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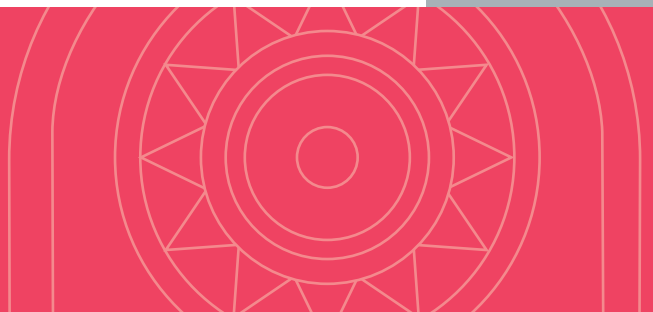
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Nuclear Proliferation International History Project

Interpreting the Bomb

Ownership and Deterrence in Ukraine's Nuclear Discourse

By Polina Sinovets and Mariana Budjeryn
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Christian F. Ostermann and Leopoldo Nuti, Series Editors

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Interpreting the Bomb: Ownership and Deterrence in Ukraine's Nuclear Discourse

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Nuclear deterrence thinking has become so entrenched in US academic and policy circles that it only seems natural that other states regard nuclear weapons in the same terms. Yet is it necessarily so? In this article, we examine the case of Ukraine to understand how its leaders interpreted the value of the nuclear weapons deployed on Ukrainian territory in 1990–1994.

Ukraine became the host of world's third largest nuclear arsenal following the Soviet collapse in 1991. Its pre-independence intention to rid itself of nuclear weapons soon gave way to a more nuanced nuclear stance that developed into a claim of rightful nuclear "ownership." Western security theories and practices led US leaders to assume that Ukraine sought to keep nuclear weapons as a deterrent against the growing Russian threat. Drawing on Ukrainian and US archival sources and interviews, we reconstruct Ukrainian deliberations about the meaning of their nuclear inheritance and find that deterrence thinking was conspicuously lacking. Our investigation demonstrates that deterrence thinking, far from being a "natural" or systemically determined way of regarding nuclear weapons, is a socially constructed and historically contingent set of concepts and practices.

Key words: Nuclear weapons, NPT, deterrence, Ukraine, disarmament

In December 1994, Ukraine joined the Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapons state. This decision entailed relinquishing the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, which it inherited from the collapsed Soviet Union. Ukraine's path toward denuclearization was not straightforward: throughout the early 1990s it was far from certain that Ukraine would choose renunciation.¹ Yet soon after it was achieved, Ukraine's denuclearization entered the annals of history while international attention shifted to

¹"Ukraine: A Nuclear State," *The Economist*, June 12, 1993.

proliferation stories of North Korea, India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Libya. Today, the interest to Ukraine's decision to disarm is once again on the rebound.

In February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops to annex Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and later stoked a conflict in eastern Ukraine, all the while reminding the world that Russia was a nuclear power to be reckoned with.² Security assurances pledged to Ukraine during its nuclear renunciation by the five NPT nuclear-weapons states—including the United States and Russia—proved insufficient to deter Russian aggression.³ Not surprisingly, the decision to denuclearize is increasingly viewed as a blunder in Ukraine. Immediately following the annexation of Crimea, a group of centrist parliamentarians proposed that Ukraine withdraw from the NPT.⁴ In July 2014, a right-wing faction of the Ukrainian parliament introduced a bill on the renewal of Ukraine's nuclear status.⁵ By the second half of 2014, popular support for the renewal of Ukraine's nuclear status soared to 49.3% up from the previous high of 33% in 1994.⁶

A cursory look at Ukraine's nuclear debates in the early 1990s reveals that many Ukrainian leaders were aware of threats emanating from Russia. This drove their reluctance to denuclearize quickly and increased their insistence on security guarantees from Russia and the United States. Nevertheless, Ukraine never reneged on its original commitment to denuclearize and even when it insisted that it was the rightful owner of nuclear systems deployed on its territory, it never declared itself nuclear state. Did Ukrainian leadership ever contemplate

²Alexei Anishchuk, "Don't Mess with Nuclear Russia, Putin Says," *Reuters*, August 29, 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/russia-putin-conflict-idUKL5N0QZ3HC20140829>.

³"Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons," December 5, 1994, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_1994_1399.pdf. See also: Mariana Budjeryn, "The Breach: Ukraine's Territorial Integrity and the Budapest Memorandum" *NPIHP Issue Briefs*. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/issue-brief-3-the-breach-ukraines-territorial-integrity-and-the-budapest-memorandum>

⁴"Deputaty Zaproponuvaly Denonsuvaty Dorovir pro Nerozprovsiudzhennia Iadernoi Zbroii [Deputies Propose Withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty]," *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, March 20, 2014, https://dt.ua/POLITICS/deputati-zaproponuvali-denonsuvati-dogovir-pro-nerozprovsiudzhennya-yadernoyi-zbroyi-140070_.html.

⁵"Svobodivtsi Zarestruvaly Zakonoproekt Shchodo Vidnovlennia Iadernoho Statusu Ukrainy [Svoboda Deputies Registered a Bill on the Renewal of the Nuclear Status of Ukraine]," *UNIAN*, July 23, 2014, <https://www.unian.ua/politics/943019-svobodivtsi-zarestruvali-zakonoproekt-schodo-vidnovlennya-yadernogo-statusu-ukrajini.html>.

⁶"Ukraiintsi Ne Viriat' Vladi I Khochut' Povernennia Iadernoho Statusu - Opytuvannia [Ukrainians Do Not Trust Their Government and Want the Renewal of Nuclear Status - Survey]," *Ukraiinska Pravda*, October 7, 2014, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/10/7/7040018/>.

retaining nuclear weapons and using them as a deterrent against Russia and if not, why? In this article, we revisit the history of Ukraine's disarmament to understand how Ukrainian leadership interpreted the country's nuclear inheritance following the collapse of the USSR and what options they considered before settling on renunciation in exchange for security assurances.

Ukraine's Independence and Nuclear Inheritance

The issue of nuclear weapons first entered the political discourse in Ukraine in July 1990. While still a Soviet republic, Ukraine's legislature, the Verkhovna Rada, passed the Declaration of Sovereignty of Ukraine in a step toward greater independence from Moscow. In the Declaration, the Rada recorded Ukraine's intention "to become, in the future, a permanently neutral state, which does not participate in military alliances and adheres to three non-nuclear principles: not to receive, manufacture, or acquire nuclear weapons."⁷ This unilateral declaration was motivated as much by the general anti-nuclear sentiment brought about by the accident on the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986, as by the understanding that full independence from Moscow would be difficult to achieve while the latter still controlled a vast nuclear arsenal deployed on the Ukrainian territory. Volodymyr Vassylenko, distinguished Ukrainian diplomat and author of the non-nuclear clause, later explained that "[Ukraine] could not have a nuclear force which is not tied to the Russian nuclear force, because of technology and control systems. By being a nuclear power we could not have full independence."⁸

Indeed, the Soviet military establishment was secretive, highly centralized, and tightly controlled by the central Union authorities in Moscow. This was especially true of the military formations associated with the Soviet nuclear arsenal: the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF), the navy's nuclear submarine force, and the strategic long-range air force. Ukraine's territory was the home to a sizeable part of Soviet military industrial complex and nuclear arsenal, second only to that of the Russian SFSR.

The Ukrainian city of Vinnitsa was the headquarters of the 43rd Strategic Rocket Army, one of the largest Soviet missile armies that commanded divisions deployed in Ukraine and Belarus.

⁷Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, *Deklaratsiia pro derzhavnii suverenitet Ukrainy [Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine]*, 55-XII, July 16, 1990, <http://zakon1.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=55-12>.

⁸John Lloyd and Chrystia Freeland, "A Painful Birth," *The Financial Times*, February 25, 1992.

Formations deployed in Ukraine included 130 SS-19 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) armed with 6 nuclear warheads each and 46 SS-24 ICBMs armed with 10 nuclear warheads each. In total, 1,240 strategic nuclear warheads were deployed in Ukraine, although there were probably additional warheads stored separately. The ICBMs, all silos-based, were deployed in two locations: Khmelnytskyi in western Ukraine and Pervomaisk in central Ukraine. In addition, the 46th Air Army commanded 44 strategic long-range bombers, including 19 Tu-160s and 25 Tu-95s, as well as 1,068 nuclear-armed AS-15 and AS-16 air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs).⁹ In addition, there were 2,883 tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine at the time of Soviet dissolution in 1991.¹⁰

Ukraine's independence came sooner and more unexpectedly than Vassilyenko and the authors of the nonnuclear clause might have anticipated. The abortive coup in Moscow in August 1991 precipitated Soviet disintegration and on August 24th Ukraine declared its independence. In the very next move, the Rada passed a resolution subordinating all military units stationed on the Ukrainian territory at the time.¹¹ It also voted to establish Ukraine's ownership over all Soviet assets on its territory.¹² Subsequently, Ukraine moved quickly to form its own ministry of defense and national armed forces out of some 750,000 Soviet troops on its territory. What this meant for the 43rd Strategic Rocket Army, the 46th Air Army, and their nuclear armaments was ambiguous. The US and its Western allies immediately formulated the

⁹Joseph P. Harahan, *With Courage and Persistence: Eliminating and Securing Weapons of Mass Destruction with the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Programs*, DTRA History Series (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, 2014), 168.

¹⁰"Zaiava Prezydenta Ukrainy Z Nahody 15-li Richnytsi Budapeshtskoho Memorandumu [Statement of the President of Ukraine on the 15th Anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum]," December 5, 2009, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politycs/885958-zayava_prezydenta_ukrani_z_nagodi_15_rchnits_budapeshtskogo_memorandumu_854907.html.

¹¹Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Akt proholoshennia nezalezhnosti Ukrainy [Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine] 1427-XII*, August 24, 1991, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=1427-12>; Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Postanova pro viis'kovi formuvannia na Ukraini [Resolution on the Military Units in Ukraine] 1434-XII*, August 24, 1991, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1431-12>.

¹²Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Zakon Ukrainy pro Pidpriemstva, Ustanovy Ta Orhanizatsii Soiuznoho Pidporiaduvannia, Roztashovani Na Terytorii Ukrainy [Law of Ukraine on Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations of Union Subordination on the Territory of Ukraine], 1540-XII*, September 10, 1991, <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1540-12>.

position that no independent control over nuclear armaments outside of Russia should be established and that no new nuclear states should emerge out of Soviet dissolution.¹³

In Moscow, the fall of 1991 was marked by a rapid rise of power and authority of Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his government at the expense of Gorbachev-led Union structures. The final death knell to the Soviet Union came on December 8 when Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus signed the Belavezha Accord, which declared that the Soviet Union ceased to exist and instead created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁴ The three states agreed to preserve the joint command and single control of nuclear weapons stationed on their territories.¹⁵ During the two follow up meetings in late December 1991, the CIS admitted another eight members and further specified the issue of nuclear command and control. All strategic nuclear armaments of the former Soviet Union now located on the territory of four newly independent states: Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine, would be subordinated to the Joint Armed Forces (JAF) of the CIS with Marshal Shaposhnikov as Commander-in-Chief, formally reporting to the Council of the Heads of State of all 11 CIS members.¹⁶

Launch authority rested with Russian President Yeltsin and Marshal Shaposhnikov.¹⁷ However, the decision to use nuclear weapons was to be made jointly by the heads of state of the four nuclear republics via a special telephone connecting their leaders with Shaposhnikov.¹⁸

¹³U.S. Department of State, Office of the Assistant Secretary/Spokesman, “‘America and the Collapse of the Soviet Empire: What Has to Be Done’”. Address by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III at Princeton University, December 12, 1991.

¹⁴*Soglasheniie O Sozdanii Sodrzhestva Nezavisimikh Gosudarstv [Agreement On the Establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States]*, December 8, 1991, <http://www.cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=1>.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Article 6.

¹⁶*Protokol Soveshchaniia Glav Nezavisimyykh Gosudarstv (O Poruchenii Komandovaniia Vooruzhennymi Silami Marshalu Shaposhnikovu Ye. I.) [Protocol of the Meeting of the Heads of Independent States (On Charging Marshal Shaposhnikov Ye. I. with the Command of the Armed Forces)]*, December 21, 1991, <http://cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=3412>.

¹⁷James Baker A., “Notes from One-on-One Meeting with Boris Yeltsin, St. Catherine’s Hall, Moscow,” December 16, 1991, Box 110, Folder 10, James A. Baker III Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

¹⁸*Soglasheniie o Sovmestnykh Merakh v Otnoshenii Iadernogo Oruzhiia. [Agreement On Joint Measures on Nuclear Weapons]*, December 21, 1991, <http://cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=3>; *Soglasheniie mezhdu Gosudarstvami-Uchastnikami Sodrzhestva Nezavisimikh Gosudarstv po Strategicheskim Silam [Agreement between Member-States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Strategic Forces]*, December 30, 1991, <http://cis.minsk.by/reestr/ru/index.html#reestr/view/text?doc=9>; Baker, “Notes from One-on-One Meeting with Boris Yeltsin, St. Catherine’s Hall, Moscow.”

Subsequently, Yeltsin allegedly issued a secret decree circumventing this procedure and stipulating that, in the case of emergency, the Russian president had the right to authorize a nuclear strike without consultations with other CIS leaders.¹⁹

The JAF was certainly an exercise in preservation of the single integrated command and control system over Soviet strategic weapons, only slightly modified to accommodate the changed political circumstances created by the Soviet collapse. For Ukraine, the significance of the CIS arrangements was ambiguous. On the one hand, it ran counter to Ukraine's efforts to establish independent armed forces and perpetuated entanglement with Moscow, which Ukrainian leaders sought to sever by declaring Ukraine a neutral and non-nuclear state in 1990. On the other hand, because 176 silo-based missiles and the 30,000 associated troops could not be removed to Russia overnight, the CIS collective nuclear arrangement presented a politically acceptable packaging for continued deployment in Ukraine of forces essentially controlled by Moscow. At the time, Ukraine's leadership by and large continued to view Soviet nuclear arms on their territory as a political liability and gravitated toward their removal from Ukraine in the shortest possible time. And so, under the CIS agreements of December 1991, Ukraine committed to the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from its territory by July 1, 1992, a process that already started in September 1991, and of strategic arms by the end of 1994.²⁰

Divergent opinions to the prevalent unconditional unilateral renunciation were voiced as early as September 1991, however. In a reaction to Soviet military withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from Ukraine, the leader of Ukraine's national-democratic opposition party *Rukh* Vyacheslav Chornovil published a statement claiming that "like Russia and Kazakhstan and other republics", Ukraine is "the rightful heir to all material and technical resources, including nuclear weapons, of the former Soviet Union."²¹ Chornovil maintained that while Ukraine remained

¹⁹Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev mentioned the existence of such Yeltsin decree during a meeting with French foreign minister Roland Dumas "Minutes of the Meeting of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev with Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Roland Dumas," January 25, 1992, Fond 5-N, Opis 1, Delo 217, List 1-19, Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

²⁰*Soglasheniie mezhdru Gosudarstvami-Uchastnikami Sodruzhestva Nezavisimikh Gosudarstv po Strategicheskim Silam [Agreement between Member-States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Strategic Forces], Article 4.*

²¹"Vyacheslav Chornovil pro bez'iadernyi status Ukrainy [Vyacheslav Chornovil on the Non-Nuclear Status of Ukraine]," *Molod Ukrainy*, September 12, 1991.

committed to the total elimination of nuclear weapons from its territory, these issues had to be decided through treaties with nuclear states.²² Another member of democratic opposition, Volodymyr Filenko, in an interview to *The Guardian* voiced his opposition to the transfer of nuclear weapons to Russia: “We are afraid of Russia, if you like. We are fighting for independence from Russia. We cannot say there’s a nuclear threat, but they did recently raise territorial claims.”²³

The Russian Threat

No sooner than the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the strains in Ukrainian-Russian relations manifested themselves—most prominently around the issue of Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet, and strategic nuclear forces. Crimea, a peninsula transferred to Ukraine by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1954, quickly became a bone of contention in the Ukrainian-Russian relations.²⁴ Anticipating that Ukraine’s move toward independence might create tensions over Crimea, the Rada voted in February 1991 to grant Crimea autonomy within Ukraine.²⁵ Nevertheless many in Russia viewed the transfer of Crimea, with its majority ethnic Russian population, as conditional on Ukraine and Russia remaining part of a single sovereign entity. Now that the Soviet Union no longer existed, the decision had to be reviewed. The problem was compounded by the fact that Crimean city of Sevastopol was the base for the Soviet Black Sea Fleet (BSF), the subordination and division of which between Ukraine and Russia became a thorny issue closely related to that of Crimea.

Early attempts to solve the issue of the BSF and other military assets on Ukraine’s territory during Ukrainian-Russian talks in Kyiv on January 11, 1992 ended in failure. In a letter concerning these negotiations to the speaker of the Russian parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov,

²²Ibid.

²³Jonathan Steele, “Ukraine May Backtrack on Nuclear Arms,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 1991.

²⁴Mark Kramer, “Why Did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago?,” *Wilson Center Cold War International History Project*, March 19, 2014, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago>.

²⁵Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, *Zakon Pro Vidnovlennia Krymskoi Avtonomnoii Radianskoi Sotsialistychnoi Respubliki [Law on Renewal of Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] 713-XII*, February 12, 1991, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/712-12>. Crimean autonomy, established in 1921, was revoked by Stalin in 1945, after the wholesale deportation of the indigenous Tatar population, at which point Crimea became a regular administrative unit, an *oblast*, within the Russian republic and as such was transferred to the Ukrainian republic in 1954.

the chairman of Russia's parliamentary committee on international affairs and foreign economic relations Vladimir Lukin reported:

The Ukrainian leadership's chief aim is clearly visible—to completely sever the special relations with Russia, including [in] the military and political sphere. By proclaiming Ukraine a formally neutral state, to proceed without us toward the West, following the road taken by East Europe. Moreover, they want to lay their hands on everything that is on their territory (except nuclear weapons in the narrow sense of the word—to surrender nuclear warheads while retaining all delivery vehicles for themselves.)²⁶

Lukin's letter, leaked to the Russian daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, suggested several ways through which Russia could bend Ukraine to its will. First, the Russian president should issue a decree to transfer the BSF, with all its bases and coastal infrastructure, including Sevastopol and Balaklava in Crimea and Nikolayev on mainland Ukraine, to Russian jurisdiction with subsequent possible transfer of part of BSF's forces to Ukraine.²⁷ A predictably hostile reaction from Ukraine could then be countered by levying economic pressure and threatening to terminate all military-industrial procurements from Ukrainian enterprises.²⁸ Yet Lukin argued that Russia's most important lever was Crimea and that the Russian parliament should reexamine the legality of the 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine.²⁹ This move would not only pressure Ukraine into ceding the fleet, but also have the added benefit of appeasing Russian nationalists and buying Russia the time needed to implement painful economic reforms.³⁰

These proposals of Lukin, a distinguished liberal and Yeltsin ally, were fairly moderate compared to the mood amongst Russian communists, nationalists, and the military establishment, many of whom refused to accept the very idea of Ukrainian statehood. Ukraine's efforts to create its own military and administer a Ukrainian military oath met with staunch opposition of Moscow's top brass, including Marshall Shaposhnikov, who was keen to maintain a common strategic-military space in the former Soviet realm.³¹ In January 1992, the Rada

²⁶"Better to Open the Kingston Valves than a Ukrainian Front," *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in *FBIS-SOV-92-016*, January 22, 1992.

²⁷*ibid.*

²⁸*ibid.*

²⁹*ibid.*

³⁰*ibid.*

³¹See Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov, *Vybor. Zapiski Glavnokomanduyushchego [The Choice. Notes of a Commander-in-Chief]* (Moscow: Independent Publishing House "PIK," 1993).

Defense and National Security committee recorded that Ukraine's efforts to establish an army were being met with "insane resistance" from the ex-Soviet defense establishment and the Russian media.³² In an April 1992 address to the Rada, Ukraine's Defense Minister Kostyantyn Morozov admitted that the process of establishing Ukraine's armed forces proved far more difficult than anticipated because the senior military command of the CIS unabashedly pursued the interests of the Russian Federation, not of the Commonwealth as a whole.³³

Conflicting loyalties and overlapping chains of command erupted in a number of military incidents. For instance, on February 13, 1992, six SU-24M bombers were flown from Ukraine's Starokonstantyniv airbase to Belarus, allegedly for a training maneuver, and then to Russia, never to return.³⁴ Reports began to emerge that some of the bases under the CIS command had been looted, their property sold off under the table.³⁵

Tensions around the division of the Soviet military, the BSF, and status of strategic units on Ukraine's territory all compounded into a rapid action-reaction spiral between Ukraine and Russia during March–April 1992. On February 23, 1992, Ukraine's President Kravchuk suddenly halted the transfer of tactical nuclear weapons from Ukraine's territory.³⁶ The official announcement of the move followed on March 12, with Kravchuk citing the lack of verification by the Ukrainian side that the weapons given over to Russia were being destroyed.³⁷ Furthermore, on April 5, Kravchuk issued a decree titled "On Urgent Measures regarding the Establishment of Armed Force of Ukraine," ordering the establishment of Ukraine's Navy on the basis of the BSF and reasserting "direct" control over "all" military units on Ukraine's territory

³²"Statement of the Commission on Defense and National Security of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine," January 17, 1992, Fond 1-P, Opis 1, Delo 2190, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

³³Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Stenohrama Plenarnoho Zasedannia. Zasedannia Sorok Tretie [Transcript of the Plenary Session. Session Forty Three]," April 8, 1992, 59, <http://portal.rada.gov.ua/meeting/stenogr/show/4700.html>.

³⁴"Telegram of President L. Kravchuk to President B. Yeltsin," February 17, 1992, Fond 5233, Opis 1, Delo 76, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

³⁵ For instance during a Rada session in April, MP V. Yatsuba reported the degradation of a base near the town of Krynychky in Dnipropetrovs'k oblast in Eastern Ukraine and the looting of surface-to-air anti-aircraft cruise missiles "ZUR" stationed there. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Stenohrama Plenarnoho Zasedannia. Zasedannia Sorok Tretie [Transcript of the Plenary Session. Session Forty Three]," 88.

³⁶Nikolai Sokov, *Russian Strategic Modernization: The Past and Future* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 98.

³⁷Serge Schmemmann, "Ukraine Halting A-Arms Shift to Russia," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1992.

and “administrative” control over Strategic Forces deployed in Ukraine.³⁸ Following the president’s decree, the Ministry of Defense established the Center for Administrative Control of the Strategic Nuclear Forces of Ukraine, ostensibly responsible for overseeing all aspects of operations of strategic units in Ukraine outside of command and control.

In a telegram to his CIS counterparts, Kravchuk explained that his decisions were precipitated by the “sharply deteriorating situation in the Republic of Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet,” brought about by the constant intrusion of Shaposhnikov and other Russian leaders into Ukraine’s internal affairs.³⁹ To demonstrate his case, Kravchuk attached to the telegram the transcript of a speech delivered by Russia’s Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi, who on April 3–4 traveled to Sevastopol. In his fiery address to the BSF sailors, Rutskoi voiced support for Crimea’s secession from Ukraine, claimed that the BSF had always been and always would be part of the Russian Navy, and presided over the raising of the Russian naval flag of St. Andrew.⁴⁰

Moscow interpreted the halt in tactical weapons withdrawal and the establishment of “administrative” control over strategic troops as Ukraine’s probing the possibility of retaining nuclear weapons.⁴¹ Ukraine’s move to administer the Ukrainian military oath to those naval BSF units that were willing to take it further exacerbated Russian-Ukrainian relations. Russian President Yeltsin responded by decreeing on April 7 to subordinate all of the BSF to the Russian Federation, as suggested previously by Lukin.⁴² That night, the BSF vessels commanded by troops loyal to Russia blockaded the naval base assigned to be the headquarters of the Ukrainian portion of the BSF.⁴³ On April 9, the Rada Presidium issued a resolution, condemning Russian President’s decision and Shaposhnikov’s moves to implement it, as an unlawful

³⁸President of Ukraine, *Ukaz pro nevidkladni zakhody po budivnytstvu Zbroinykh Syl Ukrainy [Decree On Urgent Measures regarding the Establishment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine]*, April 5, 1992, <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/209/92>.

³⁹“Telegram of President L. Kravchuk to the Heads of Commonwealth States,” April 5, 1992, Fond 5233, Opis 1, Delo 42, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

⁴⁰“Telegram of Ukrainian President L. Kravchuk to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus,” April 8, 1992, Fond 968, Opis 1, Delo 4170, List 166–172, National Archive of the Republic of Belarus.

⁴¹Sokov, *Russian Strategic Modernization: The Past and Future*, 98.

⁴²President of the Russian Federation, *Ukaz O Perekhode Pod Iurisdiksiu Rossiiskoi Federatsii Chernomorskogo Flota [Decree on Transfer of the Black Sea Fleet under the Jurisdiction of the Russian Federation] No.375*, 1992, http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal_555/doc555a728x544.htm.

⁴³Yaroslav Mezantsev, “Kholodna Viina Za Krym. Iak Dilyly Flot U 1990-Kh Rokakh [Cold War over Crimea. How the Fleet Was Divided in 1990s],” *Istorychna Pravda*, May 10, 2011, <http://www.istorychna.com.ua/articles/2011/05/10/38319/>.

intrusion in Ukraine's internal affairs.⁴⁴ The Rada also supported President's stance by passing a resolution "On Additional Measures for Ensuring Ukraine's Attainment of Non-Nuclear Status," confirming the decision to terminate the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons, and ordering the development of "technical means" to ensure the non-use of nuclear weapons from Ukraine's territory.⁴⁵ The Rada also for the first time demanded security guarantees as a condition for denuclearization.⁴⁶

Ukraine's new assertiveness on the nuclear issue also manifested itself during the negotiations about the fate of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), signed by the US and USSR on July 31, 1991. With the Soviet Union gone, it was the preference of both US and Russia that the treaty remain bilateral and be ratified by their respective legislatures, following which Russia would conclude implementation agreements with the non-Russian republics on whose territory START-accountable systems were now located.⁴⁷ Ukraine, as well as Belarus and Kazakhstan, insisted that they should be included as full-fledged parties. In the end, the US agreed to multilateralize the treaty. This was completed on May 23, 1992 when the United States, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine signed a protocol to START in Lisbon, Portugal, which recognized the latter three parties to START as successor states of the USSR on condition that they commit to join the Treaty on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as non-nuclear weapons states "in the shortest possible time."⁴⁸ While the Lisbon protocol became the first international legal document to record the commitment of the non-Russian republics to denuclearize, it also deepened the ambiguity of their nuclear status pending denuclearization by legitimizing them as fully-fledged parties to a strategic arms control treaty.

⁴⁴Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, "Postanova Pro Nepravomirnist' Dii Kerivnytstva Ob'iednanykh Zbroinykh Syl SND [Resolution on the Unlawfulness of the Actions of the Command of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS] No.2258-XII," April 9, 1992, Fond 1-P, Opis 1, Delo 2198, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

⁴⁵Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Postanova Pro Dodatkovy Zakhody Shchodo Zabezpechennia Nabuttia Ukrainoiu Bez'iadernoho Statusu [Resolution On Additional Measures for Ensuring Ukraine's Attainment of Nonnuclear Status]* No. 2264-XII, April 9, 1992, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2264-12>.

⁴⁶ibid.

⁴⁷ "Proposed Amendments Document [to START]. U.S. Draft," March 11, 1992, Box 111, Folder 2, James A. Baker III Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

⁴⁸*Protocol to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*, May 23, 1992, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/27389.pdf>.

The transfer of tactical nuclear weapons resumed in late April, following April 11 agreement between Kravchuk and Yeltsin that provided for participation of Ukrainian representatives in warhead destruction verification and the transfer was completed ahead of the July 1 deadline.⁴⁹ Yet relations with Russia would remain strained: on May 21, 1992, the Russian parliament passed a resolution, declaring illegal the 1954 Soviet decree ceding Crimea to Ukraine.⁵⁰

Nuclear “Ownership” and Deterrence

The conflagrations in relations with Russia in the first months of 1992 were interpreted by many Ukrainian leaders not merely as messy jostling over Soviet military inheritance but as matters of national security and survival. They reinforced the perception that the new Russian state had not come to terms with Ukraine’s independence and, despite declarations to the contrary, was a chip off the old Russian and Soviet imperial block. As one of the national-democratic MPs concluded during the Rada deliberations of the “Additional Measures” resolution, Yeltsin and the Russian democrats had finally dropped their pretenses and revealed themselves for the imperial chauvinists that they really were.⁵¹

The perception of Ukrainian leaders that Russia would not accept Ukraine’s independence had consequences for debates over the nuclear issue and the series of decisions adopted by Kravchuk and the Rada indicated that their thinking about nuclear weapons was beginning to shift. At that time, it would have been logical for Ukraine to begin considering in earnest the possibility of retaining a nuclear deterrent against a militarily superior and evidently hostile Russia. Certainly, we have only limited information about nuclear deliberations in Ukraine as

⁴⁹“Uhoda Mizh Ukrainoiu I Rossiiskoiu Federatsiieiu pro Poriadok Peremishchennialadernykh Boieprypasiv Z Terytorii Ukrainy Na Tsentralni Peredzavodski Bazy Rossiiskoi Federatsii Z Metoiulikh Rozkomplektuvannia Ta Znyshchennia [Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation Regarding the Order of Transfer of Nuclear Warheads from the Territory of Ukraine to the Central Manufacturer Bases in the Russian Federation for the Purpose of Their Dismantlement and Destruction],” April 11, 1992, http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/643_016.

⁵⁰Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Postanova Pro Zaiavu Verkhovnoii Rady Ukrainy Stosovno Rishen’ Verkhovnoii Rady Rosiii Z Pytannia pro Krym [Resolution on the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Regarding Decisions of the Verkhovny Soviet of Russia on the Issue of Crimea]*, 1992, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2399-12>.

⁵¹Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, “Stenohrama Plenarnoho Zasadannia. Zasadannia Sorok Chetverte [Transcript of the Plenary Session. Session Forty Four],” April 8, 1992, 44–45, <http://portal.rada.gov.ua/meeting/stenogr/show/4701.html>.

many sources both in Ukraine, Russia, and the US remain classified. Yet the available evidence suggests that while the opposition to prompt removal of all nuclear weapons from Ukraine began to gain greater traction, nuclear deterrence did not emerge as a seriously considered option in Ukraine's policy deliberations.

The first high-level expert about discussion Ukraine's nuclear inheritance took place in the middle of Ukrainian-Russian tensions on April 2, 1992, at the meeting of Ukraine's Defense Council. Chaired by President Kravchuk, the Defense Council comprised President's international affairs advisor Anton Buteiko, minister of defense Morozov, minister of foreign affairs Anatoliy Zlenko, and chief of the Security Service Yevhen Marchuk, among others. Buteiko had also invited top Ukrainian nuclear experts, including director of Khartron Yakiv Aizenberg, director of Kharkiv Physical-Technical Institute Viktor Zelenskiy, chief designer of the Pivdenne design bureau Stanislav Konyukhov, vice-president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences Viktor Bar'yakhtar, and director of the Kyiv Institute of Nuclear Research Ivan Vyshenksiy.⁵² Ukraine's minister of environment and nuclear security and a leader of the parliamentary working group responsible for the development of Ukraine's conception of national security Yuriy Kostenko also attended.

What we know of the meeting from Kostenko's detailed account suggests that it was dominated by discussion on whether the disarmament process would be realistic, safe, and meet Ukraine's national interests, rather than possibilities of gaining positive control over the armaments. Nuclear experts argued that the 1994 deadline for the dismantlement of strategic missile systems, stipulated in the CIS agreements, was unfeasible: Ukraine had neither the finances nor the necessary equipment to carry out these works, and even if it did, the process was complex and rushing it would create serious safety hazards.⁵³ They also argued that Ukraine should dismantle nuclear warheads on its own territory and blend down fissile material contained in them for use in its nuclear power reactors. In this process, Ukraine could rely on its own technological capacity and expertise, as well as on the available international financial

⁵²Yuriy Kostenko, *Istoriia Iadernoho Rozzbroiennia Ukrainy [History of Nuclear Disarmament of Ukraine]* (Kyiv: Yaroslaviv Val, 2015), 62.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 64–65.

assistance for disarmament.⁵⁴ Chief designer of Pivdenne Konyukhov argued that Ukraine should be in no rush to dismantle the 46 SS-24s: these were newer systems, designed and produced in Ukraine. Ukraine could leverage the maintenance Pivdenmash provided for the missile systems deployed in Russia, in particular the SS-18s, to obtain the necessary Russian maintenance of nuclear warheads in Ukraine.⁵⁵ Yet Konyukhov's proposal stopped short of advocating a nuclear deterrent: he proposed to eventually phase out the SS-24s, gradually replacing them with high-precision weaponry that his bureau could develop.⁵⁶ The issue of nuclear command and control was broached only briefly when Aizenberg, the director of Khartron, Kharkiv-based designer of missile guidance and targeting systems, confirmed that a "blocking button" Ukraine desired could not be integrated into the command and control system without Russian acquiescence.⁵⁷

These discussions evidently manifested themselves in subsequent presidential and parliamentary decisions to establish a greater degree of control over strategic nuclear forces in Ukraine and advance demands of compensation for fissile material, technical aid for dismantlement, postponement of denuclearization deadline, and security guarantees from nuclear states in exchange for denuclearization. Moreover, Ukraine's government soon formulated a claim, echoing Chornovil's September 1991 statement, that Ukraine was the rightful "owner" of nuclear weapons on its territory. In a memorandum distributed to foreign embassies and media in Kyiv in December 1992 aimed at clarifying Ukraine's nuclear stance, Ukraine's foreign ministry stated that, at the time of Soviet collapse, at least four states – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine – had "undeniable rights" to become nuclear states as equal successor states of the Soviet Union and voluntarily "chose" to subordinate their nuclear forces to the CIS.⁵⁸ The ministry maintained, however, that Ukraine remained committed to its goal of denuclearization.⁵⁹

⁵⁴Ibid., 66.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 64.

⁵⁸Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Memorandum Ministerstva Zakordonnykh Sprav Ukrainy [Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine]," December 11, 1992, Fond 1, Delo 6857, List 241-246, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Such Ukrainian claims raised much apprehension in Moscow where they were interpreted as attempts to declare Ukraine a nuclear state.⁶⁰ For Americans well-versed in international security theories it seemed only logical that Ukraine, a weaker threatened state, would do everything possible to preserve a nuclear deterrent against a neighboring nuclear power, Russia, especially given the asymmetry in conventional forces.⁶¹ Distinguished American international relations scholar and University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer argued in a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* essay that Ukraine would inevitably keep a nuclear deterrent and would be well justified in doing so since it “cannot defend itself against a nuclear-armed Russia with conventional weapons, and no state including the United States, is going to extend to it a meaningful security guarantee.”⁶² Ukrainian politicians were not unaware of the concept of deterrence, not least through Western discussion of Ukraine’s options. In one episode, an NGO distributed to the Rada the Ukrainian translation of Mearsheimer’s article along with the rebuttal by Harvard’s Steven Miller published in the same issue of *Foreign Affairs*.⁶³ The next day, the MPs requested 70 more copies of Mearsheimer’s article and none of Miller’s.⁶⁴

And yet Ukraine’s nuclear “ownership” claim seemed to stop well short of striving for a deterrent. For Kravchuk and the foreign ministry “nuclear ownership” meant merely that Ukraine was entitled to demand security guarantees and financial compensation for fissile material contained in Ukraine’s warheads.⁶⁵ Despite Kravchuk’s seeming assertiveness on the nuclear issue, he personally remained deeply committed to denuclearization. One of Kravchuk’s worries was that Ukraine depended on Russia for the service and maintenance of nuclear warheads and some of its missile systems, namely the 130 SS-19s which contained highly toxic

⁶⁰Yuri Dubinin, “Ukraine’s Nuclear Ambitions: Reminiscences of the Past,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, April 13, 2004, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_2913; Sokov, *Russian Strategic Modernization: The Past and Future*, 98; Nikolai Sokov, interview by Polina Sinovets, April 15, 2016.

⁶¹Graham Allison, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, December 9, 2016.

⁶²John Mearsheimer, “The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 50–51.

⁶³Steven E. Miller, “The Case against a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 67–80.

⁶⁴“Trip Report. Discussions of CISAC Plutonium Study. Kiev, Ukraine, May 30 – June 3, 1994,” 16, Box 111, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. CISAC here stands for Committee on International Security and Arms Control of the National Academy of Sciences.

⁶⁵For a more detailed discussion of the different positions in Ukraine’s nuclear discourse see Mariana Budjeryn, “The Power of the NPT: International Norms and Ukraine’s Nuclear Disarmament,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 22, no. 2 (June 2015): 203–237.

and corrosive liquid propellants.⁶⁶ As Kravchuk put it to a Canadian journalist: “Ukraine can become a hostage of its own missiles, they can be more dangerous than Chernobyl.”⁶⁷ Although Russia had the leverage to withhold the regular servicing of these missile systems to put pressure on Ukraine, Ukraine’s Pivdenmash had an equal leverage over the servicing of SS-18s and SS-25s on Russian territory, so the issue potentially could have been settled to mutual satisfaction. Yet Kravchuk also worried about the risk of accidental or otherwise Russian-controlled nuclear launch from Ukraine’s territory. At one press conference, he asked rhetorically: “Who will bear responsibility if some sort of accident originates from the Ukrainian land? Why should the people of Ukraine suffer retaliation if the decision is not made in Ukraine?”⁶⁸ Since the inception of the CIS joint nuclear command and control, Kravchuk insisted on the development of technical means to ensure the non-use of nuclear weapons from Ukraine’s territory.⁶⁹ By September 1992, Kravchuk related that jointly with CIS Strategic Command, Ukraine developed a procedure for negative control, involving an exchange of codes between himself and the Commander of the 43rd Strategic Rocket Army General Mikhtyuk.⁷⁰ This procedure, however, did not seem to have involved any technical means to stop a nuclear launch from Ukraine’s territory and relied entirely on the loyalty of General Mikhtyuk and his willingness to consult Kravchuk after receiving launch orders from Moscow.

Nuclear ownership had a different meaning for Yuriy Kostenko, who would take a stauncher position and insist that Ukraine was a *de facto* and *de jure* a nuclear state. As of spring 1992, Kostenko headed a parliamentary group created to develop Ukraine national security conception and prepare Ukraine’s accession to START and NPT.⁷¹ Under his leadership, the group seemed to heed Konyukhov’s advice and advocate that Ukraine should keep its SS-

⁶⁶Leonid Kravchuk, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, April 25, 2017.

⁶⁷“Transcript of President Kravchuk’s Interview to Canadian CTV,” December 14, 1992, Fond 5233, Opis 1, Delo 24, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

⁶⁸“Transcript of President Kravchuk’s Press Conference with Foreign Journalists,” April 28, 1992, Fond 5233, Opis 1, Delo 22, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

⁶⁹Kostenko, *Istoriia Iadernoho Rozbroiennia Ukrainy [History of Nuclear Disarmament of Ukraine]*, 64; Leonid Kravchuk, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, April 25, 2017.

⁷⁰“Transcript of the Interview of President L. Kravchuk to Daily Telegraph,” September 22, 1992, Fond 1, Opis 16, Delo 5233, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

⁷¹ Yuriy Kostenko, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, April 25, 2017.

24s for as long as their service life allows.⁷² This temporary nuclear option, however, was viewed as buying time to establish Ukraine's sovereignty and find other means to provide for its security, rather than as a step in the direction of a nuclear deterrent for Ukraine, which Kostenko insists was never considered as a long-term option.⁷³

Kostenko's position gained increasing popularity in the Rada culminating in the conditional ratification by the Rada of START Treaty and the Lisbon Protocol in November 1993. The Rada rejected Article 5 of the Lisbon Protocol obligating it to join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state and treated Ukraine's obligations under START as proportional reduction of 42% of the nuclear warheads and 36% of ICBMs deployed on its territory, with the complete disarmament conditional on security guarantees and financial compensation for the fissile material contained in the warheads.⁷⁴ The conditions were revoked after the signing on January 14, 1994 of the Trilateral Statement of U.S. President Bill Clinton, Russian President Yeltsin, and Ukrainian President Kravchuk, pledging full compensation for the fissile material contained in both tactical and strategic warheads removed from Ukraine, as well as some loosely worded security assurances that later became the basis for the Budapest Memorandum.⁷⁵

The only person who spoke of nuclear weapons in terms of deterrence in Ukrainian political discourse was General-Major Volodymyr Tolubko, the former commander of 46th Rocket Division in the 43rd Strategic Rocket Army. During the Rada deliberations in April 1992, Tolubko stated that the declaration of non-nuclear status proved "romantic and premature" and insisted that Ukraine should retain at least the 46 SS-24s which, he maintained, were

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, *Postanova pro ratyfikatsiiu Dohovoru mizh Soiuzom Radianskykh Sotsialistychnykh Respublik i Spoluchenymy Shtatamy Ameryky pro skorochennia i obmezhenia stratehichnykh nastupal'nykh ozbroien', pidpysanoho u Moskvi 31 lypnia 1991 roku, i Protokolu do niogo, pidpysanoho u Lisaboni vid imeni Ukrainy 23 travnia 1992 roku [Resolution on Ratification of the Treaty Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on Strategic Arms Reductions and Limitations Signed in Moscow on July 31, 1991 and its Protocol Signed in Lisbon on Behalf of Ukraine on May 23, 1992, 1993,* <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3624-12>.

⁷⁵ The text of the Trilateral Statement is available in Steven Pifer, *The Trilateral Process: The United States, Ukraine, Russia and Nuclear Weapons*, Arms Control Series (Brookings, May 2011), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/5/trilateral%20process%20pifer/05_trilateral_process_pifer.pdf.

sufficient to “deter any aggressor.”⁷⁶ Tolubko further elaborated his position in a series of articles and later in a policy memo addressed to the top Ukrainian leadership.⁷⁷ In his proposals, however, Tolubko was ambiguous about the object of deterrence: he argued that in Ukraine’s strained economic circumstances maintaining a nuclear deterrent would be only possible only in a close cooperation with Russia. Moreover, in a thinly veiled reference to the US, Tolubko stated that Ukraine’s joint operation of nuclear arms with Russia would protect it from the architects of the “new world order” and ensure that the fate of Grenada, Yugoslavia, and Iraq would not befall independent Ukraine.⁷⁸

The idea of maintaining a joint Ukrainian-Russian deterrent under Russian operational control within the former Soviet military-strategic space was not unpopular within certain military circles in Ukraine and Russia. There was strong institutional interest within the defense industry and the military to keep the 30,000 troops of the 43rd Strategic Rocket Army in service, which faced decommissioning in case of denuclearization. In addition, Ukraine’s defense industry was deeply integrated with that of Russia and would have greatly benefited from continued Ukrainian-Russian defense cooperation at the time of shrinking government purchases. This thinking also resonated with parts of the Russian military establishment. Ukraine’s Chief of General Staff General Anatoliy Lopata recalled that as late as 1994 the Ukrainian military received an offer from Russian deputy defense minister General Boris Gromov to leave strategic forces on Ukraine’s territory under existing conditions of Russian operational control with Ukrainian administrative control and blocking capacity.⁷⁹ Gromov, a renowned hero of the Afghan war and an outspoken opponent of the Soviet collapse, was not

⁷⁶Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, “Stenohrama Plenarnoho Zasadannia. Zasadannia Sorok Chetverte [Transcript of the Plenary Session. Session Forty Four],” 50–54.

⁷⁷Volodymyr Tolubko, “V Interesakh Bezpeky Chy Nazad Do Falanhy? [In the Interests of Security or Back to the Phalanx?],” *HolosUkrainy*, November 10, 1992; Volodymyr Tolubko, “Iadernoie Oruzhiie, Kosmos, Flot: ResheniieVoprosov Ne TerpitPromedleniia [Nuclear Weapons, Space, Navy: Decisions Cannot be delayed],” July 1, 1993, Fond 1, Delo 7058, List 99-106, Archive of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁷⁸Tolubko, “Iadernoie Oruzhiie, Kosmos, Flot: Resheniie Voprosov Ne Terpit Promedleniia [Nuclear Weapons, Space, Navy: Decisions Cannot be delayed].”

⁷⁹Anatoliy Lopata, *Zapysky Nachalnyka Heneralnoho Shtabu Zbroinykh Syl Ukrainy [Notes of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine]* (Kyiv: Voienna Rozvidka, 2015), 375.

the only one who viewed the withdrawal of nuclear forces from the former Soviet republics as the continuation of Russia's strategic retreat from Eastern Europe.⁸⁰

Allegedly, the idea was supported by a number of Ukrainian generals and General Lopata claims that some preliminary documents were signed by the Russian and Ukrainian defense establishments.⁸¹ However, Ukraine's ministry of foreign affairs thwarted any further movement in that direction.⁸² In its response to Tolubko's proposals, the foreign ministry emphasized that any joint Russian-Ukrainian operation of strategic forces would undoubtedly involve a close political alliance and a collective security agreement with Russia—exactly the arrangement Ukraine was trying to avoid.⁸³ In the view of the President, the foreign ministry, and the Rada members reluctant to denuclearize, threats to Ukraine's fledgling statehood emanated from the East, not the West as Tolubko suggested. Despite his efforts, Tolubko's ideas found little support among Ukraine's decision-makers.⁸⁴

It therefore appears more likely that Ukraine's efforts to postpone denuclearization were an exercise in political hedging and an effort to gain leverage in negotiations with the United States and Russia, rather than an attempt to buy time for developing an independent nuclear deterrent. The question is why? One explanation, often heard in discussion of Ukraine's nuclear predicament, is that Ukraine wanted to retain a nuclear deterrent but was technologically incapable of wresting operational control over nuclear armaments from Moscow. We examine this explanation and find the supporting evidence mixed and inconclusive. As the following section reveals, Ukraine had a far greater technological and scientific capacity to develop a nuclear deterrent that is normally assumed.

⁸⁰Igor Tsybulskiy, *Gromov* (Moscow: Molodaia Gravdiia, 2005), 264–272.

⁸¹Lopata, *Zapysky Nachalnyka Heneralnoho Shtabu Zbroinykh Syl Ukrainy [Notes of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine]*, 375.

⁸²*ibid.*

⁸³Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Memorandum 21-830 Pershoho Zastupnyka Ministra Zakordonnykh Sprav M.P. Makarevycha Vitse-Prem'ier-Ministru Ukrainy V.M. Shmarovu [Memorandum 21-830 of First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs M.P. Makarevych to Vice-Prime-Minister V.M. Shmarov]," July 27, 1993, Fond 1, Delo 7058, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

⁸⁴Boris Tarasiuk, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, November 14, 2012.

Ukraine's Nuclear Capacity

Of the newly independent states that emerged following the Soviet collapse, Ukraine was second only to Russia in terms of expertise and capacities in the nuclear and missile technology. According to Vitaly Kataev, a senior official of the Soviet military-industrial complex, Moscow considered Ukraine a “dependable” republic and no restrictions were placed on establishing strategic industry on its territory.⁸⁵ Ukraine possessed indigenous uranium deposits and uranium oxide (yellowcake) production facilities in Zhovti Vody in central Ukraine.⁸⁶ It also inherited the Pivdenne missile design bureau (Yuzhnoie in Russian), the Pivdenmash (Yuzhmash) missile and liquid-fueled missile engines factory in Dnipropetrovsk, a producer of solid missile fuel in Pavlograd, the Khartron missile guidance and targeting systems producer in Kharkiv, the Monolit software and automation hardware producer also in Kharkiv, three nuclear research reactors, fifteen nuclear power reactors, and close to 300 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU). Pivdenmash produced the SS-24s deployed on Ukraine's territory and even though guidance systems for those missiles were produced in Russia, Ukraine's Khartron had experience building guidance systems for a different missile, the SS-18.⁸⁷ Ukraine's Monolit produced critical pieces of hardware for command and control of Soviet ICBMs, including devices that blocked unauthorized access, and could attempt to adapt existing systems to establish control over the SS-24s.⁸⁸

The question seems to have been not whether Ukraine would be capable to acquire launch control but rather how long it would take and how much it would cost. Estimates

⁸⁵ Vitaly Kataev, “Voienno-Tekhnicheskii Potentsial Stran SNG: Perspektivy Rossiisko-Ukrainskoho Voienno-Tekhnicheskoho Sotrudnichestva [Military-Technical Potential of CIS States: Perspectives for Russian-Ukrainian Military-Technical Cooperation],” 1994, Digital Files, Vitaly Kataev Collection, Hoover Institution Archive.

⁸⁶ From 1949 until Soviet Collapse in 1991, Ukraine also had uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) production at Prydniprovsk Chemical Plant in Dniprodzerzhynsk that might have provided UF₆ for enrichment into the fissile material that went into the construction of the first Soviet bomb. See Uatom.org, “Uranium Mining and Processing Industry,” August 14, 2015, <http://uatom.org/index.php/uk/2015/08/14/uranovydobuvna-ta-uranopererobna-promyslovist/>

⁸⁷ Bruce Blair, “Russian Control of Nuclear Weapons,” in *The Nuclear Challenge in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. George Quester (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 64.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

indicate that such effort would have taken Ukraine between 6–18 months.⁸⁹ Allegedly, in early and mid-1993, the Russian military and the CIA registered some attempts by the Ukrainians to interfere with the strategic command and control system, although these reports are difficult to corroborate and distinguish from the deliberate Russian attempts to raise alarm and pressure Ukraine into disarming.⁹⁰ Bruce Blair, an expert in US and Soviet nuclear command and control systems, concludes that the easiest route would have been for Ukraine to rebuild an independent guidance system and blocking devices for the SS-24s produced by Pivdenmash.⁹¹ The ranges of the SS-24s, however, were not suitable for the purposes of credibly deterring Russia: their shortest range was 2,700 kilometers and thus could not hold at risk targets in the European part of Russia.⁹² The older SS-19s would have been more suitable for the purpose—they had been tested for ranges of about 1,000 kilometers, roughly the distance between Khmelnytsky in Ukraine, where 90 of them deployed, to Moscow.⁹³ While the SS-19 guidance systems were built in Ukraine, the missiles themselves were not and their service life was due to run out in 1998. Moreover, the highly toxic liquid propellant used in them made them expensive and dangerous to handle. Indeed, this must have been an important factor for the detractors of Ukraine's denuclearization, who never made claims on the SS-19s. Ukraine began decommissioning the first SS-19 regiment in July 1993.⁹⁴

According to Blair, strategic aviation and its armaments suffered from the weakest safeguards against unauthorized use among the Soviet strategic systems.⁹⁵ The practice in Soviet strategic aviation was to store nuclear payloads separately from the bombers in storage

⁸⁹Martin J. DeWing, "The Ukrainian Nuclear Arsenal: Problems of Command, Control and Maintenance" (Monterey Institute of International Studies, 1993); William Kincade H., "Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine: Hollow Threat, Wasting Asset," *Arms Control Today* 23, no. 6 (August 1993): 13–18.

⁹⁰Mark D. Skootsky, "An Annotated Chronology of Post-Soviet Nuclear Disarmament 1991–1994," *The Nonproliferation Review* 2, no. 3 (Spring–Summer 1995): 72, 75.

⁹¹"'Command and Control of Soviet Nuclear Weapons: Dangers and Opportunities Arising from the August Revolution.' Testimony of Bruce Blair of Brookings Institution and Gennadi Pavlov of USSR Academy of Science before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," September 24, 1991, 66, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000019266077;view=1up;seq=3>.

⁹²Blair, "Russian Control of Nuclear Weapons," 66.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Dunbar Lockwood, "Ukraine's Position Hardens Despite Some Positive Signs," *Arms Control Today* 23, no. 7 (September 1993): 30.

⁹⁵Blair, "Russian Control of Nuclear Weapons," 61.

facilities about a mile from airstrips.⁹⁶ This made their fate dependent on the cohesion of the military and the loyalty of the troops guarding the payloads. While the 500 or so AK-15 cruise missiles deployed in Ukraine were equipped with permissive action links (PALs), coded devices to prevent unauthorized use, Blair claims that those were “just gimmicks designed to buy time.”⁹⁷ Allegedly, both bombers and cruise missiles were effectively in the custody of the Ukrainian Air Force.⁹⁸ All in all, Blair concluded, “[t]he initial direct cost [for Ukraine] of cobbling together a deterrent force out of inherited or seize-able assets would be relatively small.”⁹⁹

The challenge was rather the sustainability of this deterrent in the long run. Ukraine missed key industry and infrastructure elements necessary for a nuclear weapons program, including enrichment and reprocessing facilities, fuel fabrication facilities, and warhead production. In addition, Ukraine would have needed to launch satellites to provide geodetic data for missile targeting and an early warning system, as well make major changes to its military force posture to improve the survivability of its forces.¹⁰⁰ While Pivdenmash manufactured space launch vehicles, Ukraine lacked a testing and launch site of its own. Yet none of these requirements were out of reach for Ukrainian science and industry, given the necessary time and resources.

In mid-1993, the National Space Agency of Ukraine (NSAU) conducted a feasibility study on developing an indigenous control and guidance system for the SS-24s, building a centrifuge enrichment facility, and building a warhead production facility.¹⁰¹ According to NSAU former director, Dr. Zhalko-Tytarenko, all of these elements were deemed possible to develop indigenously but for the price tag estimated at \$3bn.¹⁰² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs completed its own estimates. In a response to an inquiry by the Rada, the Ministry calculated that, after the expiration of warheads’ service life in the next 5–10 years, Ukraine would need to

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., 67.

⁹⁸Ibid., 66–67.

⁹⁹Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁰Kincade, “Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine: Hollow Threat, Wasting Asset.”

¹⁰¹Andrew Zhalko-Tytarenko, interview by Mariana Budjeryn, June 6, 2017. Dr. Zhalko-Tytarenko was the Deputy and then Acting director of the National Space Agency of Ukraine in 1992–1994.

¹⁰²Zhalko-Tytarenko, interview.

spend about \$400–500 million annually to reprocess fissile material extracted from them.¹⁰³ At the time, Ukraine also might have already had a warhead design: there are unconfirmed reports that in late 1991, shortly before the Soviet collapse, warhead designs and technical specifications were transferred to Pivdenne as part of the development of the “Universal” missile system.¹⁰⁴

Ukraine’s nuclear exploration did not seem to go beyond these discussions and feasibility studies. Kostenko, like Kravchuk, maintained that the option of establishing independent control over nuclear weapons was never seriously considered at the time.¹⁰⁵ General Lopata corroborated that the Ukrainian General Staff was never tasked with developing options for establishing operational control over strategic nuclear forces.¹⁰⁶

Undoubtedly, the expenditure of billions of dollars to obtain a nuclear deterrent would have been extremely straining for Ukraine given the dire state of its economy. In addition, Ukraine’s president, its scientists, and especially Ukrainian diplomats understood that Ukraine’s decision to develop a nuclear weapons program would incur international isolation, sanctions, and possibly collapse of its civilian nuclear energy industry, which was dependent on Russia for fuel and which provided some 30 percent of Ukraine’s energy.¹⁰⁷ And yet it seems that Ukraine had a far greater indigenous technological capacity and a nuclear starter package than other nuclear aspirants like India, Pakistan, or North Korea that doggedly pursued a nuclear option and, despite economic hardship and international opprobrium, succeeded.

¹⁰³Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Dodatkova Informatsiia Shchodo Mozhlyvykh Naslidkiv Al’ternatyvnykh Pidkhodiv Ukraïny Do Zdiisnennia Iadernoi Polityky [Additional Information Regarding the Possible Consequences of Alternative Approaches to Carrying out Ukraine’s Nuclear Policy],” February 19, 1993, Fond 1, Delo 7057, List 78–83, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. It is unclear whether the number included the construction of the warhead production plant or just the cost of running one.

¹⁰⁴Nikolai Sokov, “Controlling Soviet/Russian Nuclear Weapons in Time of Instability” (presented at the Securing Nuclear Arsenals for the Next Half Century: What Does History Recommend?”, Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, February 2012), http://www.npolicy.org/article.php?aid=1159&tid=2#_ftnref4; Zhalko-Tytarenko, interview. The development of “Universal” began in late 1980s and was cancelled at the end of 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1995, all technical documentation on “Universal” was sold by Pivdenne to Russia, which later developed it into SS-27 Topol missile systems.

¹⁰⁵Kravchuk, interview; Kostenko, interview.

¹⁰⁶Anatoliy Lopata, interview by Polina Sinovets, January 31, 2017.

¹⁰⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, “Dodatkova Informatsiia Shchodo Mozhlyvykh Naslidkiv Al’ternatyvnykh Pidkhodiv Ukraïny Do Zdiisnennia Iadernoi Polityky [Additional Information Regarding the Possible Consequences of Alternative Approaches to Carrying out Ukraine’s Nuclear Policy]”; Zhalko-Tytarenko, interview; Tarasiuk, interview.

In the following section, we propose that there was one essential element missing in Ukraine's nuclear discourse that could have tipped the scales in favor of using Ukraine's substantial nuclear capabilities to develop an indigenous nuclear deterrent: what we call "deterrence-thinking." We suggest that Ukraine's political elites were simply not adapted to thinking in terms of nuclear deterrence and found it difficult to grasp the counterintuitive and somewhat paradoxical elements that the concept of deterrence encompasses.

(The Dearth of) Deterrence Thinking

The concept of nuclear deterrence is based on the notion that nuclear weapons, owing to their immense destructive power and concise time of delivery, are nearly impossible to defend against and are better suited for preventing wars rather than fighting and winning them.¹⁰⁸ The Cold War practice of nuclear deterrence relied on a mutual, credible, and sure threat against valuable targets on both sides to discourage a "first strike" by either adversary. This balance forms the counterintuitive element of nuclear deterrence: one must credibly threaten the unthinkable in order to prevent another from acting on the very same unthinkable threat. Deterrence is not an intuitive or conventional mode of thinking about weapons, defense, and security and the paradoxes it entails have not escaped Western scholarly attention.¹⁰⁹ And yet among the nuclear weapons states and in Western expert circles deterrence is all but synonymous with military strategy involving nuclear weapons.

However, there are few references to deterrence from political actors who participated in Ukraine's nuclear deliberations. It is certainly one of the most challenging tasks for a researcher to find evidence of the absence. Yet based on what we know about nuclear deliberations in the early 1990s, Ukrainian leaders seemed to have hardly ever considered nuclear weapons in military-strategic terms and when they did, they tended to view them in war-fighting terms and thus found them unacceptable. One of the rare instances in which President Kravchuk discussed the military utility of nuclear weapons was in his interview with Dutch technology analytics

¹⁰⁸ One of the earliest analysts to note this distinctive quality of nuclear weapons was Bernard Brodie and his co-authors in Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, 1946).

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, Jeff McMahan, "Is Nuclear Deterrence Paradoxical?," *Ethics* 99, no. 2 (1989): 407–422.

provider Elsevier at the end of 1992, in which he remarked that even conventionally armed ballistic missiles would be incredibly dangerous:

Suppose we don't have nuclear warheads on these [missile] complexes, only conventional warheads . . . It is enough to launch one of these missiles into a nuclear power plant—and . . . catastrophe! What I mean is that today nuclear weapons are only psychologically a deterrent factor. In real terms, all of us could be obliterated without nuclear arms. Because there are nuclear power stations. Chernobyl. I think all nuclear weapons must be destroyed.¹¹⁰

The option of threatening an adversary's strategic targets—such as a nuclear power station—might have served as an argument in favor of nuclear weapons, or strategic delivery systems to someone thinking in deterrence terms. Instead, President Kravchuk began by considering not the deterrent effect a threat might have, but actually having to carrying out such a threat and found it untenable. His misgivings about credibility of deterrence as 'psychological only' led him to reject the military utility of nuclear weapons wholesale.¹¹¹

Similar reasoning was expressed by Ukraine's chief nuclear negotiator, deputy foreign minister Boris Tarasiuk, who headed the interagency committee on disarmament and represented Ukraine in negotiations with the United States and Russia. In an interview, he conceded that the committee, which comprised representatives of the executive, the legislature, the military, and technical elites, considered an option of retaining conventionally armed ICBMs.¹¹² While this technically would not be in breach of any international norms and treaty obligations of Ukraine and would not impede its accession to the NPT, the idea of threatening a launch of even a conventionally-armed missile at a nuclear power plant or a city of another state was not acceptable to the members of the disarmament committee.¹¹³ The repeated references to nuclear power plants as possible targets suggest the underlying imprint of Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster on the thinking of Ukraine's political elites.

¹¹⁰"Transcript of Interview of President Kravchuk to Elsevier," December 9, 1992, Fond 5233, Opus 1, Delo 22, Central State Archive of Ukraine.

¹¹¹ Kravchuk's view might not be as simplistic as it appears. Hans Morgenthau, discussing the paradoxes of nuclear deterrence, noted that as opposed to traditional force's psychological effect is achieved through actual physical employment, "nuclear force has a psychological function pure and simple." Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy," *The American Political Science Review* 58, no. 1 (1964): 24.

¹¹²Tarasiuk, interview.

¹¹³Ibid.

Ukraine's diplomats clearly leaned toward disarmament and tended to consider Ukraine's nuclear inheritance in international-political, rather than military-strategic terms. A memo authored by the foreign ministry for the Rada leadership in February 1993 to examine the positive and negative consequences of Ukraine's nuclear options, focused primarily on international political aspects of retaining nuclear weapons. Among the few benefits of becoming a "nuclear state" the memo listed the status of membership in the "nuclear club," becoming third-largest nuclear power in the world, and attaining ability to negotiate with world powers from the "position of strength."¹¹⁴ Deterrence appeared as the last item, in a rather down-played formulation as acquisition by Ukraine of "certain internal guarantees of national security owing to the presence of 'weapons of deterrence'."¹¹⁵ The memo did not fail to emphasize that this would also make Ukraine the "object of . . . nuclear deterrence for Russia, US, and other nuclear states," an item that featured prominently on the cons list.¹¹⁶

Even to the faction in the Rada that took a more assertive stance on the issue, nuclear weapons seemed to have been valuable politically but militarily unacceptable. The chair of the Rada foreign relations committee and a renowned poet Dmytro Pavlychko, who supported Kostenko's approach to delay denuclearization and retain the SS-24s, claimed that it was nevertheless inconceivable to regard Ukraine's nuclear inheritance "in military terms" at all.¹¹⁷ The Rada was far more concerned about Ukraine gaining a technological capacity to reliably prevent a launch from its territory than establishing independent operational control.¹¹⁸ Kostenko himself attempted to reconcile the lack of operational control with the concept of deterrence in a somewhat enigmatic way:

. . . Due to their specificity, nuclear weapons perform a defensive function even if they are not controlled by the state, in which they are deployed. Therefore, dismantling nuclear weapons without the adequate substitute by other deterrence means will result

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Analitychna dovidka 'Mozhlyvi Naslidky Al'ternatyvnykh Pidkhodiv Ukrainy Do Zdiysnennia Iadernoi polityky' [Analytical note 'Possible Consequences of Alternative Approaches of Ukraine to Carrying out Nuclear Policy']," February 3, 1993, Fond 1, Delo 7045, List 1-7, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Dmytro Pavlychko, *Holosy Moho Zhyattia. Statti, Vystupy, Interv'iu. Dokumenty* [The Voices of My Life. Articles, Speeches, Interviews. Documents] (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2013), 421.

¹¹⁸ "Kostiantyn Morozov Collection, 1991–1996. Interview Transcripts.," Tape 8, p. 21, Ukrainian Research Institute Library, Harvard University.

in the loss of the effective elements of the national security and threaten the existence of the Ukrainian state.¹¹⁹

Kostenko's take on deterrence resembles a sort of existential deterrence, the idea that the very presence of nuclear weapons on a state's territory would influence the calculations of a potential aggressor no matter the credibility of the threat to use these weapons in retaliation. More likely, however, what Kostenko was alluding to was the belief that the temporary presence of nuclear weapons on Ukraine's territory could influence not so much the aggressor but a potential ally, like the US. The overwhelming focus of early US policy toward Ukraine on the nuclear issue from the moment of its independence until denuclearization served to confirm that nuclear weapons force great powers to pay attention. As Ian Brzezinski, who worked as international security advisor to the Rada in 1993–1994, explained to a visiting delegation from the American National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Ukrainians believed that while Ukraine had nuclear weapons, the US would interfere to stop the fighting if Russia invaded.¹²⁰ According to NAS report of the meeting, the general argument on the Ukrainian side was that if Yugoslavia had nuclear weapons, the West would not have permitted it to descend into chaos.¹²¹ Even after the Russian invasion in 2014, Kostenko continued to maintain that Ukraine's mistake was not denuclearization as such, but insufficient financial compensation and the feebleness security commitment pledged by the West in exchange for Ukraine's denuclearization.¹²²

Ukraine's military leadership, which might have had vested institutional interests in retaining nuclear weapons and understood the concept of nuclear deterrence, took on a secondary role in nuclear decision-making. Ukraine's first defense minister Kostyantyn Morozov was committed to the idea of civilian oversight over military affairs, something he considered

¹¹⁹Kostenko, *Istoriia laderneho Rozzbroiennia Ukrainy [History of Nuclear Disarmament of Ukraine]*, 260.

¹²⁰ "Trip Report. Discussions of CISAC Plutonium Study. Kiev, Ukraine, May 30 - June 3, 1994," 15.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Kostenko, interview; Yuriy Kostenko, "10 Mifiv pro laderne Rozzbroiennia Ukrainy [10 Myths about Nuclear Disarmament of Ukraine]," *Radio Svoboda*, January 10, 2014, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25225403.html>; "Istorychna Pravda Z Vakhtangom Kipiani: laderne Rozzbroiennia [Historical Truth with Vakhtang Kipiani: Nuclear Disarmament]" (Telekanal ZIK, December 20, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PD_pOPRczKQ.

an important prerequisite of Ukraine's new democratic and European identity.¹²³ On the nuclear issue, Morozov heeded the declared nuclear policy of Ukraine's leadership, namely, the President, as well as the laws and declarations of the Rada, all of which set out a course toward nuclear disarmament.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Ukraine's military leadership was preoccupied with the challenge of establishing Ukraine's conventional armed forces against Moscow's resistance and in the face of formidable social problems and financial constraints. The presence of strategic rocket troops whose operational chain of command ran to Moscow only complicated the task. Morozov maintained that on no occasion was he privy to any discussions that considered Ukraine's nuclear weapons as a "threat to any other country."¹²⁵ Tolubko's lone voice in favor of retaining the weapons for nuclear deterrence seemed to have been the outlier. The main thrust of Tolubko's argument, however, was to preserve Ukraine's space and defense industries, the status and the very existence of the strategic rocket forces, to which he had dedicated his military career and which now faced decommissioning. Tolubko's reference to deterrence was likely a mere recitation of traditional Soviet military mantras about deterring the West, rather than indigenous strategic thinking in response to new threats faced by the new Ukrainian state.

Conclusion

At its inception as an independent state, Ukraine found itself in a precarious security predicament. An aspiring new democracy eager to join the international community on good terms and to disentangle itself from its former Moscow metropole, it was confronted with a host of political and economic woes, as well as growing perception of Russian threat to its fledgling sovereignty. In this context, the value of world's third largest nuclear arsenal Ukraine inherited from the Soviet Union was ambiguous and became a matter of domestic, as well as international contestation. The discussions of Ukraine's nuclear predicament and deliberations presented above demonstrate that Ukrainian leaders believed that nuclear weapons stranded

¹²³ Kostiantyn Morozov Collection, 1991-1996. Interview Transcripts., Tape 4, p. 7, Ukrainian Research Institute Library, Harvard University.

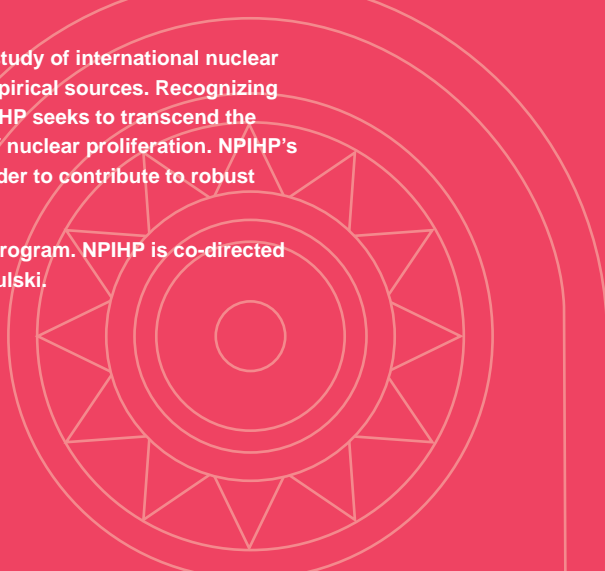

¹²⁴ Ibid., Tape 8, pp. 20–21.

¹²⁵ Ibid., Tape 8, 21.

in Ukraine had significant political and economic value. However, they had little appreciation for the military-strategic function of a nuclear deterrent.

Further research is necessary to understand why deterrence-thinking was so conspicuously lacking in Ukraine and why the military, defense industry, and expert communities that could have generated such thinking failed to formulate a more forceful position in favor of deterrence. Nevertheless, the unpacking of Ukraine's nuclear discourse contributes to a better understanding of what may drive nuclear acquisition or renunciation. Ukraine's case supports the argument that technological availability and scientific capacity, the so-called supply-side of nuclear proliferation, is far from being determinative of the decision to go nuclear. At the same time, it suggests that the political and security motivation, the so-called demand-side of proliferation, may be more complex than previously assumed. Neither the existence and perception of a security threat, nor the presence of military and defense-industrial institutional interests may be sufficient to create a powerful enough motivation to undertake surmounting political and economic hurdles involved in the development of a nuclear program. What must be present is the ability of some influential actors to think about nuclear weapons in a certain way, that is, to formulate the concept of nuclear deterrence and bill it as a worthwhile contribution to nation's security and defense.

Our research also suggests that it is wrong to assume that all actors engaging in nuclear decision-making regard these weapons in the same terms as Western academic and expert communities. The concept and practice of deterrence are not things that come naturally or are dictated by the inherent technological qualities of nuclear weaponry. The tensions and paradoxes inherent in the concept of deterrence: threatening the adversary with the very thing you are trying to avoid, are not easily grasped by those not accustomed to thinking in terms of deterrence. Statesmen must be taught and socialized into deterrence-thinking. Without it, developing or retaining nuclear weapons might not appear worth its high political and economic costs.



NPIHP is a global network of individuals and institutions engaged in the study of international nuclear history through archival documents, oral history interviews and other empirical sources. Recognizing that today's toughest nuclear challenges have deep roots in the past, NPIHP seeks to transcend the East vs. West paradigm to assemble an integrated international history of nuclear proliferation. NPIHP's research aims to fill in the blank and blurry pages of nuclear history in order to contribute to robust scholarship and effective policy decisions.

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