Cooperative Osprey '98.

2d Marine Division (Charles E. Rolfes)

Shaping on NATO's Doorstep

U.S.-Ukraine Relations

By TIMOTHY C. SHEA

Ukraine's independent status and location are key to the permanent demise of the Soviet empire. A strategic hinge between Central Europe and the partner states of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, it is also the second largest country in Europe and, except for Russia, has the largest military outside NATO. Its force structure still clings to the Soviet military legacy, with more than 300,000 personnel remaining in uniform. It is a pivotal state with substantial potential to stabilize the region.

This article examines how DOD executes the national military strategy in shaping the international security environment relative to Ukraine. U.S. engagement strategy has been moderately successful and is worth continuing, but resources have not been leveraged efficiently. The government in Kiev has shrewdly exploited American efforts to its own advantage while

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Central Europe

largely spurning attempts to influence its external behavior or internal politics.

Sovereignty, Stability, and Independence

Creating a peaceful, stable region where an enlarged U.S.-led NATO remains the preeminent security organization is an enduring American objective. Additionally, the United States seeks cooperative Russian and Ukrainian relations with the Alliance. Tools include forces stationed abroad and troops deployed for operations and exercises; military-to-military contacts; programs such as security assistance and defense and international arms cooperation; and a regional academic facility, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

America's hopes for engagement are ambitious. The U.S.-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Bilateral Defense and Military Cooperation produced a vision statement that calls for actions to ensure that Ukraine is "a stable, independent democratic, and economically prosperous state, meeting its legitimate security needs and playing a constructive role in promoting both regional and international political, military, and economic stability." To that end, the country has created a civilian-controlled defense establishment increasingly interoperable with Euro-Atlantic security organizations.

But achievements have not matched expectations. Responsibility for the overall engagement strategy toward Ukraine remains fragmented. All actions are supposed to complement the Mission Performance Plan (MPP), approved by the ambassador for all Federal agencies operating under the umbrella of the country team in Kiev, but MPP, NATO activity, and the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) Military Contacts Program all exist without one master.

overall engagement strategy toward Ukraine remains fragmented

In this vacuum, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) works to formulate sound engagement policy and sponsors interagency working group sessions. OSD manages the bilateral annual Ministerial Plan of Defense Cooperation, which includes a variety of initiatives such as the International Military and Education Program (IMET), the EUCOM-administered U.S.-Ukraine Military Contacts Program, Foreign Military Finance (FMF) cases, Partnership for Peace (PFP), and other bilateral initiatives such as support for Ukraine's participation in Kosovo Force (KFOR).

OSD receives little help in managing engagement. No national body oversees the effort to integrate the political, economic, and informational instruments of national power with the military. Likewise, EUCOM lacks the authority and capacity to synchronize military efforts with the work of other Federal agencies. The defense attaché office in Kiev, while not formally tasked or sufficiently manned, assists DOD in synchronizing in-country activities but with mixed results. Most peacetime military engagement

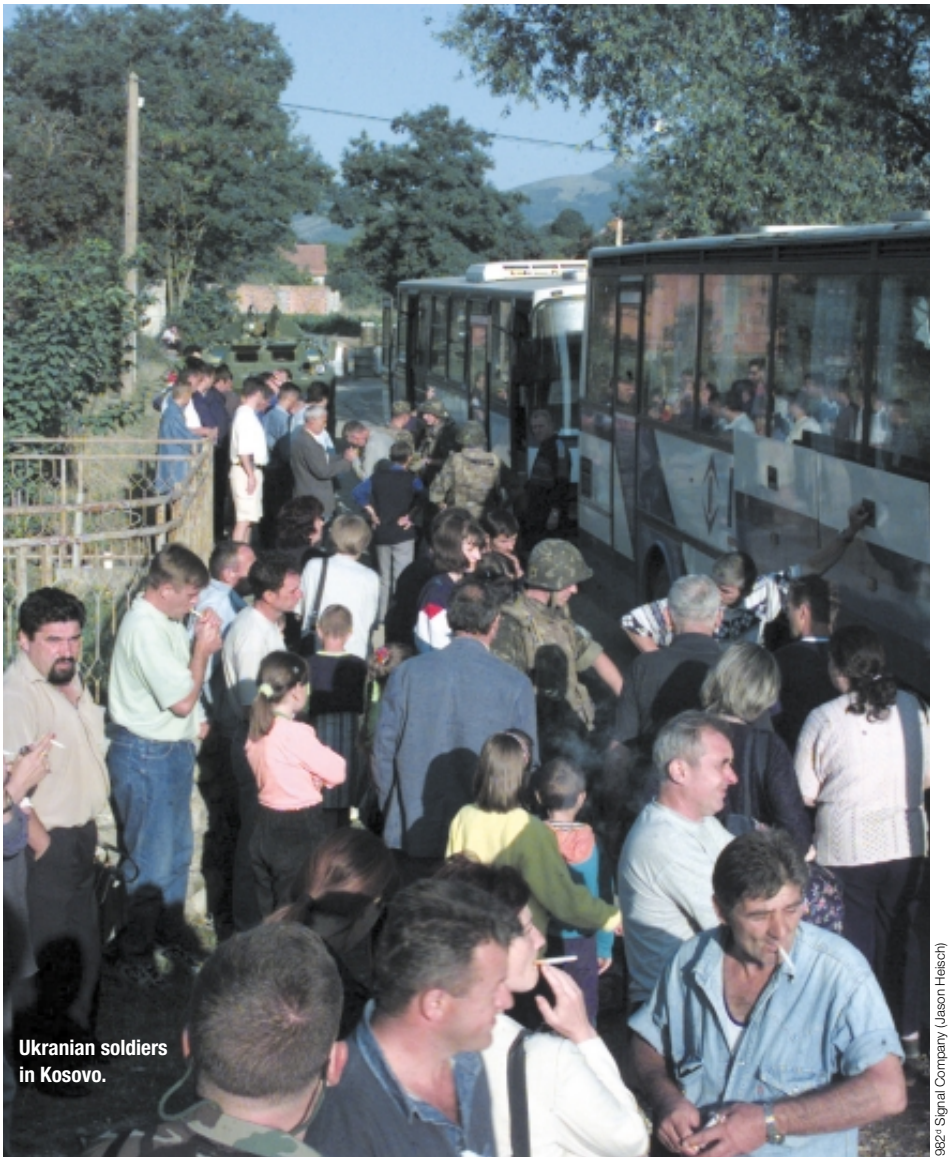
Ukraine

Defense Budget: $582 million for 2000; the gross domestic product in 2000 was $3.2 billion ($4,762 per capita).

Manpower: With a population of 50,387,000, Ukraine has a total of 5,472,000 men between 18 and 32 years of age. Active military strength is 303,800. Reserve forces number approximately 1,000,000.

Armed Forces: Ukraine has an army of 151,200 with 3,937 main battle tanks, a navy with 13,000 sailors and one submarine, one cruiser, and two frigates; and an air force with 96,000 personnel and 534 combat aircraft.

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2001–2002* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001).



Ukranian soldiers in Kosovo.

982nd Signal Company (Jason Heisch)

involving Ukraine, a military culture dominated by landpower, is PFP exercises, KFOR deployments, and other peacekeeping efforts—land operations. Inexplicably, the U.S. defense attaché is an Air Force officer who is generally not a regional specialist and by skill set is ill-equipped to handle the myriad demands of a robust engagement program. He should logically be an Army foreign area officer. The present condition is symptomatic of the failure to think through and fully integrate engagement initiatives.

Between Eagle and Bear

U.S. strategy toward Ukraine is designed to prevent conflict, but it inherently risks confrontation with Moscow by compelling Russia to accept a weakened position regarding its regional ambitions. Russia's view of being encircled by this *cordon sanitaire* along its "near abroad" encourages behavior toward the United States vis-à-vis Ukraine more as a regional rival than a partner for stability. Additionally, Ukraine has sought to assert its independence. While not anti-Russian, it wants to balance East and West, as evidenced in its establishing bilateral military interaction with the United States by signing a memorandum of understanding and cooperation in 1993. Ukraine was the first spinoff from the former Soviet Union to join PFP in February 1994. Further symbolizing how critical Ukraine is to U.S. interests, Vice President Al Gore and President Leonid Kuchma formally established a symbolic strategic partnership in 1996.

Moscow will no doubt retain significant influence over Ukraine no matter how close the Washington-Kiev relationship becomes. Nevertheless, an enduring relationship between NATO and Ukraine promises to be an important aspect of the emerging European security architecture and a goal of the NATO-Ukraine Charter, which provides a framework for an open-ended association through consultation and cooperation on common issues.

Progress in improving Ukraine's relations with the West is not assured. The NATO bombing campaign in the Balkans had a negative impact on Ukraine's perception of the Alliance and disastrous consequences on years of progress in building support for engagement within its skeptical officer corps. The NATO information center in Kiev sat unmanned while allied bombs

Peace Shield '00, Ukraine.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Chris Steffen)

fell. Support for active cooperation with NATO among the corps fell from a pre-Kosovo level of 24 to 12 percent in one poll. Half of the population now views the Alliance as an aggressive bloc. The events of September 11 have softened attitudes, but many officers remain wary of America and the Alliance.

the way engagement is currently financed inhibits fiscal control and leads to waste

The NATO liaison office has reopened and is grappling with interoperability issues. The Verkhovna Rada (parliament), following years of gridlock, finally ratified the partnership's Status of Forces Agreement. This will facilitate and simplify Allied activity in the country. The robust Ukrainian Individual Partnership Program in one year included 295 activities involving exercises, training, education, civil emergency planning, defense support, and communications. However, Ukraine only executed half of the events, revealing that it was grossly overcommitted.

Considering that all this engagement activity is fully subsidized, the dismal execution rate suggests that Kiev cannot absorb so much attention. EUCOM alone conducted more than 3,000 activities throughout its area of responsibility. Both sides have recently agreed to concentrate their efforts and shift the focus from quantity to quality.

Gatekeeper

The lead for peacetime military engagement is EUCOM. Its role in shaping U.S. engagement efforts cannot be overemphasized. Some have raised the argument that CINCs have largely displaced the Department of State as regional powerbrokers. CINCs view their engagement programs as their highest priority. Each annually develops a theater engagement plan which links planned engagement to prioritized objectives. The CINC does not fund the bulk of these activities from his own budget but from a number of programs, so money is not a serious constraint. The way engagement is currently financed inhibits fiscal control and leads to waste.

The primary engagement activities handled by the EUCOM security assistance and logistics directorate are IMET and FMF. Flawed management of these resources illustrates the problem. The greatest fault with international military education and training is the belief that many officer-graduates will rise to positions of prominence in their armed forces. IMET does not require retention

in exchange for a free education, and Ukraine has done poorly at using these highly trained officers. Transparency in the nomination process, clear and detailed guidelines outlining minimum qualifications, and accountability for retaining and assigning officers should be instituted as prerequisites for IMET. The Office of Defense Cooperation in Kiev should have veto authority over unqualified candidates.

Foreign military financing can be incredibly slow, and Ukrainian inputs outlining national priorities are suspect. The leadership will all too frequently attempt to shift priorities or overturn so-called deliberate decisions *after* committing resources to an FMF case, but *before* delivery. To permit these military oligarchs to unilaterally spend U.S. taxpayer-funded FMF money on their own priorities is a mistake. The United States is in a better position to objectively decide how to spend the funds to support U.S. strategy, filter out poor choices, and challenge questionable priorities. U.S. management of IMET and FMF would be in Ukraine's best interest.

Exercises are one of the best vehicles for training combined staffs and exposing Ukrainian officers to U.S./NATO tactics, techniques, and procedures. Ukraine traditionally hosts annual ground forces and maritime exercises. But the cadre responsible for planning with U.S. counterparts is small and shrinking. While the bilateral exercise regime has grown in scope and complexity each year, senior leadership in Kiev has become increasingly apathetic toward planning and execution. Many of these same leaders focus exclusively on the operational details of the opening ceremony and exercise payments earmarked for the training area.

Additionally, the Department of International Cooperation (DICMOD) inserted itself into bilateral exercise development in 1999 and limited general staff participation to NATO and multinational exercises. The absence of general staff officers in bilateral exercise planning not only hurt the exercise but was also a lost opportunity for improving NATO interoperability. This development has diminished exercise quality and was viewed as a cynical attempt to qualify for funding entitlements in an unsuccessful bid to obtain computers and office equipment.

Ukranian marksman.

Marine Corps Combat Camera (Sean C. Newman)

Another major initiative gone astray was the introduction of a EUCOM military liaison team (MLT). A component of the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP), it serves as the focal point for the command's peacetime engagement program. JCTP by law cannot replicate any activity funded by another program and the team is prohibited from participation in exercises, providing services or equipment, or conducting training. The defense attaché in Kiev and the Office of Defense Cooperation manage these activities. Sadly, the situation does not fit the standard JCTP mold. Designed to be colocated with counterparts on the general staff, MLT in Ukraine's case was forced to accept

Yavoriv training area.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (César Rodríguez)

residency on the opposite side of Kiev from the Ministry of Defense. Instead of directly coordinating with planners, the team relies on DICMOD *apparatchiks* to administer the program. MLT members serve in a temporary duty status without mastering the intricacies of dealing with their counterparts. They lack Russian or Ukrainian language skills and regional expertise. The team's organization and activities need to be reorganized and its efforts placed under the operational control of the Office of Defense Cooperation.

The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, located in Garmisch, Germany, teaches defense planning, organization, and management in democratic societies to East European military officers and government officials. The center provides a useful product to Ukrainian officers, but realigning the curriculum would offer substantial benefits. A reinvented relic of the Cold War, the center inadvertently reinforces the dominant role of Moscow and fosters the illusion of a functional Commonwealth of Independent States. In partial recognition of this problem, the center moved to hire a foreign service national to work with the attaché in Kiev and customize the program. As a practical matter, the center maintains Russian as the *lingua franca* of the former Soviet republics instead of using national languages such as Ukrainian (English and German are also offered). While the costs are prohibitive to use all regional languages, the strategic importance of Ukraine warrants the wider use of its official tongue. The U.S. policy of pandering to the Russian Federation to fill seats at the center convinces other countries that they are second class. Success should not be defined as maximizing Russian participation in events or attracting mostly unreformable senior officers to flagship courses. Instead, the school should invite officers from regional groupings with orientations arrayed against Russian domination of the region.

general officers serving today are more concerned with perks than showing initiative

On Foreign Ground

The Yavoriv training area in the western Ukraine was designated as the first NATO/PFP training center on the territory of the former Soviet Union during the April 1999 NATO summit. The United States strongly supported the Ukrainian desire to market the facility. However, Kiev has not agreed to host a NATO exercise there since Cooperative Neighbor in 1997. Western Operational Command, which owns Yavoriv, originally saw an opportunity to increase revenues and enable infrastructure improvements. Exercise costs included amortization charges for coat hangers and paintings hanging on billet walls. Ukrainian senior officers do not view extortionist practices as inappropriate and shamelessly defend even the most dubious charges. Allied nations such as Canada, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, have avoided the inflated exercise costs charged by the Western Operational Command and sought training opportunities elsewhere. During Peace Shield, the United States met with hysterical resistance when it contracted for goods and services instead of transferring funds to ministry bank accounts.

The legacy of the Soviet armed forces and the Committee for State Security (or KGB) remains deeply imbedded in the psyche of most senior officers. Old party leaders poison the entire government. As James Sherr of the Conflict Research Studies Centre in the British Ministry of Defence says, "In Ukraine official and criminal structures have effectively merged. Ukraine expects the West to take more risks on its behalf than it is prepared to take itself. Neither Western assistance nor pressure produces results." After Ukraine's declaration of independence, many senior officers elected to stay for opportunistic reasons. This *nomenklatura*, which includes the majority of senior general officers serving today, are classic products of the Soviet military, more concerned with perks and privileges than showing initiative and seeking responsibility.

U.S. engagement has been effective in teaching the senior ministry leadership to use defense reform rhetoric and buzzwords to maintain the incentives and to keep the pressure off for real action. Defense reform threatens these leaders directly, and they have a huge stake in misleading the United States into believing they are

Georgian, Ukrainian, and Moldovian officers planning PFP exercise.

786th Communications Squadron (John Trautt)

not smart enough to grasp the concept, or they lack the necessary resources, or they are valiantly struggling to achieve reform along the edges.

On the other hand, junior and middle rank officers are progressive, energetic, and patriotic. But the oppressive command climate punishes initiative, imposes silence, and causes frustration. Political officers—*zampolit*—of the former Main Political Administration of Soviet Armed Forces are now promoting their version of patriotism and loyalty. These political socialization responsibilities included marching the troops to vote in presidential elections in autumn 1999 to support the Defense Minister's favorite relative.

In truth, archaic Soviet practices still flourish. The Byzantine structure of the Ministry of Defense functions as a loose coalition of stovepipe organizations that answer only to the defense minister. The U.S. military engagement apparatus has no clearly defined counterpart. The United States coordinates with the general staff, the services, various departments within the ministry, or as a last resort DICMOD for engagement activity. The proliferation of deputy defense ministers has further weakened the effectiveness of the Ministry of Defense by diluting authority and obscuring accountability and responsibility. These structures have evolved into competing organizations incapable of lateral coordination. The appointment of a new defense minister, General Volodmyr Shkidchenko, who is widely viewed as a reformer, has prompted renewed optimism that things may change. Time will tell.

Still, corruption exacerbates the challenges of working with a flawed institution. Ukraine finished second to the last out of 90 countries with a score of 1.5 out of 10, according to the annual corruption perception index published by Transparency International. This problem affects all aspects of engagement from exaggerated exercise costs to the payment of officer per diem. Without careful management and scrutiny, peacetime military engagement could easily serve no purpose other than enriching a few well-placed and corrupt officers. These problems are deep-rooted and complex. They are symptoms of ills that will not yield easily to a half-hearted, poorly managed engagement program.

Early U.S. efforts were effective in convincing Ukraine to give up nuclear weapons in return for substantial material incentives provided through the cooperative threat reduction program. Subsequent initiatives have shown poorer results. In the beginning, shaping activity was loosely regulated and allowed activity managers substantial discretion. Engagement activity has become more regulated over time and resources less available. Meanwhile Ukraine's perception of its strategic value to the West has grow proportionally with its expectation of even greater material incentives. This distortion has resulted in mutual disappointment and alienation, a vicious cycle that threatens to spin out of control as each side increasingly views the other as insincere and exploitative. The amount of money thrown at peacetime military engagement has convinced senior Ukrainian leadership that the United States has unlimited resources and that the decreasing incentives represent Washington's indifference.

What is needed now is less lecturing, greater U.S. humility, more thoughtful organizing, rewarding positive change, and discouraging inappropriate action. Because problems cut across the entire government, neither OSD nor EUCOM can solve them alone. For any strategy to succeed it must be implemented using all instruments of U.S. power—and Ukraine must respond across the entire spectrum of its government. The senior civilian and military leadership have not actively supported reform in the past. Ongoing bilateral efforts have shown some renewed signs that point toward progress. Kiev remains receptive to engagement, but the way ahead requires more judicious use of incentives to motivate positive forces for change and deny success to sophisticated elements interested in blocking reform or plundering resources. **JFQ**