

NATO RELATIONS WITH UKRAINE: PROSPECTS FOR PROGRESS

By David A. Karns, April 2000

“When is the U.S. going to stop paying so much attention to countries that don’t want to be its friends, and more attention to those that do?”¹

Introduction

The U.S. and NATO pursue close relations, bilaterally and multilaterally respectively, with Ukraine, and Ukraine wants substantive and close relations in return – while recognizing the importance of constructive relations with its eastern neighbor. Given the pressures from both East and West, Ukraine’s leaders have performed an admirable balancing act – perhaps the only realistic course given the circumstances. While Ukraine’s relations both with the U.S. and NATO have made great strides since 1991, putting substance into its relationships with the West has been difficult and spotty at times, particularly in certain sectors. Further, Ukraine’s slow progress in reforming its economy and defense establishment has proven frustrating to western policy makers and institutions. Though this paper focuses on major aspects of NATO-Ukraine relations, it should be remembered throughout that the U.S. is a NATO Ally, and has often been *primus inter pares* for Ukraine-related issues. This paper aims to provide a fresh look at the development and character of NATO/Ukraine

¹ A Czech general officer asked me this rhetorical question in 1994 during an orientation conference at the George C Marshall European Center for Security Studies, in Garmisch Germany.

relations, particularly aspects in the security/military realm, assess the current situation, and suggest ways for moving forward.

Why write this paper now?

Since the early 1990's, U.S. and NATO relations with Ukraine relations have grown, as well as stagnated. There are reasons for both peaks and valleys. Public documents such as ministerial communiqués present an upbeat, positive picture of accomplishments past and cooperation to come. While such pronouncements are optimistic, by nature, they provide only a superficial picture that does not help policymakers and Ukraine watchers see how work is proceeding or where more work is needed, or why. Nor do they reflect less than helpful attitudes or perceptions underlying the relations and which hinder the deepening of those relations. As we approach the third anniversary of the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, I am convinced that good relations with Ukraine, particularly as they can help Ukraine make internal changes including in economic and military spheres, are essential.

This paper will not catalogue every aspect of NATO relations with Ukraine; that is well outside the scope of this effort, and unnecessary for making observations and recommendations for the future. I trust however that enough detail is provided to lend credence to such recommendations. For instance, while defense reform is covered in some detail, its relevance to this paper does not require explaining the pitiful plight of Ukraine's military establishment. That has been well documented, particularly in comprehensive studies published in the last year, and the true state of affairs is now widely known. What is relevant here is that the issue of defense reform has often been the focus of

NATO relations with Ukraine, and progress or lack thereof in this area has helped in large part to define both of those relationships. *I do ask the readers to remember that the views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect any official policy or position of the Department of Defense, the United States Air Force or the U.S. Government.*

Background

Ukraine is the largest European nation west of the Ural Mountains, larger than either France, Germany or Spain. Its population of 52 million is roughly that of France. A Black Sea littoral nation, Ukraine has roughly 300 miles of coastline, with major trading, industrial and military ports. Ukraine is both industrial and agricultural, with a wealth of coal, iron ore, manganese, nickel and uranium. Major industries include steel, mining, energy, chemicals, machine tools, and food and textile production. In the agricultural sector, Ukraine produces annual yields of tens of millions of tons each of grain, sugar and meat. Perhaps its most valuable resource however is its well-educated and skilled workforce.

Given the attraction of its vast natural wealth to conquering nations and empires, as well as its cross-roads position linking Europe and the Eurasian steppe, it is easy to understand why so many different flags have flown over this land over the centuries.² And as conquered peoples often do, Ukrainians have suffered terribly at the hands of their conquerors. For example, under the Soviet yoke, eight million rural Ukrainian citizens perished during the artificial famines of 1932-33. Even after its horrific losses during WWII, the subsequent “peace” did not pay many dividends for

Ukrainians. It should have surprised no one when, after the USSR collapsed and the Rada adopted an act proclaiming Ukraine's independence on 24 August 1991, a national referendum on independence was supported by over 90 percent of the populace. That this development was not initially welcomed by much of the West, must surely have surprised Ukraine.

Though rich in agricultural and industrial potential, Ukraine suffers from a weak economy, weak largely due to Soviet legacy leftovers. As well, its environment was badly damaged under decades of Soviet industrial pollution and mismanagement; the effects of the Chernobyl disaster are even now not fully calculated.³ Too many of Ukraine's industrial plants are filled with obsolete equipment, and service industry development lags. Formerly, Ukraine's defense industry represented major portions of overall Soviet production, for instance for ballistic missiles, tanks, armored vehicles and some types of aircraft. The fact that at independence key parts of 80 percent of Ukraine's industrial production cycle depended on Russian-made components made Ukraine's inheritance even more of a burden than an asset – particularly regarding leverage a former master could apply to its prodigal subject.⁴

² See www.freenet.kiev.ua for a wealth of background information.

³ U.S. and Ukraine signed an agreement in Washington on 8 December 1999, at the third meeting of the US-Ukraine Binational Commission, toward cooperative research on health and environmental effects related to the Chernobyl accident. Inter alia, this research will look at incidences of thyroid cancer, leukemia/lymphoma, cataracts, behavioral and mental effects on children, effects on mothers, etc. Full text of agreement is in 10 Dec 1999 USIS-posted article available at www.eucom.mil/europe/ukraine/USIS/99dec14b.htm.

⁴ "Ukraine and European Security" by Tor Bukkvoll, page 80, published as a Chatham House Paper by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Wellington House, London UK, 1997

Contributing to the overall economic difficulties, an alarming percentage of agricultural products spoil or rot before they can be brought to market, and reform of the agricultural sector has still not begun in any meaningful way.⁵ Politically, Ukraine labors under some two dozen political parties, organized roughly into half a dozen shifting blocks. Reform in most key areas, particularly economic, was blocked until very recently by the Communist party's stranglehold in the Verkhovna Rada, or Parliament. And that lack of economic revitalization blocked, or at least provided a ready excuse for lack of reform, in most areas critically needing it, such as military/defense.

Understanding Ukraine

Newly independent Ukraine inherited a great deal from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), and not much of it good. In terms of military power, Ukraine inherited SS-19 and SS-24 ICBMs, strategic bombers with nuclear cruise missiles, and a host of tactical nuclear weapons. As well, it inherited some 40 percent of the former Soviet Union's armed forces in both soldiers and equipment, including 6,000 tanks and 1,400 combat aircraft. That equipment is now ten years older, ten years of too-little maintenance and virtually no modernization. It also inherited the legacy of a centralized political system, command economy, oversized military, etc., but its experience with these structures was not in developing or organizing them based on Ukrainian national interests, but in implementing decisions made elsewhere and based on others' interests -- and with a 'glass ceiling' restricting Ukrainian participation at top levels.

⁵ see "Ukraine's Farms: Unreformed" pp44-49 in 11 Sept 99 The Economist, and "Villagers Fight for Land Ownership Rights", a 20 Jan 2000 article in the Kiev Post.

Thus, from independence, Ukraine had to start from scratch to develop expertise in designing and managing foreign policy, economic stabilization and reform, defense/military affairs, social welfare and development programs, and every other area critical to the smooth running of a sovereign state – including intra-governmental prioritization, planning and coordination. Indeed, Ukraine has had to try to define itself and its own interests as a sovereign state; a process best described even today as a “work in progress.”

Although Ukraine has some of the outwardly good looking basics of a democracy, e.g. “elections”, it has a long way to go before it can be considered truly democratic. Dirty tricks leading up to the October 1999 presidential elections, and re-elected President Kuchma’s referenda for April 2000 – which include proposals giving him the power to dissolve the Rada – as well as the Rada breaking into two camps and holding separate meetings earlier this year, are only the more visible symptoms of a semi-authoritarian structure with democratic window dressing pasted over a reality more than reminiscent of the Soviet era.⁶ One only has to read the State Department’s 25 January 2000 Country Report on Human Rights Practices to learn just how far Ukraine has to go.⁷ Ukraine is *in* Europe, but in many ways is still not *of* Europe. That Ukraine has done as well as it has over its nine years of existence should however be a cause for optimism, if not mild celebration.

⁶ inter alia, see: “Ukrainian Incumbent is Taking No Chances”, IHT 29 Oct 99 article; “Grim Choices”, The Economist 10 July 1999; “Governing by Referendum No Way to Govern”, Kiev Post 20 Jan 2000 article; and “Ukrainian Parliament Splits into Rival Camps”, Reuters 24 Jan 2000 article carried in the Kiev Post.

⁷ Report text available at www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hr_report/ukraine.html.

Recognizing the blank slate with which Ukraine started should also counsel patience to the West. How far along the road was the United States nine years after its own independence? In his 19 December 1999 testimony before the House International Relations Committee, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott spoke of the enormous and time-consuming task of replacing dysfunctional Soviet structures with institutions and structures of a modern democratic state. He cited the lack, under communism, of any legacy of a civil society, market economy or the rule of law, are said crime and corruption were parts of that same Soviet experience. He was not talking about Ukraine but, as usual, about Russia. But Ukraine has that same legacy, those same problems. The difference is that while Russia was in charge of its own ill fate, Ukraine had such problems imposed on it. If we need to be patient with Russia, we need to be even more patient with Ukraine. Such patience has not always been forthcoming, however, as will be discussed in detail below.

Getting started in 1991

The West had virtually no institutional ties to the Ukrainian SSR during the Cold War, and met Ukrainian independence in 1991 with caution and concern. President Bush's oft quoted comment on the possible rise of "suicidal nationalism"⁸ was perhaps representative of this general mood. Other Allied leaders made similar comments. From that less than open-arms beginning, relations began and have developed since by fits and starts across a wide spectrum.

Why was Ukraine important to the U.S. in the early 1990's? One could say that Ukraine's geographic position as well as its being the largest European state gaining independence at the breakup of the Soviet Union, give it a unique geo-strategic importance to the West. This statement might perhaps find more general acceptance now, but in the early 1990's Ukraine's importance to the West was defined largely by its nuclear inheritance. This was actually the second stage of relations described by one author as moving from "first, a period of neglect; second, a period of annoyance; and finally, a period of growing appreciation."⁹

As the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program is so well known, and much written about¹⁰, I'll not regale the reader with another detailed history of this successful program, through which the last nuclear warhead left Ukrainian soil in June 1996. It should be noted though that in July 1999 the CTR program with Ukraine was extended (now as part of the Expanded Threat Reduction Initiative) through 2006, with approximately \$77 million earmarked for FY2000. Within the context of this paper, however, there are key points worth remembering.

- Ukraine's nuclear inheritance, and Ukraine itself, was seen as a problem to be dealt with, not as an opportunity for post-Cold War relations.

⁸ Inter alia, see the article "U.S.-Ukrainian Relations: Past, Present, and Future" by Sherman Garnett, pg 104, in "Ukraine in the World: Studies in the International Relations and Security Structure of a Newly Independent State", published in 1998 by the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, ed by Lubomyr Hajda.

⁹ "Ukraine and European Security" by Tor Bukkvoll, page 71. Had he been writing in late 1999, Bukkvoll might have added "back to annoyance" as a fourth stage.

¹⁰ For one comprehensive treatment, see "Dismantling the Cold War: US and NIS Perspectives on the Nunn-Lugar CTR Program", Shields and Potter editors, 1997, published by the Center for Science and International Affairs, JFK School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

- Ukraine's insistence on financial support to mitigate "not only military and political dimensions (i.e., of CTR) but economic, social and ecological ones as well" was perceived by some as simple blackmail. Ukraine's conditional ratification of START I was seen as a case in point.¹¹
- Ukraine did not want the weapons. In fact, the Ukrainian Rada's proclamation on state sovereignty in July 1990 says Ukraine would not acquire or produce nuclear weapons. On the other hand, Ukraine did not feel it right to bear the burden alone for disposing of weapons and systems that had been imposed on it from outside.
- Ukraine perceived much less assistance being provided than U.S. program representatives had promised and regularly reported (in terms of funds allocated).

These points are worth mentioning because they reflect attitudes on both sides of the relationship – attitudes that still endure to varying degrees.

While CTR was taking root however, a U.S. review of its policy toward Ukraine led beginning in 1993 to a more cooperative approach – carrot and stick, not just the stick.¹² Other Allies developed bilateral initiatives of their own with Ukraine.

NATO's Outreach Initiatives

¹¹ Ibid, pp 158-160, in Chapter 8: Reducing the Nuclear Threat through Joint Efforts: the View from Ukraine, by Ambassador Kostyantyn Hryshchenko.

After the Soviet Union's breakup, NATO faced a radically changed security environment – radically changed for the better. While keeping to the enduring fundamental tasks related to collective defense, the Alliance saw unprecedented opportunities for cooperation with nations to its east. At their London Summit 6 July 1990, Allied heads of state and government issued a declaration on a “Transformed North Atlantic Alliance.” This document outlined proposals for cooperating with central and eastern European (CEE) nations on a broad variety of political and military topics, and paved the way for establishing regular diplomatic relations with those nations.

This new environment also led to NATO promulgating a new Strategic Concept in 1991, which entailed a more comprehensive approach to security based on dialogue, cooperation, and management of crisis and conflict prevention, in addition to the bedrock of collective defense.¹³ When they agreed this new concept, Allied leaders went beyond the London Declaration and issued an invitation to CEE and Baltic nations to meet that December to issue a joint political declaration showcasing the concept of partnership and to discuss specific proposals for future consultation and cooperation.

This new, enlarged, consultative body, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), met for the first time on 20 December 1991 – the same day that the Soviet Union dissolved. Following that dissolution, the NACC was further enlarged to include all of the FSU, including Ukraine,

¹² Inter alia, see Bukkvoll's “Ukraine and European security” page 72; and Garnett's “Keystone in the Arch” page 118.

and met at least once a year at the Ministerial level. Though originally envisioned for consultation and cooperation on political and security-related issues on which Allies could offer their advice and expertise, the NACC's broad scope grew to include such areas as defense planning, principles of strategy, force and command structures, military exercises, democratic principles of civil-military relations, civil-military air traffic management and the conversion of defense industry to civilian commercial use.¹⁴ Specific events were developed for these issues and included in the NACC's agreed-by-consensus Work Plan for Dialogue, Partnership and Cooperation, first issued in March 1992. Additional areas for consultation were added over the next several years, including defense procurement, air defense, science and the environment and civil emergency planning. As did other cooperating nations, Ukraine had its choice of a wide variety of activities through which it could call upon the expertise not only of Allies, but of other nations in the process of transitioning to institutions based on democratic principles and reforming/restructuring their defense establishments.

NATO's next phase of partnership and cooperation began with the establishment of the Partnership for Peace (PFP), launched at the 10-11 January 1994 Brussels Summit, which would "forge new security relationships" between NATO and its Partners.¹⁵ As compared with the NACC, which was a plenary forum of all Allies and all interested CEE/FSU nations, PFP offered a NATO-plus-1 relation to each Partner that wanted one. As such, nations joined the Partnership individually by signing the PFP Framework Document which carries with it the renewed

¹³ paras 24-34 of The Alliance's Strategic Concept, agreed at the Rome Summit on 7-8 Nov 1991. Full text is at Appendix IX of the NATO Handbook, published in Oct 1995 by NATO Office of Information and Press (hereafter NATIP)

¹⁴ NATO Handbook (1995), page 44.

commitment to democratic principles, international law, obligations under the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, respecting existing borders and settling disputes by peaceful means, commitments to the Helsinki Final Act and other CSCE documents, as well as commitments and obligations regarding disarmament and arms control.¹⁶

After signing the Framework Document, Partners were to provide Presentation Documents identifying the steps to be taken to achieve the political goals of the Partnership as well as military and other assets that might be used/made available for PFP activities. Then, drawing from the Partnership Work Plan (PWP), a catalogue of hundreds of specific activities offered/organized by NATO or Allies individually (later, this also included events which Partners themselves offered, so long as all Partners were invited to participate), each Partner with advice from the I.S. developed its annual Individual Partnership Program (IPP). Each IPP was subsequently agreed by a consensus of Allies and the Partner and, once agreed, was available to all Partners.

PFP offered a much broader array of consultation topics and practical activities for cooperation than had the NACC (which would soon get its own Madrid Summit makeover as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). Based on the principle of self-differentiation, Partners could choose from activities in 21 areas (number changing over the years based largely on Partner interests), many of which were directly relevant to Ukraine's pressing need for defense reform and restructuring, such as: defense policy and strategy; defense, planning, budgeting and

¹⁵ Partnership for Peace Invitation, 10-11 Jan 1994, issued by NATIP

resource management; planning, organization and management of national defense procurement programs and international cooperation in the armaments field; military infrastructure; peacekeeping; military exercises and training; and military education, training and doctrine.¹⁷ Another key aspect of PFP was the development of the Planning and Review Process (PARP) through which Partners could identify and evaluate forces and capabilities that might be made available for training, exercises and operations in conjunction with Alliance forces – the main goal being the interoperability of Partner and Alliance forces. Thus, Ukraine had an ever greater variety of subject matter expertise on which to draw, particularly in the broad area of defense reform.

For its part, Allies agreed to establish a new committee, the Political-Military Steering Committee, to address all policy questions related to PFP.¹⁸ They also agreed to set up within the International Staff (I.S.) the Directorate for Partnership and Cooperation within the Defense Planning and Operations Division, to handle what was to become an enormous administrative burden imposed by individual relationships with the Partners (e.g., IPP development, assessments of PFP participation, development of PARP interoperability objectives and assessments of Partners progress on meeting those IO's). Implementation of specific activities was left to the relevant NATO body or committee wherein resided the functional or subject matter expertise.

Ukraine Steps Forward

¹⁶ second para of the PFP Framework Document, agreed 10 Jan 1994, issued by NATIP.

Ukraine was the first FSU country to join PFP, in February 1994, and when the Alliance made space available for Partners to establish a political and military presence at NATO, Ukraine took advantage of this new aspect of the Partnership. Ukraine also sent a liaison officer to the Partnership Coordination cell in Mons (by SHAPE Headquarters) to help plan and coordinate Ukrainian participation in PFP's joint military activities, and in January 1998 added a MilRep to its Mission at NATO. Ukraine also joined the PARP, adopting a number of basic Interoperability Objectives (15 IOs in 1995, and 28 in 1997) for those forces it had earmarked for possible participation in PFP activities, and in 1999 identified additional capabilities as its PARP Partnership Goals as potential contributions to real-world NATO-led operations. These included capabilities or forces for air transport, headquarters augmentation, NBC defense, and combat/combat service support units.

Just being willing to provide limited information on its armed forces (such as that entailed through PARP) is, in itself, progress. Clearly, Ukraine's military/defense leadership have a long way to go toward leaving Cold War-reminiscent secrecy behind, but such is essential if they want substantive help from beyond their own borders. It is equally clear to me now that this lack of transparency has been a hallmark of Ukraine's military 'cooperation' relations.

On 1 June 1995, President Kuchma visited NATO and announced his desire to raise NATO-Ukraine relations to a higher level. This was followed that September by a visit of Foreign

¹⁷ See the full list of cooperation areas, inter alia, in NATO Review, Spring 1999, page 26, NATIP

Minister Udovenko, for a 16-plus-1 meeting with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to discuss European security issues. Such high level meetings have continued. During this same period, Ukrainians attended a wide variety of PFP activities, including military exercises – and hosted a number of exercises on her own soil – and were particularly active in the area of disaster relief and civil emergency planning. Consultations also covered such areas as economic security, defense industrial restructuring, downsizing and conversion, retraining of retired military officers, research and technology, and scientific and environmental issues. Ukraine also worked with NATO in peacekeeping operations, contributing forces to IFOR, SFOR and to the UN mission in Eastern Slavonia.¹⁹ More recently, it has contributed a helicopter transport squadron to the NATO-led KFOR in Kosovo, and sent relief teams to both Greece and Turkey in 1999 when those nations were rocked by earthquakes – just as NATO nations organized assistance for Ukraine’s trans-Carpathian region after serious flooding in November 1998.

Relations reached a new plateau and gained added impetus in July 1997, with the signing of the “Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine” at the NATO Summit of Heads of State and Government in Madrid. This Charter also established the NATO Ukraine Commission which would meet at Ministerial level (summit level if agreed) at least twice each year to assess the overall relationship and suggest ways to improve or further develop cooperation between Ukraine and the Alliance. That Commission met 24 April 1999 at summit level in conjunction with the NATO Summit in Washington DC. Allies reaffirmed support for Ukraine’s “sovereignty and independence, territorial integrity, democratic development,

¹⁸ Author served on this committee for the U.S. from 1995 to mid-1999.

economic prosperity and the principle of inviolability of frontiers.” For his part, Ukraine’s President reaffirmed Ukraine’s determination to continue efforts toward “democratic political, economic and defense reforms as well as to pursue its goal of integration in European and transatlantic structures.”²⁰

Ukraine had not withdrawn from its cooperative relationship with NATO in disagreement with the bombing campaign against Serbia – as had Russia. Still, the bombing had made the relationship more difficult given a communist dominated Rada and Russian dominated media in eastern Ukraine, and Ukraine’s leadership sent clear signals that the Alliance was not taking Ukraine or the NATO-Ukraine relationship seriously enough.

It should be remembered that Tarasyuk and MOD Kuzmuk had traveled to Belgrade on 26 March 1999 to try to get Milosevic to cooperate with the international community and end the Kosovo crisis. This was not as ‘out of the blue’ or out of character as it was perhaps perceived. Ukraine’s leaders had previously offered their ‘good offices’ in attempts to help mediate resolutions to the Georgia-Abkhazia, Moldova-Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh disputes. That this latest diplomatic effort was regarded by some in the West as unwelcome meddling (after all, hadn’t Russia had been given the job of dealing with Milosevic?) could only reinforce the frustration of Ukraine’s leaders, and their feeling that Ukraine was seen as a second or third string player. President Clinton’s comments on 24 April 1999 at the NUC Summit in Washington, where he said “I appreciate President Kuchma’s efforts to persuade Mr Milosevic to

¹⁹ See NATO Basic Fact Sheet #18, June 1997, at www.nato.int/docu/facts/ukr.htm.

end his campaign against the Kosovar Albanians,”²¹ were no doubt helpful salve for hurt feelings. Interestingly, one Allied ambassador noted not long after this that Ukraine might be getting the impression that Russia’s confrontational attitude paid more dividends than Ukraine’s cooperative approach. Still, when KFOR was eventually assembled, Ukraine offered to contribute a field hospital, a helicopter transport squadron and a mechanized infantry company.

For its part, NATO appreciated the repercussions on the political climate in Ukraine and moved to increase its information efforts in Ukraine, helping to explain to politicians, academics and the media the necessity of its actions against Serbia’s leadership. Part of this renewed effort included a number of high-level visits to Kiev, and a publicized meeting between NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson and Minister Tarasyuk on 20 October (less than 2 weeks before Ukraine’s presidential elections).

Ukraine’s Place

The January 1994 Brussels Summit’s declaration by heads of state and government notes that, “we believe that an independent, democratic, stable and nuclear-weapons-free Ukraine would likewise contribute to security and stability.”²² It should be remembered (and Ukraine no doubt does) that the “likewise” in the sentence just quoted refers to the several preceding sentences regarding Russia. Every ministerial communique since then, by both foreign and defense

²⁰ for both quotes, see NATO Press Communique NUC-S(99)68, 24 April 99, at www.nato50.gov/text/99042410.htm.

²¹ Transcript of White House-issued statement is at www.nato50.gov/text/99042504.htm.

²² Para 20. Issued by the NATO Office of Information and Press

ministers, has had similar language regarding Ukraine's importance to European "security and stability," language always placed right behind language on Russia.²³

One problem is, such words repeated often enough are seen as both obligatory (by Allies) and meaningless (to Ukraine) – unless the words are matched by substantive practical cooperation by both sides. Another problem is the message this repeatedly sends to Russia; i.e., our relationship with you is more important than that with Ukraine. It at least implies a recognition of Ukraine as being within Russia's "sphere of influence," but also casts Ukraine as one of the West's answers to limiting Russia's possible ambitions as a 'great power.' This approach only serves to build suspicion and competition, not the partnership and cooperation so often hailed in official pronouncements.

In my opinion, the reality is that for NATO, as for the U.S. bilaterally, Ukraine has always been a secondary concern, worked in rough parallel to relations with Russia but always two steps behind and never being recognized as truly important, in its own right, outside that competing context. That attitude needs to change.

All this has not meant a lack of activity in NATO's relations with Ukraine. In fact, NATO has been willing to meet Ukraine at least halfway on most issues or desires. In May 1997, NATO opened an Information and Documentation Center, housed in the Institute for International

²³ See for example the communiques from foreign and defense ministerials in Luxembourg on 28 May 1998, in Brussels on 11 June 1998, in Brussels on 8 December 1998, in Brussels on 17 December 1998, as well as the Summit Communiques from Madrid (July 1997) and Washington (April 1999).

Relations at Taras Shevchenko University in Kiev, to make information about the Alliance more widely available to Ukrainian citizens.²⁴

At the 16 December 1997 meeting of Foreign Ministers, NATO and Ukraine signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Emergency Planning and Disaster Preparedness, which included a provision for joint studies aimed at enhancing response capabilities regarding nuclear accidents. This culminated a rich vein of cooperation between NATO and Ukraine in the area of Civil Emergency Planning, begun in 1992 under the NACC,²⁵ and which has continued through today. At this same meeting they also agreed to establish a Joint Working Group on Defense Reform (JWGDR), and approved a NATO-Ukraine Workplan for 1998. In 1998, Allies agreed, albeit reluctantly, to Ukraine's wish to have a NATO Liaison Office in Kiev to help Ukraine improve its participation in PFP. This office would have both a civilian head and a military officer advisor.²⁶

For its part, in 1997, Ukraine established the State Interagency Commission on Cooperation with NATO, and set up the PFP and Peacekeeping Coordination Center in the General Staff. As well, it established partnership coordination sections in the various services and regional commands. Also, special interoperability programs were set up for units earmarked for NATO-led operations.

²⁴ Keeping this Center operational has been a problem, however, as the first director died in an auto accident, the second was fired after several months, and a third (current) director was not in place until mid-1999. Thus, during the turmoil surrounding NATO's air campaign against Serbia, the office was not operational.

²⁵ See "Ukraine-NATO Cooperation in CEP" by Valentin Kalchenko, Minister for Emergencies, published in the Autumn 1998 edition of the NATO Review.

²⁶ A military officer was assigned in 1999, but a civilian to head the office was not found until January 2000.

More recently, Ukraine has been very active in NATO's Science Program, garnering collaborative research grants (more than any other Partner), computer networking infrastructure grants, and a variety of other Science for Peace projects. As well, it has taken advantage of projects and consultations with a variety of other committees, including the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS), Joint Medical Committee, and Industrial Planning Committee.

Joint Working Group on Defense Reform (JWGDR)

The JWGDR merits detailed discussion, as defense reform was seen by all Allies as perhaps the most important and needful subject for Ukrainian consultations with NATO. A U.S. initiative, the JWGDR was seen as a way to stop 'whittling at the edges' and get to the roots of Ukraine's need for military reform at the macro level – really, to help Ukraine jump start a process perceived by the West as completely stalled, if indeed it had ever amounted to more than attrition in place. Once agreed by the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the 17 December 1997 ministerials, Allies hoped the JWGDR could work at the strategic level to provide guidance and direction to the largely tactical level activities that were the mainstay of NATO-Ukraine relations. Without strategic-level reform, the usefulness (even appropriateness) of those activities was called into question.

For the Allies, the macro question was simple – what do you need and want to reform and how can we help? From my perspective, without answering that question the Ukrainian MOD/GS stuck to pushing tactical activities – dealing with topics for which many PFP activities already existed, or for which PARP was designed. The terms of reference for the JWGDR gave the MOD/GS plenty of maneuvering room as they mention consultative activities regarding: civil-military relations; defense planning and resource management; and military education (NCO and officer). Other areas could be added as mutually agreed. Had articles such as UCEPS’ analytical report “The Armed Forces of Ukraine: Problems of Reforming and the Present Situation”²⁷ been available or known to Westerners trying to understand the situation, more progress could have been made. As it was, the profound nature and scope of Ukraine’s need for defense reform, including the fact that the “armed forces” refers only to those assets/personnel controlled by the MOD and not to the militaries controlled by a variety of other ministries, was little understood by outsiders.

Though the JWGDR was envisioned as a mechanism to spur and help Ukraine’s efforts at macro-level defense reform, results have been largely disappointing. Disappointment, even frustration, was perhaps exacerbated given the importance Allies attached to the issue and since the JWGDR seemed to get off to an auspicious start. Even at its first meeting however, hosted 2-6 March 1998 by the U.S. at the Marshall Center in Garmisch, it was clear that the MOD/GS had its sights set much lower than did Allies – or at least was working from very different definitions.

²⁷ Published by UCEPS, in Kiev, May 1996.

Indeed, over the next year the MOD/GS resisted holding JWGDR events on macro issues such as force planning, preferring instead to continue discussions on officer retraining, resource management, civ-mil relations, etc. Though many Allies considered this to be mere duplication of existing PFP or PARP activities, they also realized the futility of trying to “force” the agenda. The JWGDR plodded on, and Allies became more convinced that the MOD/GS was not serious on the subject of defense reform; rather, that it was content to attrit the military over time while maintaining its own bloated and ineffective structures. On the other hand, briefings by Ukrainian representatives claimed that reform was ongoing as funding allowed. That is, it wasn’t that they were unwilling, simply unable.

In November 1998, in an attempt to break the strategic versus tactical logjam, the U.S. proposed that Allies offer to form a Joint Task Force on Defense Reform (JTFR) with Ukraine. This would be an executive level group, chartered by the Ukrainian Minister of Defense and working outside existing structures (i.e., avoid conflict of interest). The effort would require subgroups to cover a variety of major areas, such as: Ukraine’s defense and security strategy, rationalizing and streamlining MOD structures, force planning, resource management, military personnel systems, acquisition practices and modernization priorities, and officer/NCO career development. The product would be concrete proposals for top-down driven change. Once the proposals were presented to the MOD, the JTFR would disband. JTFR recommendations could also provide direction and focus for future JWGDR activities.

Allies were generally receptive to the idea but agreed only to have the I.S. discuss it informally with the Ukrainian Mission – not to make an outright proposal. The I.S. reported back that the Ukrainians found the idea ‘interesting’ and worth discussing. With the ball back in NATO’s court, the initiative languished. However, no Ally (U.S. included) pressed the issue. It seems now that the timing was simply not right; Allies and corporate NATO had their hands full with other initiatives with the April Summit in Washington fast approaching. But the idea would not remain buried forever.²⁸

In mid-1999 Lieutenant General Kuksenko, Ukrainian Military Representative to NATO, briefed NATO MilReps on the “Practical Aspects of Military Reform in Ukraine.” In that presentation, he said a “new principal proposal is to *increase JWG role in Ukraine to the appropriate state level, as the sphere of its activity includes a number of issues, which are within the interest not only for the Ministry of Defense.* That is why, at the joint sessions in future, we will wider (sic) involve experts of the state bodies, which provide and coordinate military reform in Ukraine. *The results of our work should be concrete recommendations to the higher military-political leadership of the country.*”²⁹

If Kuksenko’s words reflected official MOD/GS positions, the Ukrainian defense establishment would seem to have finally ‘got it,’ and was looking for expert advice on the more strategic level originally envisioned by Allies. Even better was the tacit admission that reform made the most sense only if it included all of the military structures in Ukraine, not just those under the MOD.

²⁸ According to interviews at NATO Headquarters in January 2000, the International Staff was dusting off the JTFR

Indeed, this perspective was even more broad than that at NATO. Since General Kuksenko's briefing however, there has been little progress to note on this issue.

Progress has been made however, under extremely difficult financial circumstances, and needs to be highlighted. Current reform plans, such as they are, recognize political, economic, social/humanitarian, legal, as well as purely military aspects of reform and restructuring. The importance of professional education was recognized early on and by early 1999 hundreds of officers had completed professional academic courses in Europe and North America.³⁰ While gross numbers are only one factor, Ukraine's MOD-controlled military has been reduced by more than half since 1992, and the number of officers in senior ranks is finally falling. An NCO academy was opened 1 July 1999, with significant help from the U.S., and a training program was started with U.S. assistance to develop military-economic expertise within the General Staff.

Ukraine's military doctrine continues to evolve, and initial steps are being taken toward developing a cadre of civilian defense experts within the MOD. A critical, but largely unheralded, aspect is that the military officer corps remains un-politicized – even after nearly a decade of demoralizing social and financial hardship where many have been pushed into Ukraine's shadow economy just to survive. Further, even through these difficult times, progress has been made in reorienting the armed forces from an offensive to a defensive stance – with a size and makeup more appropriate to Ukraine's legitimate self-defense concerns.

idea. I was told though that the first step was still for Ukraine to identify what kind of help it wanted

²⁹ Statement circulated to Allies at the 20 May 1999 meeting of the MC/PS with Ukraine. Italics added.

³⁰ This and other areas of progress were briefed by Maj Gen Dzubak, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, at the Binational Commission meetings 25-26 Jan 1999, in Eglin FL.

Toward greater interoperability of units identified under PARP, improvements have also been made in key areas such as organization and processes of command and control, logistic sustainability, supply standards, aircraft IFF equipment, air traffic control procedures, and language/staff training. This may not sound all that impressive to the West. One should recall however that in the 1997 assessment of PARP Interoperability Objectives agreed in 1995, a comment applied to explain lack of any progress for virtually all IOs was that there was no structure or organization with the responsibility to implement changes. Given its starting point, Ukraine's progress really is noteworthy.

Whether Ukraine now intends to move forward with broad based defense reform is unclear. Finances are no better now than 5 years ago, and over the last several months, Ukrainian authorities have sent mixed signals. In late 1999, President Kuchma reportedly issued a general directive for broad-based defense reform.³¹ This was followed 29 February by a visit to Kiev of Secretary General Robertson, Allied Ambassadors to NATO and the Chairman of the Military Committee for a NUC meeting – a meeting agreed well before Robertson's earlier and less than productive visit on 27 January.³² Touted by the press as “a major step toward closer links between the western alliance and the former Soviet state seeking integration into European structures,”³³ this meeting may have been seen by some Allies as more a matter of going through the motions. Contributing to this was the now widely circulated UCEPS study “Military Reform

³¹ See “National Security and Defense”, vol1, 2000, UCEPS, page 28.

³² Inter alia, see Ukrainian Weekly article at www.ukrweekly.com/archive/2000/060011.shtml.

³³ inter alia, see Reuters wire article “Ukraine Hosts Top NATO Officials, Eyes Closer Ties” by Dmitry Solovoyov, text at http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/20000229/wl/ukraine_nato_1.html

in Ukraine: The Start or Another False Start” – copies of which had been provided to all Allies on 11 February – and which according to one contact “caused quite a stir.” With defense reform naturally high on NATO’s agenda, this comprehensive study cast Ukraine’s need for/and lack of defense reform in stark relief – and included a variety of specific recommendations for change. Minister Tarasyuk himself characterized Allies as “critical of Ukraine’s record of reforming the armed forces.”³⁴ He didn’t say they were wrong.

Kuchma’s tasking? One source told me the tasking had rolled downhill to the MOD, and thence to the General Staff, which shelved it. If it did go to the MOD/GS, then it makes sense that little would happen in the near term as any serious recommendations for reform would seriously impact the size (jobs) and makeup of those staffs. Asking any organization to reform itself is problematic at best. It may be recalled from the U.S. own experience that the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 is more widely known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act – named after its Senate sponsors and not after the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of the time.

Ukraine Admitted Some Problems and Asked for Help

Though Ukraine, various Allies, and corporate NATO itself regularly touted Ukrainian participation in PFP (and continue to do so), the actual track record did not always match the rhetoric. In fact, Ukraine’s poor participatory habits had tarnished its image within the Alliance.

³⁴ See Reuters 1 March 2000 article “NATO Urges Military Reform in Ukraine” by Christina Ling, available on-

Ukrainian officials recognized and then admitted their lackluster participation during the first visit to NATO HQ by the State Interagency Commission for Cooperation with NATO (SIC) on 18 November 1997.

Minister Horbulin, head of the SIC and Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, addressed Allies to "convey our concern on the status of implementation of the Ukrainian IPP and the quality of our participation in PFP."³⁵ After reviewing the objectives of its workplan for 1998, priorities for the armed forces cooperation through PFP, and 1997 exercises in which Ukraine participated, Horbulin went on to discuss why Ukrainian implementation of the 1997 IPP had been "chaotic and fragmented and was not objective driven." Among the nine reasons he cited for this were: acute problems related to the transitional period of establishing statehood; lack of experience and mechanisms for developing and implementing such programs; incomplete structures for coordinating participation by the military districts, armed forces and services; no nationally integrated program to provide training for participation, including language training and staff procedures; and, scarce resources (financial and human).

Horbulin then presented Allies with an opportunity. He asked assistance in developing a "new, modest and meaningful IPP which will enable us to concentrate on the most vital, crucial and important aspects of achieving interoperability." He also called for "the establishment of a team of dedicated experts" to assess the situation and provide practical recommendations to help

line at http://daileynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/20000301/wl/ukraine_nato_2.html.

develop roadmaps to interoperability, first for units/elements earmarked for PFP participation, and then to *“help us devise the program of reforming and modernizing the entire armed forces.”* Horbulin humorously added that “we know that NATO is a classical Mr ‘Niet’, first to reject the idea outright and then to reconsider after awhile.” Sadly, Mr Horbulin was wrong. In fact, such requests for help were seen by many Allies not as opportunities but as embarrassing episodes of a sovereign nation admitting its ineptitude.

Horbulin visited NATO again in late 1998, to brief Allies on the “State Programme of Ukraine’s Participation with NATO for the period until 2001” which had been approved by Presidential decree on 4 November 1998. Ukraine’s previous engagement with NATO had been largely dominated by activities of the Ministry of Defense/General Staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministry for Emergencies. This new program envisioned participation by a much wider group, including: the National Institute of Strategic Studies to coordinate scientific research on pol/mil areas; the National Guard; the Ministry of Industrial Policy, the State Committee on Standardization, Metrology and Certification and the State Service for Export Control for armaments cooperation; the Ministry of Economy, with the Ministries of Defense and Industry, for development and conversion of defense industries; the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Security Service, State Customs Service and the Border Guards to combat crime, terrorism and smuggling; the Ministry of Science and Technology; the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety; the National Agency for Information for cooperation in telecommunications and information systems; the Ministry of Transportation,

³⁵ Text forwarded to Washington by US Mission NATO via unclass cable dtg 201834Z Nov 97 (3871).

with the MOD, for air traffic control cooperation; the National Space Agency for cooperation in space; and the Ministry of Information.³⁶ Admitting that all of the activities could not happen at once, Horbulin explained that individual activities would be built into future IPP's and NATO-Ukraine Workplans. While this point seems obvious, how it translated to Allies is not.

What the Programme represented was potentially unprecedented openness and transparency, with the possibility of contact with all the ministries involved in Ukraine's basic nation-building efforts, including its continuing transition to democratically based institutions and a market economy. In a later presentation, the Programme was described as providing "for the establishment of direct contacts among branch ministries, agencies and institutions of Ukraine and relevant NATO structural divisions."³⁷ This was a truly golden opportunity, not just for corporate NATO, but for each Ally to expand cooperation and help Ukraine find its way to closer integration with the West. Among Allies, including the U.S., however, the reaction was mixed at best. Allies welcomed the new Programme, and encouraged Ukraine to set priorities for areas and activities. Unfortunately, since Horbulin had said implementation would be through the annual IPP and Workplan, where the primary responsibility for making proposals lay with the Partner, Allies considered that the ball was still in Ukraine's court – and largely took a wait and see approach. Instead of being seen as a matrix that NATO and individual Allies could use to take the initiative in helping Ukraine accelerate its progress, it was regarded more as a nice sounding wish list. In this way, another key opportunity was allowed to slip away.

³⁶ Full text was circulated to NATO and Allies, and was "welcomedas a tangible signal of Ukraine's commitment to a productive relationship with NATO" in the Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, issued at the Foreign Ministers meeting on 9 December 1998. See NATO Review, Spring 1999 edition, page 26.

Attempts to Enhance Ukrainian Participation

It is somewhat ironic then that by early 1998 there was a sense among Allies that NATO-Ukraine relations were drifting from a lack of serious engagement by Kiev (that Kiev might hold a reciprocal perception was not appreciated). For this reason, a workshop was convened in Washington 8-9 April 1998, co-sponsored by the Harvard University Project on Ukrainian Security and the Stanford-Harvard Preventive Defense Project. The event brought together 50 policy experts, high-level government officials and academic scholars from the U.S., Ukraine and NATO to develop specific recommendations for both short and long-term measures to broaden and deepen NATO-Ukraine relations. The recommendations focused naturally on economic and defense reform, noting in particular the need for multi-year strategic plans, priority setting and assessment mechanisms. While stressing as full as possible participation in PFP and other programs, the workshop report also calls for implementation and follow through on reforms.

Recommendations voiced at the workshop were not all directed at what Ukraine should do. Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S., Yuri Shcherbak, gave an impassioned closing address which called on NATO, the U.S and all Allies to do their part as well. For instance, he pointed to restrictions preventing Ukrainian high-tech products from entering U.S. and EU markets. In a return to irony, he said there was often the impression that the Charter had become the end of a

³⁷ From a briefing entitled "Presentation of the National Programme of Cooperation between Ukraine and NATO

process rather than a platform for even more meaningful cooperation in the future, and he called on NATO to develop a “clear-cut and detailed concept of interaction” with Ukraine – including how Allies can cooperate with Ukraine in the military-technical area to take advantage of Ukraine's existing but stagnating military industrial capabilities.

As well, Ambassador Shcherbak cited the building of a civil society, social stability, consolidation of democratic trends, and restructuring of Ukraine's government and system of management as areas for improvement that would lead to closer relations with NATO and the West. Both sides then called for a more strategic approach, but in the months to come that was not aggressively pursued by either side. Too often, such events become “one off” with the expectation that someone else will follow up. Recommendations developed at the workshop need to be dusted off, updated and put into action.³⁸

Other attempts were made to encourage Ukraine to implement more of its IPP activities. Also, the point was made that it was not PFP participation that was ultimately important; rather, it was PFP *application* that Allies looked for. The numbers game, both numbers of events listed in an IPP and numbers of events actually attended, while an important indication of seriousness attached to the program, was a side issue. Another aspect stressed regarded Ukraine's low attendance rate at course slots set aside for it by the NATO (SHAPE) School in Oberramergau Germany. Last minute no-shows, too late to offer the slots to another Partner nation, were particularly troubling. As well, Ukrainians who did attend such courses too often turned out to

for the period up to the year 2001” Presented at the 25-26 Jan 1999 Binational Commission meeting in Eglin FL.

be the wrong people to send. That is, they had no experience or responsibility in the area to be discussed, did not have the requisite language skills to participate effectively, or were there for another reason such as tourism and shopping. Apparently, this continues to be a problem, witness Deputy Secretary of State Talbott's comments at the NATO-Ukraine Commission in Brussels on 19 December 1999. He said Ukraine "must send the best-qualified people to every meeting or training session with NATO."³⁹ I know of no other Partner for whom such comments are felt necessary.

A third aspect stressed was the importance of Kiev using at least some token amount of its own resources as a show of commitment to the relationship.

For their part, Ukrainian officials identified in early 1999 several areas of interest to Kiev: armaments cooperation, including refitting/modernizing to NATO standards Soviet-type systems used by some current and soon-to-be Allies; a repeat of the U.S. Defense Resource Management Study program; and active cooperation by the Ministry for Emergencies, to include counter-proliferation activities, English language training and possible Black Sea demining. The desire for the Yavoriv Training Complex to be designated a PFP Training Center by the time of the Summit was also discussed -- and came to be.

³⁸ See "Fulfilling the Promise: Building an Enduring Security Partnership between Ukraine and NATO", Carter, Miller and Sherwood-Randall, published as Vol 1, Number 3 by the Preventive Defense Project, c1999.

³⁹ Full text of remarks is available on-line at www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1999/991215_talbott_nuc.html

By late 1999, many of issues regarding Ukraine's approach to PFP had not been resolved. From a pure numbers standpoint however, the IPP for 2000 is at least an improvement over that for 1999 -- which listed a whopping 295 activities.

Financial Woes Detract from Ukraine's Image

Ukrainian authorities repeatedly pushed for the Alliance to establish a budget line item specifically to cover Ukrainian costs not already covered by the PFP Funding Policy. For example, Ukrainian costs to participate in JWGDR and NATO-Ukraine Commission activities (e.g., to attend Ministerial sessions) were not covered. Allies proved unwilling to go this far, particularly as PFP was originally established as a "pay as you go"⁴⁰ program, with a generous 80 percent of Partner costs covered by NATO common budgets as an interim measure to ensure maximum participation. Allies knew as well that the U.S. covered the remaining 20 percent of Partner costs via its Warsaw Initiative program.

More than that however, Allies grew weary of the requests for funds because this was supposed to be a "distinctive" relationship that was valued and supported by both sides -- particularly given the fact that Ukraine was already the most subsidized of all Partners. However, requests for additional funding continued. For example, for visits of Ukraine's State Interagency Commission (SIC) on Cooperation with NATO, Ukraine sought subsidies for transportation and lodging costs. In this case, NATO did make funds available through NATO's Office of

⁴⁰ PFP Framework Document, para 6, tic 2; issued 10 Jan 1994 by NATO HQ, Brussels

Information and Press, which has its own outreach budget. JWGDR activities, also not covered by the PFP funding policy, received similar, exceptional subsidies. Finally, though Ukraine offered several capabilities to the KFOR operation, it needed help both with deploying to theater and sustaining operations once there.

In my opinion, the subsidy issue should not be allowed to adversely affect the relationship – it is a transient issue, while the relationship is for the long haul. What should be part of the way ahead is to start to make funding subsidies conditional and targeted. That is, subsidize activities only if they directly support specific plans for change or improvement. Other activities should be self-funded.

Allies regularly urge Ukraine to prioritize; there's no better way to encourage this than to stop paying their way for extraneous events that are largely repeats of events attended in the past. For its part though, Ukraine must learn to approach this sensitive subject with greater sophistication – and preferably on a one-on-one basis behind closed doors – making it easier for one or another Ally to provide the help requested, when helping is appropriate.

Is Ukraine still important to the West?

The answer to this question depends, as usual, on whom you ask. President Clinton said, “Ukraine is a nation critical to our vision of an undivided, peaceful democratic Europe.”⁴¹ If you consult INSS’ 1999 Strategic Assessment, the answer appears to be “no.” Ukraine is mentioned only in passing, with the lion’s share focus on other “transitioning” states (i.e., Russia, China and India).⁴² Even when mentioning “integrative measures” made possible in the permissive climate of the mid-1990s, INSS mentions NATO Enlargement, PFP, the EAPC and the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council – but not the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine.⁴³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, in 1996 and as recently as mid-1999⁴⁴, presented Ukraine more in terms of a spoiler to a rejuvenated Soviet Union than as a potential anchor and positive influence for regional stability.

Interestingly, an independent, sovereign and prosperous Ukraine is rarely discussed in terms of its positive impact on the 52 million citizens who live there. Also, I have yet to encounter advocacy in terms of its potential as an economic partner – though that potential is certainly there, and could serve as a future mitigator (if not a counterpoint) for the U.S. in its future relations with the European Union.⁴⁵ A politically stable, economically sound Ukraine, which is

⁴¹ This was part of the President’s comments just before the NUC Summit in Washington, 24 April 1999. See www.nato50.gov/text/99042504.htm.

⁴² INSS most recent product is disappointing in many regards, including its generalities not backed up with detail. Could and might, without some notion of likelihood, may be helpful to those hoping for more force structure, but are less useful to policymakers. It’s prognosis that the future is “up for grabs”, while always true, is a case in point. Least helpful, however, is its reinforcement of the old-think, great-power approach. Fresh thinking and a fresh approach are needed.

⁴³ Ibid, page 13.

⁴⁴ See “Ukraine’s Critical Role”, pages 3-8 of “Ukraine in the World”, previously cited. For a similar approach, see Bukkvoll’s book cited earlier. See also “Ukraine’s Two Minds”, page 30 in 5 June 99 *The Economist*.

⁴⁵ For a more forward thinking approach to relations with Ukraine, see Sherman Garnett’s book “Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe” c1997 by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC.

a good neighbor and trading partner, with a defense establishment reformed to provide a properly sized/structured/capable military, is what's best for Ukrainians. That it's also a Ukraine where any future thoughts of empire by Russia become moot should be a subsidiary issue. Helping Ukraine "be all it can be" would also answer a multitude of other security concerns for the region as an added bonus. The focus however needs to be on what is good for Ukraine.

Future Relations with NATO

First, a general comment. Both sides perceive the other as not taking the relationship seriously. Ukraine has asked for help and not received that help. NATO's focus is on defense reform and sees little real commitment by Ukraine in that area. Both sides need to be more realistic in recognizing that desires and expectations for the relationship are not the same for each side. These differences need to be openly discussed, while recognizing that a forced agenda will not be a shared agenda.

Second, a change of attitude is needed. Ukraine is not a problem to be solved, but an opportunity to be embraced. As part of this more optimistic outlook, all Allies should better appreciate the progress Ukraine has made instead of focusing on the slow pace of change, or the lack of change in some areas. Another, and perhaps more fundamental, shift in approach would entail asking what Ukraine wants to be, as opposed to what Allies want Ukraine to do or be. That is, what do Ukraine's 52 million citizens need and want their country to be like in order to enjoy greater civil freedom, prosperity, and security? Then, what changes does Ukraine see are required to bring

that about and what hindrances are there to those changes? And finally, what can the Allies do across the spectrum to help Ukrainians realize that future?

Currently, the Western focus and approach tends to reflect western definitions, standards and expectations – many of them security related – including timelines for how long a democratizing nation’s “transition” period should last. But those external definitions don’t take into account Ukraine’s current character, or her past, including a short period of independence and a much longer history of subjugation. If Ukraine’s leaders don’t want to pursue change in some area, and we push it anyway, we harvest frustration and alienation instead of friendship and cooperation.

This might mean a relationship much less defined and measured in security or military terms, with assistance aimed more at helping Ukraine to build a civil society and strong economy, and translating to projects that improve the daily lives of ordinary citizens. This should lead to greater security, albeit by the back door, but a security more sure of enduring since it would have much more healthy roots. In the process, it would also help Ukrainians raise their own expectations for what a democratically elected government should be doing for them or facilitating for them to do for themselves at the local level.

Third, a strategic, comprehensive, cohesive and sustained approach to Ukraine is needed, using all the tools at the West’s disposal -- moving away from the “tactical and opportunistic.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Keystone in the Arch, pg viii.

Allies, and particularly the U.S., must stop thinking about Ukraine in terms of deliverables due every 6 months for Ministerials. Those are necessary in their own way, but too great a reliance on them as ends to themselves has contributed to the too superficial relations of today – broad but shallow. The relationship is one to be continually worked, applying human and financial resources – developing the “human capital” repeatedly emphasized by German Defense Minister Volker Ruehe.

Two passages from the 1999 INSS Strategic Assessment have direct implications for enhancing relations with Ukraine. First, “The coming era likely will demand fresh thinking and regular innovation.” At least part of this fresh thinking should include a rejection of the current habit of holding one relationship hostage to progress in another relationship. Cooperative, constructive relationships require no apology or compensatory offering to any third party. Rather, they serve as models of opportunity for third parties. In that regard, relations with Ukraine should be dragged out from under the NATO/Russia (and U.S./Russia) shadow. Second, “the future will demand the careful blending of foreign policy, international economic policy and defense strategy, so that all three components work closely together—not at cross purposes or in separate domains.”⁴⁷ This takes resources, human and financial, and the political will to actively and continually enhance relations with priority nations – including Ukraine.

Parts of this preferred solution are already in place or under way. For example, bilateral programs such as USAID’s in Ukraine, funded at about \$100 million in 1999, have as a primary

⁴⁷ INSS Strategic Assessment for 1999, page xvi, published by NDU

aim to “help the country improve the quality of life for the Ukrainian people.”⁴⁸ Their strategy includes support for macro-economic and structural reforms through initiatives implemented incrementally, with milestones to measure progress. Specifics include community-based micro-enterprise and small business development programs, working with cities to improve transport systems and utilities, and focusing on health care. AID’s programs also aim to encourage civil society development with NGOs to facilitate citizens’ involvement in issues that directly affect them. One specific program, the Community Partnerships Project (CPP),⁴⁹ has built ties between Donetsk and Louisville KY, Komsomolsk and Ithaca NY, and Kamianets-Podilskyi and Athens GA. The aim is to foster relations, share cultures and exchange ideas on municipal governance and includes internships where Ukrainian city officials work in U.S. communities. USAID’s approach and selective focus have a better chance of building brass-roots good will and friendship among Ukrainians for the U.S. than many of the more traditional security-based initiatives. Allies should expand similar programs.

Non-governmental programs are also part of the solution. Sister Cities International, for example, is a non-profit organization that aims at building relationships that encourage sustainable economic and community development. City administrators, private volunteers and corporate representatives engage their counterparts in a variety of programs. There are currently 24 Ukrainian cities partnered through this program (e.g., Cincinnati and Karkhiv), and there are some 115 projects underway.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ USIS article “U.S. Assistance to Ukraine Aimed at Building Long-Term Partnership,” by Peter Sawchyn, 25 Feb 1999. Text at www.eucom.mil/europe/ukraine/usis/99feb25.htm.

⁴⁹ see 23 Jan 2000 Kyiv Press Bureau article at www.ukrweekly.com/Archive/2000/040006.shtml.

⁵⁰ see Sister Cities website at www.sister-cities.org.

UCEPS's study on military reform, which all Allies now have, has largely answered the "what's the problem?" question. This comprehensive study, complete with recommendations for reform, should be the basis for future discussions between Allies and Ukraine's defense/military leadership – and present an opportunity for the JWGDR to finally do meaningful work *if that is what the MOD/GS wants*. Interestingly, the study calls for an interdepartmental Commission on military reform which would be established by Presidential decree, supported by an executive level Working Group and headed by a Chairman with broad implementation powers. The focus now needs to be on developing plans to implement change and on how Allies can assist – starting with urging President Kuchma to establish a Commission and offering to provide counterpart experts to facilitate its work.

Ukraine's leadership must be told that the current repetitive flurry of tactical activities which serve now as a substitute for substantive cooperation in the area of defense reform will be curtailed until a truer foundation is laid – if Ukraine desires cooperation in that area. I note that the problems highlighted in the UCEPS study had to have been largely known by the MOD/GS, yet those bodies did not share the information with Allies – much less ask Allies for help in developing and implementing solutions. Recall that the MOD/GS had trouble even sharing information on current troop strength. Rather, it fell to a think-tank made up of former defense, military and academic experts. Whether the MOD/GS will now get on board, even in the face of this expose, remains to be seen. And with Horbulin now replaced by Marchuk as head of the NSDC, further top-level requests for assistance may now be a thing of the past (the recent

request appears to have been retracted). Even without defense reform on the agenda, there are many other topics on which to base a productive, mutually beneficial relationship.

As this revamped aspect goes forward (hopefully), Allies need to remember Ukraine's lack of experience; it makes little sense to tell them what they need to do in broad terms and then stand back to see how they do – and then be irritated when they don't perform to western standards. Also recall Mr Horbulin's request, as Chairman of the NSDC, for teams of experts to come to Ukraine. If there is a shortage of such experts (at least in terms of availability) on various governments' payrolls, there is no shortage of such expertise now in the private sector. Such companies could be contracted to provide the defense reform expert advice which Ukraine so badly needs – and has requested repeatedly. If corporate NATO does not want to take this on, individual or groups of Allies should step up. Partnering efforts, such as that with Poland, also merit continued and increased support as they can draw from experiences much “closer to home” regarding Ukraine's experience.

In the sphere of defense/military cooperation, much more care and planning is needed than is now evident. Programs should be relatively few, but deep, and with measurable milestones met before continuing to the next stage. More important, they must be directly related to Ukraine's own plans for streamlining and improving military forces (of all ministries) and the structures that support them. Absent such plans, focus on areas such as civil-military coordination and capabilities for disaster response, retraining programs to steer military personnel into professions

that will help build Ukraine's dilapidated infrastructure, professional military education, and counter-proliferation, and help Ukraine develop its military industry for regional markets.⁵¹

All of these would be part of any rational plans that might be developed. Reinforce success, and don't confuse willingness to consult or attend meetings as intention or commitment for action. Continue the public information campaign begun in mid-1999, especially activities that inform and involve Parliamentarians, leading intellectuals and the media. Emphasize non-military aspects of cooperative activities, and the practical results therefrom. More important however will be using the detailed information now available on defense reform needs to shape IPPs, PARP plans, etc. to address the very real shortfalls. Condition future subsidies accordingly. Use that same information to insist on substantive work for the JWGDR, whatever committee will oversee it in the future.

Also, Ukraine (and the U.S., for that matter) needs to better understand NATO's roles and limitations (as prescribed by *all* Allies). In the partnership sphere, NATO has two main roles: provide a structured framework within which each Partner can decide and design its relationship with the Alliance and derive plans for internal change; and help identify problem areas that need more work. But substantive assistance designed to help a Partner develop plans for change and then implement those changes is much harder for corporate NATO to do than for bilateral programs of Allies. Although NATO has gone the extra step with countries like Albania, under truly exceptional circumstances, it is loath to do so for others – largely considering this an

⁵¹ Some notable progress/deals have been made, including selling hovercraft to Greece and tanks to Pakistan, and

intrusion into matters of an individual nation's sovereignty. If Ukraine wants the Alliance to go that step further with it, then Ukraine's leaders must demonstrate a seriousness toward reform that has been lacking thus far.

Economic Measures

There is no disagreement that the greatest threat to Ukraine's stability and prosperity remains its economy. While Russia is weak militarily, it continues to pressure Ukraine economically – particularly through Ukraine's energy dependence. And Russia has used this club vigorously, ⁵²seeking to obtain control of key production sectors as payment for energy bills. Giving in to this would be to mortgage Ukraine's independence, if not its very existence. But while all agree to the severity of the economic threat, too little has been done to help Ukraine recover.

Ukraine has not made providing such help easy, with a Rada that blocked most economic reform measures through the 1990s, questionable practices that encourage the IMF to back away, and corruption that discourages foreign investors. Ukraine's capabilities and potential as a future competitor make the EU wary. Still, there are a number of ways Allies can and should engage to nudge Ukraine's economy along the road to recovery, including looking for ways to support President Kuchma's new economic reform plan.

Ukraine is contending for main battle tank contracts with a variety of nations.

⁵² Inter alia, see "Ukraine's Place in European and Regional Security" by Stephen Larrabee, chapter 13 in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol XX, cited previously.

Canceling visits by Ukraine's leaders to Washington or other Allied capitals is not the answer, such as happened after the IMF disclosed Ukraine's recent double counting to inflate its claimed currency reserves. Rather, such visits are opportunities for more "tough love," and a chance to leverage change. With Ukraine's economy finally showing signs of growth, with GDP and industrial output on the rise and with a growing base of small and medium sized businesses, engagement is even more imperative. With the Ukrainian government now in the middle of a large privatization effort, and Russian kingpins such as Berezovsky trying to get control of these "blue chips" – just as they did in Russia itself – economic disengagement by the West could have disastrous results⁵³ Ukraine's Mikolayiv Alumina Plant, Europe's largest aluminum producer and major provider of raw material to Russia's aluminum industry, may have already suffered this fate.

What else should we do?

One other thing, easily done, is to support Ukrainian think-tanks, such as UCEPS or the Ukrainian Centre for Peace, Conversion and Conflict Resolution Studies,⁵⁴ which produce studies and articles crucial to Western understanding of the situation in Ukraine. UCEPS seminal study on Ukraine's need for defense reform, for example, was published with a circulation of only 1,000.⁵⁵ There are probably that many offices inside Washington's Beltway, not to mention Defense and State Department offices charged specifically with developing closer

⁵³ See "Russia Eyes Ukraine's Blue Chips", a 9 March 2000 Kiev Post article by Peter Byrne.

⁵⁴ see its website at www.public.ua.net/~potekhin/ucpcrs.

⁵⁵ And this limited circulation was possible only with the assistance of the Netherlands Embassy in Kiev.

relations with Ukraine, that need these “insider” products, as well as a variety of Ukraine-focused think-tanks at U.S. universities. All Allies benefit from such products.

Time Marches On

While the West waits to see what Russia will become under President Putin, it should be busy helping nations around Russia establish themselves as anchors of prosperity and stability in their own right. We need to think in terms of globalization, where one nation after another becomes inextricably linked in mutually beneficial ways with not just its immediate neighbors but with nations around the globe. The best way to solve the ‘Russia problem’ is to give it fewer and fewer alternatives to being a constructive member of a peaceful, globalized community, where the final wrong choice is to collapse under the weight of its own irrelevance. Helping Ukraine make the right moves, establishing itself firmly, not as a cog in some new security architecture that perpetuates the old-think and baggage of times past, but as a productive and prosperous democracy, and economic partner, could prove to be crucial in this regard. Clinging to A-list and other Cold War mentalities is counter-productive, and sends the wrong message to all concerned.

Ukraine is still a “state in the making.” It must find its own way forward, and while the responsibility for progress lies with Ukraine alone, it can draw from others’ experiences in shaping its solutions. Friends of Ukraine can not impose reforms, and should not try, but they should tell Ukraine’s leaders and citizens the hard truth about the consequences of continued

failure to act. When Ukraine asks for help, the West needs to find ways of lending that help. It may only be when Ukraine stops asking for advice and assistance that the West will realize it has missed out on a critically important opportunity. But by then it may be too late.

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