is too little.²⁵

What and how much Russia should offer in return for Ukrainian assistance remained up for discussion. The idea of providing Ukraine with gas subsidies in return for an extended lease was first mentioned by Russian parliamentary deputies, notably the previously combative Konstantin Zatulin. The First Deputy Chairman of the *Duma* committee for issues relating to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and relations with compatriots suggested in March that Russia might reduce prices for gas deliveries to Ukraine if the BSF could stay in Sevastopol'.²⁶ Such an exchange eventually formed the basis for the bilateral agreement struck the following month.

Yet with a history of challenging Ukrainian sovereignty, Zatulin was not the best messenger to advocate alleged Russian benefits to Ukraine. As long as negotiations continued the Russian leadership became increasingly anxious that Ukrainians understand the advantages in store for them. In April, Medvedev stressed that an agreement would benefit Ukraine as well as Russia, noting that 'our Ukrainian partners will receive a discount on gas. These funds will turn into a real resource for [Ukraine's] business and economic aims' (Olearchyk & Wagstyl 2010). Medvedev's claim did have some merit. As mentioned above, the agreement on the prolongation of the BSF lease of Sevastopol' facilities reduced energy payments due by Ukraine to Russia, saving the Ukrainian state budget much more than the \$98 million per year, which had been stipulated in the 1997 basing agreements (Rossiia–Ukraina 2001b, p. 139). The Russian government could and did argue that it was

²²*Kyiv Post*, 22 November 2009.

²³*Kommersant Daily*, 2 December 2009.

²⁴'Medvedev i Yanukovich: obshchnost' pobedy', *Interfaks*, 5 March 2010, available at: <http://www.interfax.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

²⁵'Ex-commander: Russia should Strengthen Black Sea Fleet', *Interfax*, 5 February 2010, available at: <http://www.interfax.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

²⁶'Zatulin Nazvav Umovu Znyzhennia tsiny na Gaz dlya Ukrainy', *UNIAN*, 19 March 2010, available at: <http://www.unian.net/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

being more generous now, even accounting for the increase in Russian GDP. Arguably, therefore, Russian political elites were not just willing to treat Ukraine fairly, but even to subsidise the neighbouring state beyond what might have been expected based on market terms. Furthermore, with the *Duma* unanimously backing the new agreement it seemed that the Russian political elite was prepared to pay dearly to assist the BSF.²⁷

It should be remembered, though, that advantages to the BSF in the new agreement might reach beyond the extension of a lease of military base facilities. Yanukovich's government seemed to have no objections to an increased non-military Russian presence in Crimea. By late May the FSB had been re-instated in the BSF following agreement between Valerii Khoroshkovskii and Aleksandr Bortnikov, heads of the SBU and FSB (Ukrainian and Russian domestic security services) respectively. Not only did this reverse the above-mentioned dismissal of the FSB from Ukraine the previous year, but the two security services immediately undertook joint anti-terrorism operations, as well.²⁸ Thus, as in other post-Soviet states, the FSB was deployed outside the borders of the Russian Federation, despite the fact that the law governing the FSB clearly indicated the domestic nature of the service,²⁹ as opposed to the foreign intelligence service, the SVR. It could be argued that the overt deployment of the FSB in Crimea indicated that the Russian government saw this region as effectively subject to dual Russo–Ukrainian sovereignty for the time being. Apparently, Yanukovich had no problem with this.

Protector of the Russian nation

The third interpretation of Russian policy is that the BSF was perceived by Russian political elites as a protector of the Russian nation. In this interpretation the purpose of the BSF was at least partly to protect against Ukrainian advances. Following the Soviet collapse, the 1990s had witnessed an increasingly bitter battle between Russia and Ukraine concerning the ownership of the BSF within the wider context of the disputed sovereignty of Sevastopol' and of Crimea as a whole. Historically, there had sometimes been a tendency in Moscow to stress the centrality of Sevastopol' and Crimea for Russia and Russians and not for any supranational entity including Ukraine (Plokhly 2000, p. 378). After the Soviet collapse the Russian elite had, arguably, been forced back into such a position. Following unsuccessful attempts by Russian President Boris Yel'tsin to place the BSF under the multinational command of the CIS, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk claimed the BSF for his country in turn prompting Yel'tsin to claim the fleet for Russia (Rossiya–Ukraina 2001a, pp. 55–57). Eventually, the aforementioned treaties on the ownership and basing of the BSF from 1997 halted the dispute, seemingly consolidating Ukrainian sovereignty in the process (Kuzio 2007, pp. 204–21). Yet the 1997 agreements had left a number of issues unresolved. Russian and Ukrainian political and economic elites had, to a large extent, supported the agreements in order for both sides to continue to profit from the Russo–Ukrainian energy trade (Bukkvoll 2001, p. 1145). Russia had now officially accepted Ukrainian sovereignty in return for the BSF as well as for the long-term lease of naval facilities in Sevastopol'. However, the fortunes of this arrangement remained tied to individuals rather than to

²⁷ *FK-Novosti. Russkaya Versiya*, 27 April 2010.

²⁸ *Ukrainska Pravda*, 12 May 2010.

²⁹ 'Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii: spravka', *RIA Novosti*, 3 April 2010, available at: www.rian.ru, accessed 31 March 2011.

processes. Thus, it remained quite possible that Russo–Ukrainian disputes would resurface in the future, and that such disputes would again challenge Ukrainian sovereignty. Above, I noted how Russian decision makers between 2008 and 2010 repeatedly referred to the BSF as an instrument for the projection of Russian power in the world. Consequently, it might have been expected that the BSF would not be aimed at Black Sea littoral states, such as Ukraine and Georgia. Nevertheless, when looking at the fleet under Medvedev it still remained capable of undertaking local operations only. During the first two years of Medvedev’s presidency the BSF consisted of 219 vessels. The majority of these were supporting vessels with 43 being classified as combat vessels. As indicated earlier, of these combat vessels only two were built following the Soviet collapse and these two were of somewhat negligible size. Three of the combat vessels hailed from the 1960s and eight from the 1970s. The flagship of the BSF, the *Moskva* (also known as the *Slava*), was built in 1979. Thus, the BSF was ageing and had seen almost no modernisation take place under Russian ownership. Furthermore, while the *Moskva* with its 11,280 tonnes³⁰ was significantly larger than any ship in the adjacent Turkish navy,³¹ let alone any ship in the much smaller Ukrainian and Georgian navies, it was less than one-tenth the size of one of the larger American aircraft carriers and only about as large as a ship of the Austin class used for landings by US Marines.³² It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the BSF at present is intended to defend Russian local interests in the Black Sea and not against global great powers elsewhere.

Moreover, Russian interests in the Black Sea region could easily work against Ukraine. From the outset Medvedev’s government showed its willingness to challenge Ukrainian obstruction of the BSF by all means necessary, including unravelling the entire framework of Russo–Ukrainian relations. When, in May 2008, Yushchenko ordered Ukrainian authorities to prepare for the departure of the BSF from Ukraine by 2017, the Russian government stated:

The adoption of [Yushchenko’s] decree in a haste that we find hard to understand cannot facilitate trust between Russia and Ukraine and can adversely affect the talks on the BSF. . . . [T]he Russian side believes that it is premature to discuss the timeframe for the deployment of the fleet now. This issue should be the subject of a Russian–Ukrainian agreement later and considered in the context of the whole range of bilateral relations.³³

The following month, according to Lavrov, Medvedev:

notified Yushchenko that the actions of Kyiv in connection with discussions on the length of stay for the BSF in Sevastopol’ are inadequate . . . deciding how the BSF can function normally, as outlined in existing agreements, and deciding how to deal with unresolved matters cannot be done unilaterally. The Agreement [concerning the BSF from 1997] includes the possibility of prolonging the stay of the BSF. We would not like to see from our partners an approach which prepares for the departure of the BSF ten years before the end of the period. . . . The Agreement on Friendship and Partnership [from 1997] assumes that neither party threatens the security of the other. . . . Ukrainian membership in [NATO] poses an increasing number of questions and contemplations of Russian security.³⁴

³⁰*Chernomorskiy flot: informatsionnyi resurs*, available at: <http://flot.sevastopol.info/>, accessed 5 October 2010.

³¹*Turkish Naval Forces*, available at: www.dzkk.tsk.tr/english/HOMEPAGE.php, accessed 5 October 2010.

³²*US Navy*, available at: www.navy.mil, accessed 5 October 2010.

³³*ITAR-TASS Daily*, 21 May 2008.

³⁴‘Medvedev Vstretilsya s Kollegami po SNG. On obvinil Yushchenko v neadekvatnosti’, *NEWSru.com*, 6 June 2008, available at: <http://newsru.com>, accessed 4 October 2010.

Without specifying where the instability might appear, Medvedev had chosen to openly threaten Ukrainians on behalf of the BSF at the outset of his presidency. He seemed prepared to place the blame on the Yushchenko administration, in particular, for refusing continued partnership with Russia. And, most importantly, Medvedev indicated that the 1997 agreements, the basis for Russian recognition of Ukrainian sovereignty, could be threatened by Ukrainian refusal to prolong the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol'.

At the same time, members of the Russian government warned of more robust action to follow. The historical importance of Sevastopol' for Russia was often prominently displayed in these warnings. Thus, Sergei Ivanov's interpretation of the importance of the link between the BSF and Sevastopol' was that: 'It is hard to imagine the Russian BSF without its main base; the fate of Sevastopol' matters for all those who lived in the Soviet Union, it is our city . . . it is dangerous to play not only with fire but also with history' (Felgenhauer 2008). This comment, especially the last part, could be interpreted as a military threat against Ukraine; and while Ivanov was known for his combative statements in general, Ukrainian attempts to obstruct the participation of the BSF in the Russian war with Georgia led to widespread condemnation, even from the previously peaceful Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some Russian diplomats talked of 'a politically motivated unilateral initiative by the Ukrainian authorities', while the Ministry officially took matters a step further, denouncing the Ukrainian executive threat to prevent the BSF from returning at will to Ukraine as 'a serious anti-Russian step [which] strikes another blow to the negotiations concerning the BSF and, in a wider sense, to the entire framework of bilateral relations'.³⁵ This was despite the fact that the BSF had hardly acted in a peacekeeping, as opposed to offensive, role in Georgia, unlike Russian claims to the contrary. The *Moskva* spent two weeks patrolling the Georgian coastline and preventing the transfer of weapons to Georgia from abroad. Subsequently, the same vessel accompanied two smaller ships from the fleet back to Sevastopol'³⁶ in what could easily be interpreted as a show of strength towards Ukraine as well as Western intruders.

In the autumn of 2008, following the end of Russo–Georgian hostilities, the Russian government gradually diminished its attacks on Ukraine, which had, after all, been unable to prevent the return of the BSF to Sevastopol'. Yet in Moscow there remained a fear that if Ukraine wanted to obstruct BSF operations it might be able to do so in future, damaging not only Russian military manoeuvrability, but also the historical connections between Russia and the Crimean port. The threat was noted by the spokesman of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 2008 in connection with reports in the Ukrainian mass media about a meeting held at the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry with the participation of police, army and security officers, which discussed ways of tightening control over the deployment of the BSF on Ukrainian territory:

It looks suspicious that the meeting was held against the background of reports, confirmed by Ukrainian officials, concerning the drafting of various plans of staging provocations in Ukraine, aimed at destabilising the situation in Crimea and around the BSF. It is suspicious that the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry did not refute those reports. . . . Naturally all those developments evoke serious concern. We urge Ukraine to realise that it will be very much responsible for possible catastrophic consequences of such provocations for Russian–Ukrainian relations.³⁷

³⁵*Rossiia*, 14 August 2008.

³⁶*The Independent*, 24 August 2008.

³⁷*ITAR-TASS Daily*, 9 October 2008.

Nothing else came of the meetings in Ukraine and Russian disquietude gradually diminished. Nevertheless, into 2009 Russia remained sensitive to Ukrainian challenges to the BSF as the fleet continued to play a central role in Russian attempts to retain control over the Caucasus in general and Georgia in particular. By April, domestic opponents of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili protested in the streets of Tbilisi in an unsuccessful attempt to topple a man they accused of having unnecessarily provoked the war with Russia. And just as the protests were beginning the *Moskva* led the BSF from Sevastopol' towards Georgia. Officially, this manoeuvre was part of routine military exercises, but that was what Russia had claimed the previous summer just before the Russo–Georgian war (Felgenhauer 2009). Of course, the Russian leadership had little reason to care whether the Georgian government believed the excuse as long as neither the West nor Yushchenko's Ukraine was prepared to obstruct the Russian use of the BSF against Tbilisi. On this occasion Ukraine remained silent. Other uses of the BSF could not help but provoke a reaction from Yushchenko's administration, however. Following years of clashes between the Russian leadership and Yushchenko's Ukraine, Russian politicians had increasingly come to view the BSF as a tool that could be used against Ukrainians as well as Georgians in protection of the Russian diaspora and allies. Ominously, in June 2009 Zatulin advocated seeing Russians in Ukraine and elsewhere in neighbouring states 'as having the same rank as the army, the fleet and church' (Zatulin 2009). By doing so, the Russian deputy militarised the question of the Russian diaspora and legitimised the potential use of the BSF to defend them in future. As a military force the BSF might not have been able to do much against Ukraine. Yet, as Sherr has pointed out, the fleet had highly useful covert functions too. Notably, it had long served as a cover for Russian secret services to remain in Ukraine, where they could and did influence their host country (Sherr 2010, p. 16), or possibly even subvert the control of the Ukrainian administration. This danger was recognised by many observers, including the Ukrainian security services, the SBU (Kuzio 2009), and, apparently, including high-ranking members of the US administration.³⁸ By June 2009 Yushchenko's government had apparently recognised this danger as it ordered representatives of the Russian domestic security services, the FSB, to leave the BSF and Ukraine within six months. Yet immediately the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested. The Ministry argued that the FSB was in Ukraine based on bilateral fleet agreements and could only be removed with Russian consent.³⁹ Thus, Russian officials seemingly found it legitimate that domestic Russian security services could circumvent Ukrainian political sovereignty. That the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued diplomatic status for the BSF mission was confirmed, too, by the retaliatory expulsion of a Ukrainian diplomat in Moscow following the expulsion from Ukraine of the Russian diplomat responsible for the BSF.⁴⁰

Medvedev did not become directly involved in these affairs and refrained from predicting the position of the BSF in 2017. Yet the President clearly viewed Yushchenko's government as responsible for the current friction. In August, Medvedev even wrote Yushchenko a letter in which the Ukrainian leader was blamed for 'obstructing' the BSF and the Ukrainian

³⁸'Nordic and Baltic Political Directors', *Wikileaks*, 2 October 2008, available at: <http://www.wikileaks.ch/>, accessed 19 April 2011.

³⁹*Ukrainska Pravda*, 18 June 2009.

⁴⁰'Rossiiskii MID Dal Simmetrichnyi Otvet', *Radio Svoboda*, 30 July 2009, available at: <http://www.svobodanews.ru/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

President was, effectively, dismissed by Medvedev as a spent force;⁴¹ not unlike Russian treatment of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili following the Russo–Georgian war the previous year. At the same time the BSF was allowed to answer perceived Ukrainian provocations in a more robust fashion. When Ukrainian bailiffs tried to seize navigational equipment from a lighthouse near Sevastopol’ under BSF control armed Russian sailors arrested the bailiffs and made certain the confrontation was recorded by Russian television (Dul’man 2009). Apparently, BSF commanders wanted a reputation as defenders of the fleet and perhaps of the city against an aggressive Ukrainian government. Subsequently, during the autumn the BSF tried to overcome Ukrainian attempts at circumscribing the movements of the fleet by erecting new camps outside Sevastopol’ and transferring some weapons and other equipment there.⁴²

While such local tussles took place on Crimea, in the run-up to the Ukrainian presidential election the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to blame Yushchenko for the troubles. In October, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigorii Karasin pointed out that:

The fleet has to have a normal existence and fulfil the tasks ahead of us, which first of all requires a large degree of manoeuvrability for the units. This is hindered by the Ukrainian President’s decrees, which are intended to terminate the system whereby the military vessels of the Russian BSF can cross the [Russo–Ukrainian] borders just as Russian military formations can move about on Ukrainian territory outside their bases ... these [decrees] contravene the BSF basing agreements. ... Ukraine is also obliged not to interfere with the internal affairs of our military deployments. (Pasiakin 2009)

Like Medvedev, Karasin held Yushchenko and his close associates personally responsible for this development.

Such an excessive focus on Yushchenko’s attempts to harm the BSF implied that new Ukrainian President Yanukovych would be viewed more favourably in Moscow. Indeed, as I have previously described, it took only a few months after the regime change in Kyiv before Russia and Ukraine had signed a seemingly mutually satisfactory agreement on basing lease extension and gas subsidies. The advantage for Ukraine was not clear-cut though. While the payment of \$330/1,000 cubic metres of gas did represent a discount on the agreed base price from January 2009, at \$450/1,000 cubic metres this base price was noticeably higher than, for instance, the average German import price at the time, which stood at \$398. Thus, the Ukrainian discount acquired by the agreement of 2010 was only a discount relative to a relatively very high earlier price (Pirani *et al.*, 2010, p. 20). The Russian state could not be blamed for ensuring maximum advantages for its companies, yet the image of a ‘supportive big brother’ was dubious. Russia did not seem eager to help, either, when Ukraine was forced by the IMF in August to raise gas prices for domestic households by 50% (Olearchyk 2010). Additionally, even while Putin made his opinion clear in April that Ukraine was receiving preferential treatment with an agreement on gas subsidies, which would never be offered to other states, he also noted that Russia expected to exert influence on Crimea as a whole and not just concerning the BSF (Bryanskii 2010). The influential Russian Prime Minister was not completely convinced that Yanukovych and

⁴¹ *Kommersant*”, 12 August 2009.

⁴² ‘Russian Black Sea Fleet Objects to Ukrainian Checks’, *RFE/RL*, 18 October 2009, available at: <http://www.rferl.org>, accessed 4 October 2010.

other Ukrainian politicians would immediately allow this. Indeed, Putin openly wondered why Yanukovich suddenly hesitated to prolong the basing agreement, since neither Tymoshenko's nor Yanukovich's previous governments had objected.⁴³ This implied that Putin and other Russian elites remained uncertain over whether Yanukovich might not present more obstacles for the BSF in future in order to gain short-term advantages at home.

Conclusion

In this article I have presented three interpretations of Russian policy regarding the BSF and its basing in Ukraine. It seems clear to me that the first interpretation, of the BSF as a preserver of the peace over which Ukraine and Russia should have equal power, was not very noticeable in Russian foreign policy. Certainly, Russian officials made a habit of referring to the 1997 agreements and international law in order to prevent Ukraine from curtly dismissing the BSF. Yet apart from isolated comments Russian political elites never showed willingness to withdraw the BSF from Ukraine just as the involvement of the BSF in the Russo–Georgian war made it difficult to argue that the fleet only had peaceful aims. Indeed, not least due to the central place of Crimea and Sevastopol' in Russian history, there seems to have been little comprehension among Russian policy makers for the idea of Russian military forces subordinate to international law and the sovereignty of neighbouring states such as Ukraine. While it would require a much more detailed study to conclusively determine whether this was indeed the case, I might tentatively suggest that Medvedev's appearance as Russian President failed to imbue Russian political elites with the notion that other post-Soviet states were legitimate equals *qua* their sovereign status on the international military scene.

In contrast, the second interpretation viewing the BSF as a projector of Russian power abroad with the assistance of a subordinated Ukraine would seem to be very relevant for Russian policy. There were a number of reasons for this, not least the historical role of Imperial and Soviet Russia as regional hegemon; a role which was deeply rooted in the mentality of the Russian elite. Similarly, for most influential Russians the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol' seemed inextricably linked to the historic Russian ownership of Crimea as a whole. Partly for such reasons was the presence of the BSF in Sevastopol' beyond 2017 viewed as a legitimate necessity *qua* the identity of Russia as a state. In addition, however, there was a pronounced feeling that the BSF had a role to fulfil in the world and that the majority of Ukrainians, reasonable as they were, could not help but understand this. Not only could the BSF assist in the protection of endangered Caucasian minorities, but it could help Russia back into the role of global great power, which had been abandoned following the Soviet collapse. Additionally, a significant proportion of the population in Ukraine strongly favoured good relations with Russia. Particularly among Crimeans such sentiments were widespread and it was perhaps not unreasonable for the Medvedev administration to assume that people in Ukraine, apart from a fringe of nationalists surrounding Yushchenko, understood the beneficial nature of the Russian BSF.

Yet at the same time Russian elites could not ignore the fact that such alleged nationalists ruled Ukraine from Kyiv. Whether Russians believed that Yushchenko had been

⁴³ 'Yaitsya i Stovp Dymu v Parlamenti Ukrainy, ale Spravzhnya Bomba Rvane Piznishe (evropeis'ka presa)', *Radio Svoboda*, 27 April 2010, available at: <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/>, accessed 4 October 2010.

democratically elected was a different matter, but as Ukrainian President he was certainly in a position to trouble the BSF. This might have made the third interpretation of the BSF as protector of Russians against Ukraine quite relevant for any analysis of Russian foreign policy. However, already in August 2008 Yushchenko's bluff was called when he and his government were powerless to prevent the BSF from operating against Georgia from its base in Sevastopol'. Subsequently, there was an increasing feeling that Russian politicians were biding their time, waiting for the increasingly inevitable dethronement of Yushchenko by Yanukovich whose allegiance to Russia seemed quite certain. Nevertheless, the Russian administration never felt completely at ease while Yushchenko was president, and even Putin showed some doubts following Yanukovich's ascendance and the signing of the agreement to extend the BSF basing lease. The problem remained that, as much as Moscow would like to ignore Ukraine in the quest for global naval power, the BSF for now remained completely incapable of assisting any Russian great power dreams. As long as the fleet did not receive funds and facilities allowing it to operate independently from Ukraine it would always be subject to whatever changing winds came from Kyiv. Such dependence on what was still seen by many Russian elites as a provincial outpost was deeply uncomfortable for Moscow even 20 years after the Soviet collapse.

Independent Scholar

References

- Bryanskii, G. (2010) 'Vladimir Putin: sdelok po skheme "gaz v obmen na voennye bazy" bol'she ne budet', *InoSMI*, 22 April, available at: <http://www.inosmi.ru>, accessed 4 October 2010.
- Bukkvoll, T. (2001) 'Off the Cuff Politics: Explaining Russia's Lack of a Ukraine Strategy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, 8.
- De Haas, M. (2010) *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and beyond* (London, Routledge).
- Donaldson, R. & Nogue, J. (2009) *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (4th edn) (Armonk, NY, M.E. Sharpe).
- Dul'man, P. (2009) 'Ukraina Popytalas' Zakhvatit' Rossiiskii Mayak', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 28 August.
- Felgenhauer, P. (2008) 'Moscow Ready for Major Confrontations with Pro-Western Georgia and Ukraine', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 19 June, available at: <http://www.jamestown.org>, accessed 4 October 2010.
- Felgenhauer, P. (2009) 'Russian Forces Deploying for Possible Action in Georgia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 16 April, available at: <http://www.jamestown.org>, accessed 4 October 2010.
- Gorenburg, D. (2010) 'The Future of the Sevastopol Russian Navy Base', *Russian Military Reform*, 22 March, available at: <http://russiamil.wordpress.com>, accessed 31 March 2011.
- Gorst, I. (2008) 'US Ship Docks in Occupied Georgian Port', *Financial Times*, 5 September.
- Kuzio, T. (2007) *Ukraine—Crimea—Russia: Triangle of Conflict* (Stuttgart, ibidem).
- Kuzio, T. (2009) 'SBU Challenges the FSB in Crimea', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 14 July, available at: <http://www.jamestown.org>, accessed 19 April 2011.
- Lieven, A. (1999) *Ukraine & Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry* (Washington, DC, United States Institute of Peace).
- Matveev, A. (2009) 'Chernomorskii Flot Prirastet Ochamchiroi', *Voenno-promyshlennyyi kur'er*, 4 February.
- McDermott, R. (2010) 'Mistral Procurement Disguises Weak Condition of the Black Sea Fleet', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 9 March, available at: <http://www.jamestown.org>, accessed 4 October 2010.
- Myasnikov, V. (2008) 'Chernomorskii Flot Stavyat na Yakor'', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 August.
- Nilsson, R. (2010) *Revanchist Russia? Russian Perceptions of Belarusian and Ukrainian Sovereignty, 1990–2008* (PhD thesis, University College London), available at: <http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/19223/1/19223.pdf>, accessed 31 May 2013.
- Nygren, B. (2007) *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia: Putin's Foreign Policy Towards the CIS Countries* (Abingdon, Routledge).
- Olearchyk, R. (2008) 'Ukraine Snubs Moscow on Port', *Financial Times*, 14 August.
- Olearchyk, R. (2010) 'Ukraine Seeks Lower Russian Gas Price', *Financial Times*, 25 August.

- Olearchyk, R. & Wagstyl, S. (2010) 'Russia and Ukraine Set for Gas Price Deal in Exchange for Navy Base Pledge', *Financial Times*, 22 April.
- Pasiakin, V. (2009) 'Chernomorskii Flot: zapret na peredvizheniya', *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 31 October.
- Pirani, S., Stern, J. & Yafimava, K. (2010) *The April 2010 Russo-Ukrainian Gas Agreement and its Implications for Europe* (Oxford, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies).
- Ploky, S. (2000) 'The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 3.
- Rossiya-Ukraina (2001a) *Rossiya-Ukraina 1990-2000: dokumenty i materialy (kniga 1 1990-1995)* (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya).
- Rossiya-Ukraina (2001b) *Rossiya-Ukraina 1990-2000: dokumenty i materialy (kniga 2 1996-2000)* (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya).
- Rudakov, V. (2008) 'Po Oseni Schitayut...', *Profil*, 27 October.
- Sherr, J. (2010) *The Mortgaging of Ukraine's Independence*, Briefing Paper 2010/01 (London, Chatham House).
- Shirokorad, A. (2009) 'Nespokoinyi Sevastopol' i Gibnushchii Chernomorskii Flot', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 18 September.
- Tarasov, S. (2009) 'Sud'ba Gruzii i Sekretnyi Dogovor po Karabakhu', *Rossiiskie Vesti*, 9 September.
- Tran, M. (2008) 'Russia Defies West by Recognising Georgian Rebel Regions', *Guardian*, 26 August.
- Trenin, D. (2007) 'Russia and Ukraine', in Hamilton, D. & Mangott, G. (eds) *The New Eastern Europe: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova* (Washington, DC, Center for Transatlantic Relations).
- Zatulín, K. (2009) 'Rossiiskaya Diaspora kak Soyuznik Rossii: v odnom ryadu s armiei, flotom i tserkov'yu', *Russkie.org*, 20 May, available at: <http://www.russkie.org>, accessed 4 October 2010.