

Ukrainian Independence and National Security

And the Role the United States Can Play to Safeguard Both

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While the world has been anxiously observing the pains of Russian democratic growth, watching most recently with rapt fascination the struggle between Boris Yeltsin and his opponents in the Russian Parliament, events in Ukraine have received scant attention. Ironically, even if one was to disregard the right of the Ukrainian people to live in peace and prosperity, the lack of attention to events occurring in Ukraine is likely to affect significantly the prospects for building genuine democracy in Russia and, in time, may return the world to the tense environment of East-West confrontation. For these reasons, it is necessary to examine Ukrainian developments and briefly evaluate Ukrainian-Russian relations.

The fates of democracy in Kiev and Moscow are inextricably intertwined. Simple geopolitical realities ensure that, with an independent, strong, and prosperous Ukraine serving as a strategic buffer, Russia's ability to play an intimidating role in central and eastern Europe is likely to remain limited. The loss of Ukraine's economy and agriculture greatly shrunk the Russian GNP. Additionally, "Ukraine includes the majority of the strategic highways, railroads and pipelines connecting Russia to central and Western Europe. Thus, the loss of Ukraine pushed Russia geographically a giant step farther away from Europe."¹

To be sure, Moscow is certain to continue pressing for as much economic and political influence as it can in various constituent parts of the former Soviet Union.² For example, in the case of Ukraine, Russia pushed the prices charged for Moscow's oil and gas deliveries to world levels, while continuing to insist on paying artificially low prices for Ukrainian-produced foodstuffs.

The cold realities of geopolitics aside, given the history of Russia's relations with Kiev over the last several hundred years, a Russia bereft of Ukraine is psychologically unlikely to see itself as an imperial power. Indeed, Ukrainian independence has been perceived as a temporary aberration by Moscow. Thus, in Ian Brzezinski's apt characterization, "Ukraine's independence is both a determinant and indicator of the direction of Russia's post-Soviet evolution."³

Moreover, Ukrainian independence is of crucial significance to the prospects for stability in Poland, potentially the strongest regional power in east-central Europe. Warsaw and Kiev both recognize that a sufficiently Finlandized Ukraine would greatly exacerbate Poland's security problems.⁴ Indeed, in February 1993,

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Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk described Europe's security architecture as resting on twin pillars—strategic partnerships between Germany and France and Ukraine and Poland.

One may, of course, argue that the evolution of democracy in Russia ought to prove a sufficient antidote to any imperial resurgence. To a large extent, this view animates most of America's recent foreign policy

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moves directed at Russia and other countries of the Newly Independent States (NIS). For example, U.S. Defense Secretary Les Aspin, speaking at the dedication ceremony of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, which is designed to facilitate consultations between Western Europe and east-central European nations, noted, “I believe a democratic, non-imperial Russia is the best guarantee of security and stability in the new Europe.”⁵

There are two rebuttals to this claim. First, democracy in Russia is far from assured. In fact, if Russian democracy was sufficiently entrenched, there would be few reasons to worry about a resumption of Moscow's expansionist behavior. Second, to the extent Russia engages in adventures in the so-called “near abroad,” it is difficult to envision how a fragile Russian democracy could survive in the process.

Ironically, then, seemingly opposite courses of action may produce the same bad outcome. Thus, it is equally foolhardy for Washington either to push Yeltsin too hard or coddle him too much. Indeed, a Russia that flexes its military muscle is certain to be a place where the military as an institution is accorded great deference, if not outright primacy. In this atmosphere, military priorities on an entire range of national security issues are going to be pursued, transforming Moscow's foreign and defense policies and setting them on a collision course with the West. Once this process is underway, a vicious cycle of reaction and counterreaction is likely to ensue. The more egregious Russia's conduct, the stronger the inevitable Western response and, with the Russian military calling the shots, the more forceful Russian policy is likely to emerge.

Furthermore, because a significant percentage of Russia's population does not support the use of force abroad, any decision by Moscow to order troops into combat will likely be intensely unpopular and divisive.⁶ This ensures that Russia's pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy would be accompanied by a domestic crackdown.

Since the end of the Cold War, the new international environment, while replete with numerous regional conflicts, has also been characterized by a diminished risk of massive conventional or nuclear conflict. It also has accorded Western leaders the budgetary and political “luxury” of being able to focus on domestic issues. Of course, all of this would come to an end if Russia were to

attempt to regain its imperial mantle or even make major strides toward that goal.⁷

Moreover, it is important to underscore that what is at stake may be much worse than a simple return to the “bad old” days of the Cold War. For one thing, Russia's misbehavior may trigger destructive, albeit ultimately futile, resistance by its intended victims, using conventional or even nuclear weapons. Furthermore, unlike the erstwhile cautious CPSU *apparatchiki*, who were convinced that time was on their side, Moscow's pro-imperial elites are unlikely to be either cautious or prudent when dealing with a weakened NATO and the predictable Western protests about Russia's aggressive behavior. Thus, in sum, it would be both tragic and myopic if our failure to pursue a sound policy, designed to ensure Ukraine's independence, would bring about the greatest geostrategic reversal in human history.

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Whither Ukraine?

Unfortunately, over the course of 1993, the situation in Ukraine grew progressively worse. Indeed, by now, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the very survival of the Ukrainian independent state has been imperiled.

These developments are essentially attributable to serious domestic political and economic problems facing the government in Kiev, a lack of concrete reform undertaken by the Ukrainian leadership, as well as to the fact that Russia has exacerbated Ukraine's political, economic and security problems, while Western governments have done very little to help and almost nothing to restrain Moscow.

At the same time, if the current economic difficulties are resolved and the economy begins to grow again, the long-term prospects for developing a genuine democracy and strong market economy for Ukraine are very good. Thus, the success of Ukrainian nation-building is both necessary—from the Western standpoint it is an indispensable ingredient of European security in the post-Cold War era—and feasible.

The Economic Dimension

The Ukrainian economy is deteriorating. In the first quarter of 1993, industrial production fell by 10 percent and the inflation rate was over 40 percent per month. At this time, the inflation rate has risen to 70 percent per month, and Ukrainian currency has lost nearly all its value. Even food production, long a Ukrainian strong suit, continued to decline. The government continued to demonstrate that it lacked any spending discipline, as it continued to pour subsidies to unprofitable state enterprises, fueling inflation even further.

Meanwhile, relatively little has been done on the privatization front, leading to the September 1993 resignation by a senior official of the Kravchuk government genuinely committed to free-market reforms, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics Viktor M. Pynzenyk. Reportedly, Pynzenyk grew increasingly disenchanted after unsuccessfully battling some well-entrenched former Communist *apparatchiki* and conservative economic managers. And, on September 9, Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma also resigned, declaring that the government had lost control of the economy.⁸ Additional economic hardship was triggered by strikes, which took place in June and July in Donbass and other parts of eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian economy, particularly its heavy industry and energy sectors, continues to be totally dependent on Russia. While Ukraine has a large industrial complex, it produces relatively few finished products and has even fewer vertically integrated production lines. Instead, as is the case with all former Soviet industrial assets, Ukrainian factories usually are highly integrated into the “unified production complexes” scattered throughout the entire territory of the former USSR.

Ukraine's nuclear power industry is also dependent upon Russia's nuclear fuel supplies and its willingness to receive spent fuel rods and other nuclear waste. Since Ukraine has no indigenous supplies of oil and gas, and no hard currency to speak of, it is completely dependent on Russia's gas and oil shipments. Since Moscow has raised the prices of these commodities to world levels, Ukraine's debt to Russia has risen to \$2.5 billion, a fact Moscow used during the recent negotiations over the fate of the Black Sea Fleet. In general, Russia's attitude toward the Ukrainian economy seems to be: the worse, the better. Some Russian government officials point out that there is a high economic price to be paid for Kiev's political independence.

Meanwhile, Western aid has been scarce. Ukraine, a country of 52 million, has seen very little American, Japanese, or West European money. Most recently, some U.S. government officials fought even such a relatively innocuous development as the Congressional earmarking of a modest \$300 million amount for Ukraine out of the total \$2.5 billion aid package for all NIS countries. What has been even more damaging to the Ukrainian economy is the relative dearth of Western investment prompted by related concerns about Ukraine's economic and political stability.

The Political Dimension

While Ukrainian political life has not witnessed the struggle between the president and Parliament on a scale similar to the confrontation between Yeltsin and Rutskoi/Khasbulatov, it has not featured much cooperation either. In 1993 alone, we have seen a constitutional crisis, when in May special economic decree powers granted by the Supreme Rada (the Ukrainian Parliament) to Kuchma

expired; battles over a national referendum, first scheduled for September and then canceled; battles within the Supreme Rada pitting different factions against each other; Kuchma's resignation and Kravchuk's assumption of his responsibilities; tense relations between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defense and the resignation of Ukraine's first defense minister, General Konstantin Morozov. Political battles are complicated by the fact that Ukraine's Soviet-era Constitution is poorly drafted, and fails to divide clearly government authority among the president, prime minister and Supreme Rada.

Still, it is important to underscore the fact that, relatively speaking, the Ukrainian political situation is not entirely bleak. Unlike in Russia, Ukraine seems to feature a more harmonious relationship between President Kravchuk and the Supreme Rada.⁹ The Parliament itself, while witnessing numerous

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acrimonious debates among the different factions, was able to pull itself together and avoid legislative gridlock. This relative political cohesion is probably driven as much by necessity as by choice—for example, the sense of national peril undoubtedly contributes to executive-legislative “harmony” in Kiev. Yet, if

immediate problems are overcome, it can serve as a foundation for stable democratic development of Ukrainian political life.

Potentially, however, the most serious political and strategic problem facing Ukraine is the emerging gulf between the attitudes of eastern and western Ukrainians, a fact that was somewhat obscured by the seemingly decisive pro-independence vote of 1991. In retrospect, it appears that, in both Crimea and eastern Ukraine, large segments of a heavily Russified and Russian-speaking, although not necessarily ethnically Russian, population opted to vote for independence, hoping to improve their economic conditions. With the Ukrainian economy in a virtual free-fall, their loyalty is being severely tested.

Traditional elites, who until recently were silent, especially since the Communist Party was banned, are regrouping and manifesting greater political activism. Since late autumn of 1992, a number of political organizations based in eastern Ukraine have become more vocal, demanding a greater say in policy development, co-equal status for the Russian language and a more pro-Russian economic and foreign policy by the government in Kiev. The center of this political reawakening of eastern Ukraine has been Donbass and the two eastern Ukraine *oblasti* of Donetsk and Luhansk. Donbass in particular contains a large number of obsolete heavy industry sites which are primarily dependent on continued trade with Russia and an infusion of new state subsidies.

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The problem of political legitimacy for the Kravchuk government is even more severe in the Crimea, where the local Parliament wants at least autonomy, and even temporarily declared independence.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the more nationalistic western Ukrainians are anxious to press forward with more independent, Western-oriented policies. All in all, the potential for political fragmentation, pitting western Ukraine against eastern Ukraine and Crimea, is still quite high. Such a rift is certain to be seized upon by Russia and may well become a pretext for Russian intervention. A less extreme, but still dangerous, scenario is the continued stalemate, with eastern Ukraine preventing the Kiev-based government from undertaking needed economic, political, and national security reforms.

To be sure, tensions between east and west Ukraine are essentially economic in nature, reflecting different economic imperatives facing the two regions. Compared with Russia or even other former parts of the Soviet Union, provided that economic conditions improve, the long-term outlook for Ukrainian political stability is quite decent. For example, as pointed out by Adrian Karatnycky:

Ukraine has few of the ethnic, political, and cultural divisions that will likely plague Russia in years ahead. It has nothing like Russia's simmering separatist movements, as in Chechnia and Tatarstan. While Ukrainians and Russians (73 and 21 percent, respectively, of Ukraine's population) represent different nations, their common Slavic roots argue for a stable ethnic mix. Moreover, with the exception of Crimea, all of Ukraine's oblasts have Ukrainian majorities.¹¹

The National Security Dimension

If one had to find one phrase best characterizing Ukrainian national security policy it would be “confusing and confused.” To begin with, it is impossible to reconcile Ukrainian official declarations of neutrality and professed disinterest in joining the NATO military infrastructure with the numerous hints by Kiev-based leaders that they are interested in gaining NATO affiliations. Meanwhile, while President Kravchuk has assiduously sought to forge strong ties with Poland, his efforts to create an eastern European security arrangement, comprised of the Baltic states, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Austria, have not been supported by most central European states who want to join NATO.

Kravchuk's main legitimate national security anxiety is that Ukraine would be “singularized” and left to fend for itself, squeezed between an aggressive Moscow and an indifferent NATO, with Washington sitting on the sidelines. Yet, his strategy for coping with the problem has been to proffer numerous assurances to the West that Ukraine would be promptly de-nuclearized, but he fails to follow

through on these commitments. This leads to justifiable accusations of duplicity and bad faith.¹²

A similar approach seems to be a strategy of choice for dealing with Moscow, with the so-called Massandra accords being the most recent example. On 3 September 1993, against the advice of his own defense minister, President Kravchuk signed an accord with Yeltsin pledging to transfer to Russia one-half of the Black Sea Fleet, with the proceeds of the sale being used to satisfy Ukraine's \$2.5 billion oil and gas debt obligations to Russia. Simultaneously, he agreed to transfer Ukraine's nuclear warheads to Russia for dismantling, with the proceeds from the sale of plutonium and uranium contained therein to be remitted back to Ukraine.¹³

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All of this is not to deny that Moscow tried to coerce Ukraine into giving up all its nuclear weapons and surrender the Black Sea Fleet, while engaging in provocative behavior vis-à-vis Crimea.¹⁴ However, it is unclear what Kravchuk can gain by going back on various commitments he has

made, instead of trying to hold to a more firm and principled course.

The problems with Ukrainian nuclear weapons policy are particularly severe and have served to tarnish Ukraine's image in the West. There is no denying that Ukraine has both the legal right and sound strategic reasons to retain indefinitely a modest nuclear force. Moreover, contrary to some allegations, such a force could be maintained by Kiev and need not create an unstable nuclear balance between Russia and Ukraine. However, since all policies are not made in a historical vacuum, and given President Kravchuk's declarations on nuclear issues over the last two years, any blunt statement at this time that Ukraine wants to remain a nuclear state is likely to cause further damage to Ukraine's international legitimacy. Thus, the only viable course of action open to Kiev is some refinement of its prior nuclear stance, which features prompt START I ratification and a delayed accession to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Over the last several months, the Ukrainian Parliament has held some hearings on the START I treaty. However, it has yet to ratify that treaty and the fate of the NPT is even less assured. The stakes extend beyond the schedule for dismantling 176 ICBMs¹⁵ and 30 strategic bombers—equipped with some 1,650 nuclear warheads—left on Ukrainian soil. Most obviously, Ukraine's evolving attitudes toward nuclear weapons and related issues are certain to exert a keen influence on the course of U.S.-Ukrainian relations. Even more fundamentally, the U.S. and West Europeans strongly believe that Ukraine's denuclearization, or lack thereof, affects the stability of the entire region. From Kiev's standpoint,

however, what is really at stake is Ukrainian sovereignty, challenged by what it perceives as Russia's resurgent "imperial" tendencies.

Ironically, all of these perceptions are correct. The question of nuclear weapons in Ukraine is inextricably intertwined with both bilateral Russian-Ukrainian and U.S.-Ukrainian ties as well as broader regional security issues. In principle, the interests of various protagonists are not irreconcilable. However, given the history involved and especially the distrust that Ukraine feels toward Russia, resolving this imbroglio would be a difficult process requiring masterful statecraft on all sides and particularly adept U.S. leadership.

Ukraine's unsettled domestic situation injects further complications. The original de-nuclearization policy was developed by President Kravchuk and Prime Minister Kuchma without much consultation with the Parliament, which consequently does not have much stake in it. A number of former Communists in Parliament, who now are under attack from more democratic deputies, decided that "hardline" nationalism offers them the best chance for political survival. Since many of them also represent heavy industry constituencies, their pro-nuclear attitudes are even more pronounced. Yet, even the Rukh faction has evidenced strong dissatisfaction with Kravchuk's nuclear policies and there appear to be divisions even within the Cabinet, with the widening rift on nuclear issues between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ironically, while debating the merits of indefinite possession of nuclear weapons, Ukraine's conventional force posture remains in shambles. The Kiev-based government was originally very adept in establishing Ukraine's self-defense forces. Thousands of officers and hundreds of thousands of soldiers took loyalty oaths; those who refused were shipped to Russia, while Ukrainian officers and privates serving outside of Ukraine were summoned to come home. A Ministry of Defense was promptly organized and an able defense minister, General Morozov, appointed. Unfortunately, these early successes were not followed with additional positive steps.

Based on the accounts of American observers and visitors to Kiev, the Ukrainian military appears to be unresponsive to civilian leadership. The problem is not so much one of loyalty as the lack of clear lines of authority, leading to the potentially dangerous autonomy of local military commanders. Meanwhile, there is neither a clear Ukrainian military doctrine, nor an ascertainable defense budget. To be sure, the state of the Ukrainian economy precludes any large investment in defense; there is, however, no excuse for the operational, doctrinal and organizational chaos that seems to permeate Ukraine's defense establishment. Given the fact that Kiev has inherited most of the Soviet Union's frontline military equipment—artillery, armor, supply depots, bases, airfields, etc.—it should be able, in time, to field a first-rate military establishment. And, while the downsizing of the current 650,000-750,000 Ukrainian forces

seems inevitable and appropriate, not much thought has been given to defense conversion and a restructuring of the defense industrial base.

Until the visit to Ukraine by U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Strobe Talbott this summer, U.S.-Ukraine relations seemed to be growing progressively worse.

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Washington complained, with justification, that the Ukrainian government was not living up to its international undertakings; while Kiev, also justifiably, berated the Americans for not taking it seriously

and focusing exclusively on nuclear matters.

For example, during this author's recent visit to Ukraine, Ukrainian officials angrily denounced U.S. newspaper editorials that described Kiev as a “barrier to nuclear peace” and called for more pressure by the U.S. and its allies “to isolate Ukraine and deny it economic help.” This author also heard a litany of other perceived indignities, whether real or imagined, that Ukraine had to suffer. While Talbott appears to have been successful in diffusing the immediate tensions, all the underlying divisions still remain. There must be progress in resolving these more fundamental problems.

Up to now, the prevailing Western attitude seems to focus on the fact that the Kiev government has already signed numerous agreements, in 1991 with Russia and other CIS members,¹⁶ and in March 1992 the so-called Lisbon Protocol, affirming its intent to become a non-nuclear state. All that remains for Ukraine is to implement these undertakings. The United States is also concerned about the alleged dire consequences of, for example, Ukraine's failure to ratify promptly START and the NPT. Indeed, by now, it has become the “politically correct” view in Washington that any outright rejection by the Ukrainian Parliament of either of these treaties or even efforts to demand their renegotiation are likely to undermine global non-proliferation efforts, intensify tensions between Kiev and Moscow, torpedo efforts to implement START I and ratify START II, contribute to regional instability and last, but not least, might well cause other countries, such as Belarus and Poland, to reconsider their non-nuclear status. The intellectual merits of these Western concerns aside—and they are far from unimpeachable—the sole preoccupation with nuclear matters arguably has prevented the U.S. from paying sufficient attention to Ukrainian anxieties. These must be taken into account if an acceptable solution is to be found.

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Kiev properly believes that the United States has been unduly preoccupied with the nuclear issue to the detriment of all other aspects of the bilateral relationship. It is unhappy that Washington's economic aid has been overwhelmingly tilted toward Russia. In this context, the Ukrainians have asked for more Western money, both to pay for the costs associated with dismantling the nuclear infrastructure and compensate them for the economic value of the plutonium contained in nuclear warheads being transferred out of Ukraine. However, an even more fundamental fear in Kiev is the prospect of a de-nuclearized Ukraine having to deal with an "imperial-minded" nuclear-armed Russia.

Accordingly, Ukrainian national security officials are increasingly vocal in arguing that, just as is the case with other nuclear weapon-armed states, they are unwilling to give up their entire nuclear deterrence without first establishing alternative security arrangements. Significantly, in Kiev's view, more than just a credible conventional force posture is involved. What Ukraine is seeking is nothing less than integration into the existing European security structure, albeit without specifying the precise modality for such an arrangement. For example, in a recent paper, Yuri Kostenko, an influential Supreme Rada member, argued as follows:

Speaking frankly, the final strategic missile deployed on Ukrainian territory should be destroyed only when any likely aggression against Ukraine will automatically threaten the interests of many other European states. By taking such an approach, Ukraine will, on the one hand, be able to play a significant role in every pan-European process and, on the other hand, it will be able to gradually exchange one component of its national security posture (nuclear weapons) for another, more effective one (integrating with the developed world) without threatening its interests. In all other scenarios, Ukraine's nuclear disarmament . . . will not serve our country's interests.¹⁷

The historical legacy of the 1917-1921 period, when Ukraine, bereft of an army, fell prey to the pro-Russian Bolshevik forces, greatly influences the thinking of current Ukrainian leaders. Meanwhile, tensions continue over the fate of the Black Sea Fleet¹⁸ and there is a tug of war between Russia and Ukraine over the delivery and cost of oil and gas products. Ukrainians are also bitter that such reasonable steps on their part as the transfer of all tactical nuclear weapons to Russia seem to have earned them no Western gratitude.

The Ukrainian government is also distraught that such moves as Moscow's announcement of their so-called "Monroe Doctrine" over the rest of the former USSR have not been challenged strongly by Washington, and that, in general, the United States seems to be unwilling to stand up for the rights of the non-Russian countries. Ironically, while Russian conservatives are criticizing the

West for tilting against fellow Orthodox Slavs in the former Yugoslavia, the Ukrainians view the Western failure to stand up to the Serbs as an indication that they cannot count on outside support in dealing with a case of Russian aggression. All of these facts, particularly when viewed through the prism of a 300-year painful history of Russian-Ukrainian relations, make for a very difficult situation.

United States Policy Options

What can the United States do to help defuse this explosive situation? First, we ought to maintain that it is both feasible and necessary to maintain good relations with Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, one can argue that exclusive preoccupation with Russia, to the detriment of developing strong ties with Ukraine and countries in the region, is unlikely to help institutionalize democracy even in Russia. We have a stake in a democratic Russia, but we also have a vested interest in the evolution of a democratic Ukraine and other neighboring countries of the former Soviet Union.

Second, it is necessary to develop a realistic view of the threats faced by Kiev. Contrary to the claims of Ukrainian strategists, the probability of a Russian military attack against Ukraine is quite low. To be sure, the fact that the specter of deliberate Warsaw Pact aggression against Western Europe had always been quite low did not prevent NATO from building a credible conventional and nuclear force to deter this threat. Ukraine should do the same. Still, it is important to stress that Moscow's seemingly preferred policy option remains one of patient exploitation and exacerbation of Ukraine's political and economic problems. Accordingly, American foreign policy should be directed at both dissuading Russia from carrying out this course of action and helping Ukraine cope with internal and external problems.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, what is needed is a merger of two agendas—the Western and Ukrainian—so that all of the imperatives involved can be satisfied. With regard to the nuclear issues, we need to continue pressing for prompt and unconditional START I ratification and, given the fact that it is probably too late for Kiev to adopt a more nuclear-oriented national security strategy, a relatively short timetable—seven to 10 years—for Ukraine's signing of the NPT. At the same time, we should publicly announce that we would take seriously any nuclear threats against Ukraine, whether implicit or explicit.

The finite duration of Ukraine's nuclear status should enable the United States to argue credibly that Ukraine poses no real threat to Moscow. In fact, unless Russia planned to invade Ukraine in the next few years, it is difficult to imagine how a temporary Ukrainian nuclear power status could be viewed by the Kremlin with alarm. Concomitantly, we should support Ukraine's quest for obtaining appropriate means to ensure that, while nuclear weapons remain on Ukraine's soil, they cannot be launched without Kiev's approval.

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Simultaneously, we can take steps to diffuse tensions caused by alleged Ukrainian efforts to gain operational control of its ICBMs.¹⁹ The way to accomplish both of these objectives would be to propose a series of confidence-building measures (CBMs) for Ukrainian SS-24s that would remain operational once the START I-accountable missiles are dismantled. One element of such CBMs, designed to demonstrate Moscow's good faith, would be to implement Defense Secretary Aspin's earlier proposal that rather than turning Ukrainian-based nuclear warheads over to Russia, at least for the time being they be stored under international supervision on Ukrainian soil.

As far as the remaining Ukrainian ICBMs are concerned, Kiev should be prepared to take them off alert status and allow Russia an opportunity to verify this development. The purpose of all CBMs is to make the Ukrainian nuclear posture, while it lasts, as benign as possible and use the nuclear interregnum—the next 10 to 15 years—as an opportunity to strengthen Ukrainian statehood, bolster its conventional force posture and enhance its ties with Europe. To be sure, taking Ukrainian ICBMs off alert status will increase their vulnerability to a Russian first strike; still, enough uncertainty about the outcome should remain to provide Kiev with a modicum of nuclear deterrence.

We also need to announce that we intend to play a strong and positive role in protecting the security of Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union, and that we are prepared to make this policy a linchpin of our relations with Russia. In general, we need to do more than just discourage aggressive Russian behavior; we need to provide a positive alternative—the encouragement of Russia's democratic development. Thus, just as we should be prepared to condemn Moscow's "Monroe Doctrine," the United States should express full support for Russia's legitimate security concerns and the rights of ethnic Russians residing outside Russia's borders. As a long-term goal, we should be also prepared to support Ukrainian efforts to join NATO. If any collective security arrangement of which Ukraine becomes a part also includes Russia, there is no reason to believe that this arrangement should be viewed negatively by an enlightened government in Moscow. Other ways of enhancing Ukrainian legitimacy include helping to become more involved with such regional and international organizations as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the U.N. For example, using Ukrainian troops in future peacekeeping missions should both enhance *esprit de corps* of the Ukrainian military and improve Kiev's international standing.

Last, but not least, since the ultimate success or failure of Ukrainian independence would be largely determined by internal developments in Ukraine, the United States should strongly support the development of democratic and free-market structures in that country. Here, we should draw on the full panoply of resources, including aid, credit guarantees, and transfer of relevant know-how and technology. This effort can be best underwritten by a partnership involving

the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and such U.S. government agencies as the U.S. Information Agency and the Agency for international Development.

Notes

¹ Ian Brzezinski, "The Geopolitical Dimension," *The National Interest*, Spring 1992, pp. 49-50.

² Russia's strategy for winning the "hearts and minds" of the former Soviet republics has been anything but subtle, resting on twin pillars of economic blackmail and inciting/manipulating ethnic conflicts. In Georgia, Moscow deftly assisted the Abkhazian separatists and then capitalized on the clashes between supporters of the ousted Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and forces backing Eduard Shevardnadze. In both Moldova and Azerbaijan, Moscow has supported secessionist forces, causing in the process the collapse of the government led by the democratically elected president of Azerbaijan Abulfar Elchibey. Not surprisingly, the leaders of Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan succumbed to Russian pressure to join an economic union, built around the CIS.

³ Ian Brzezinski, "Polish-Ukrainian Relations: Europe's Neglected Strategic Axis," *Survival*, Autumn 1993, p. 27.

⁴ Historically, Poland, when threatened by Russia, sought to obtain help from its Western neighbors, most often France and Germany. This strategy, however, has not been successful in the past, and, given the current political, budgetary, and military realities in Europe, it is difficult to envision how either Germany or France or even both of them can offer a sufficient strategic counterweight to a newly resurgent Russia.

⁵ Quoted in R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Fears Ukrainian-Russian Clash," *Washington Post*, 6 June 1993.

⁶ One of the legacies of Afghanistan is the great reluctance by many Russians to serve in the military, even when the possibility of combat seems non-existent. This is all the more true if any fighting appears likely. For example, during the Persian Gulf War, one of the (false) criticisms, launched by the hard-line opponents of then Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was that he wanted to send Soviet troops into combat against Iraq, to assist the allied coalition. While there was the separate issue involved—whether it was in the Soviet Union's interest to side with the U.S. in the Gulf War—there was no doubt that the most powerful emotion, counted on by Shevardnadze's opponents, was the public's aversion to any new combat ventures.

⁷ The fact that such a Russia is highly unlikely to march under the banners of Marx, Engels, and Lenin offers no particular consolation. The 20th century's worst war was prompted by a malignant, totalitarian regime—Nazi Germany—which was anything but Communist in its nature.

⁸ Considerable damage to the Ukrainian economy occurred during the tenure of Kuchma's predecessor, Prime Minister Fokin.

⁹ To be sure, the issue of how much support ought to be given to Kravchuk, and the more fundamental underlying quandary—whether one ought to focus on democracy-building or nation-building—have caused the split of the main nationalist movement, Rukh. The pro-Kravchuk faction broke away and now calls itself the Congress of National Democratic Forces. The rest of Rukh is led by Kravchuk's political rival, Vyacheslav Chornovil.

¹⁰ During the December 1991 referendum, a majority of Crimeans who went to the polls voted for Ukrainian independence. However, on 5 May 1992, the Crimea Supreme Soviet declared independence, although the resolution was ambiguous on the issue of whether Crimea would rejoin Russia or remain associated in some form with Ukraine. This decision was largely prompted by the unsatisfactory—from Crimea's standpoint—changes introduced by the Ukrainian Supreme Rada into the draft law, "On Demarcation of Powers of Ukraine and the

Crimean Republic.” This draft, negotiated by Ukrainian and Crimean government representatives, granted broad autonomy to Crimea, but only within the context of being a part of Ukraine. By May 20, however, responding to pressure from Kiev, Crimea's legislature withdrew the independence proclamation.

¹¹ Adrian Karatnycky, “The Ukrainian Factor,” *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992, p. 106.

¹² For example, one can argue that Ukraine would have been much better off if it were to declare that, while it aspires eventually to become a non-nuclear state, this process would take considerable time. In this context, a distinction could have been made between START I and NPT, with Ukraine signaling its willingness, as one of the successor states to the Soviet Union, to live up to its START obligations, while deferring the NPT ratification. To ease America's anxiety about adverse precedent-setting by Kiev, Ukraine could have pointed out that, as a successor state to the Soviet Union, it was already a nuclear state and hence ought to be treated differently, for NPT purposes, than other central and east European countries. While Ukraine would have been surely challenged for adopting this policy, it is now being criticized even more for its seemingly persistent efforts to renege on its nuclear commitments.

¹³ This agreement was somewhat ambiguous, since it did not specify whether it applied only to START-accountable warheads or all Ukrainian nuclear weapons. In any case, the accord was promptly repudiated by Kravchuk, although it is unclear whether he or the Russian Ministry of Defense first pronounced it dead.

¹⁴ For example, Vice President Ruskoi travelled to Crimea in April of last year and declared that it should be a part of Russia. In May of 1992, Yevgeny Ambartsumov, chairman of the Russian Parliament's International Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations Committee, declared that Crimea was taken from Russia illegally and should be returned to Moscow. In the same month, the Russian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution echoing Ambartsumov's points.

¹⁵ One hundred and thirty of the Ukrainian SS-19s are START-accountable delivery systems and would have to be dismantled if Kiev ratifies START I. However, Ukraine's remaining 46 SS-24s are the most modern part of its arsenal. In July, as a goodwill gesture, Ukraine announced that it had begun dismantling 10 of its SS-19 ICBMs.

¹⁶ Ukraine's original declaration of independence was accompanied by a statement expressing intent to become a non-nuclear state. Indeed, given the fact that the Chernobyl disaster became the defining moment in the Ukrainian quest for independence, and anti-nuclear sentiments were widespread among the Ukrainian people, affirmations of non-nuclear intentions came easily to Ukrainian government officials. Indeed, as far as nuclear weapons were concerned, in many ways, Ukrainian intellectuals saw similarities between themselves and Japanese victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

¹⁷ Yuri Kostenko, “Ukraine's Nuclear Weapons: A Political, Legal, and Economic Analysis of Disarmament,” p. 10.

¹⁸ It is important to underscore that what is at stake here is not just the fate of over 300 aging, mostly surface, combatants. Ukraine does not aspire to be either a global or even regional maritime power. However, both Moscow and Kiev recognize that the presence of a large Russian fleet in the Black Sea, with de facto Russian control of Odessa and other port facilities, poses a permanent challenge to Ukrainian sovereignty.

¹⁹ Russian statements that Ukraine is on the verge of being able to retarget its ICBMs and that it would not tolerate such a development bear a certain chilling resemblance to Moscow's hints in 1969 to American government officials that because China was on the verge of acquiring a sizeable nuclear arsenal, the Soviets might launch a preemptive strike against that country. At the time, a strong and negative U.S. response helped cooler heads to prevail in Moscow. A similar response is clearly called for now.