

Proceedings of Seminar on 'Management & Supervision of Defence in a Society in Transition'
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Introduction by the British Co-Chairman

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As part of the official United Kingdom-Ukraine Programme of Co-Operation, the Conflict Studies Research Centre of the UK Ministry of Defence (CSRC) held a workshop in Kyiv between 24-26 April, 1997 on the theme, 'Management and Supervision of Defence in a Society in Transition'. Sponsored by the United Kingdom Know How Fund, the workshop was held in association with three Ukrainian partners — the National Institute of Strategic Studies, the Atlantic Council of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Centre for International Security Studies — and with the kind assistance of the Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko University, who provided the premises for this event.

It was a significant year in which to hold such a workshop. The adoption of the National Security Concept of Ukraine on 16 January, 1997 was a watershed in Ukraine's efforts to create a national security system equal to the challenges of the present era. These challenges are both radical and compelling. They stem not only from the need to give substance to national independence, but from the need to reconcile independence with a Europe vastly more interdependent in its character and thinking. In an increasingly interconnected Europe, the focus of security must be the civil domain as much as the military, the economic sphere as much as the political, not to say the multiple relationships between local, national and international events. Unless states acquire the competence to assess and remedy vulnerabilities in these areas, interdependence could weaken security rather than strengthen it. The National Security Concept of Ukraine is a comprehensive framework making assessment and action possible. It is a necessary and forward looking document.

It is fortunate that the year's second major accomplishment, the conclusion of a Charter

on Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine, followed rather than preceded Ukraine's examination of its own security requirements. The Distinctive Partnership is less noteworthy for establishing partnership — for that had already existed — than for signifying Ukraine's emergence as a contributor to European security, with ideas of its own about new security challenges and the role that armed forces should play in meeting them. If the potential of Distinctive Partnership is realised, these ideas will acquire influence outside Ukraine, to the benefit of Europe as a whole.

Well timed as it was, the CSRC seminar was not unique. How could it be when, on an official level alone, the 1997 bilateral UK-Ukraine Programme of Cooperation provided for over 95 exchanges of military delegations, ship visits, courses, seminars and military exercises? Nevertheless, the seminar was an unusual event and, at that, a catalyst. It was the first forum in Ukraine under official British auspices to bring together two vital and closely related themes. The first of these, the management of change — of obvious and overwhelming importance to Ukraine — is also of relevance, indeed of some concern, to the British military establishment, as several of the seminar speakers demonstrated in detail.

The second and principal theme, civilian, democratic control of armed forces, is also of mutual interest to Ukraine and the United Kingdom. First, as Ukrainian military professionals realise, it is an essential component of civil society, not to say stability. Second, democratic, civilian control is essential to security — and far more so now than it was in the past. For in today's Europe, the issue is less how states can be 'threatened' by conventional forms of aggression than how they can be undermined by the exploitation of vulnerability and division. Unless national security is a national enterprise, embracing the public, parliament, the non-defence sector of government and the economic elite of the country, this challenge will not be well addressed. This, too, is understood. But the process of achieving this goal is not always clear cut, and Westerners with ready-made formulas and short memories of Western Europe's own troubled history do not assist it. Success not only demands conviction on the part of Ukraine and its partners, it also demands knowledge, imagination, objectivity, patience — and, to be sure, resources.

With regard to each of the workshop themes, the British participants had no illusion, let

alone wish, that Ukrainians would emulate British models and concepts. To the contrary, one of the attractions of collaboration in Ukraine is the opportunity to work alongside defence and security professionals who plainly believe (in President Kuchma's words) that 'Ukrainians themselves' must achieve the goals that Ukrainians set. What we hoped was that our perspectives would be helpful and, where appropriate, adapted to Ukrainian conditions. These conditions have long been an object of study at the Conflict Studies Research Centre, which since its establishment in 1972 as the Soviet Studies Research Centre, was committed to the belief that the West's potential adversaries needed to be understood in their own terms, rather than ours. Certainly, the principle is at least as vital at a time of partnership as it was at a time of confrontation.

To be sure, CSRC could not have organised this venture on its own. We are fortunate that the Know How Fund — primarily concerned with strengthening the civil component of 'civil society' — shared our views about the connection between democracy and democratic control of armed forces. It is no accident that CSRC's first venture in Ukraine — the lecture series 'Defence in a Democracy', held at the Institute of International Relations in May-June, 1995 — was conducted with Know How Fund sponsorship. British Embassy Kyiv — a model of what dedication, persistence and knowledge of local conditions can achieve — provided firm and constant support; indeed, without the support of Her Majesty's Ambassador, Roy Reeve, Britain's Defence & Naval Attaché, Captain Leigh Merrick and (then) Deputy Head of Mission, Dick Jenkins, the workshop would not have occurred. Our three Ukrainian partners not only committed long hours of work to the project, they provided indispensable guidance, not to say assistance in bringing the project to the attention of today's decision makers as well as tomorrow's.

The papers which follow formed the centre piece of two-and-a-half days of discussion. The first of these — the keynote address by the United Kingdom Chief of General Staff — as well as the second, the opening presentation by the British Army's Director General of Doctrine and Development — represented official United Kingdom perspectives. The balance of the papers, by serving and retired general officers, along with specialists from CSRC itself, represented the personal and often highly critical

perspectives of the individuals concerned. The discussions which ensued were intense, collegial and frank. All of us learnt at least as much from these discussions as we contributed to them.

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