

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

PHILIP D. ZELIKOW  
Assistant Professor  
of Public Policy



79 JOHN F. KENNEDY STREET  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138  
(617) 496-6891  
FAX (617) 495-5776

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Graham Allison, Robert Blackwill, Al Carnesale,  
Ash Carter, Bill Hogan

From: Philip Zelikow *PZ*

Subject: Harvard Discussion with Kravchuk on Nuclear Weapons

Date: September 30, 1991

I thought you would be interested in the details of a conversation with Ukrainian President Kravchuk on his republic's plans for nuclear weapons. The conversation took place on Friday morning, September 27, at the Ukrainian Research Institute. The conversation was part of the discussion, led by Bill Hogan (with Shirley Williams), which was described by Clifford Krauss in today's New York Times.

At Bill's invitation, I asked President Kravchuk to help me understand some troubling inconsistencies which had emerged in his republic's public position on nuclear weapons:

- First, Ukraine intends to become nuclear-free and sign the NPT, but Kravchuk says it will take an indefinite number of years to achieve this goal. (He later reportedly mentioned a timeframe of seven years while in Chicago.)
- Second, Ukraine says it supports central control of nuclear forces but:
  - (a) adds that Ukraine must participate in the mechanism of central control; and
  - (b) adds that Ukraine will, on its own, effectively and reliably control the possible use of any nuclear weapons actually located in the republic.
- Third, Ukraine's hopes for participation in the mechanism of central control rely on retention of Union military structures, but Kravchuk also said the armed forces of independent Ukraine will be entirely independent -- a development which will quickly put the future of Union military structures in doubt.

So, I asked, could Kravchuk clear up this confusion by stating that he unconditionally supports the elimination of nuclear weapons by the fastest possible means, whether it is removal to Russia or destruction on Ukrainian territory? Or, if the future of nuclear weapons in the Ukraine is linked to certain political developments,

could Kravchuk describe these linkages and open the way to a frankly political negotiation?

In a lengthy reply, Kravchuk made the following points:

- He wanted participation in the mechanism for central control of nuclear weapons along the lines worked out between Yeltsin and Gorbachev. Nazarbayev (Kazakh president) had the same view.
- His government's new ministry of defense was considering the nature of Ukrainian armed forces in light of "sufficiency," and was beginning discussions about this with the center. There would need to be some agreement on a "transition" between the Union ministry of defense and the republics. (An agreement devolving control over border guards had already been signed.)
- Work on the difficult problems, including the division and coordination of authority with Moscow, was only beginning. But key political decisions had been made.
- It might be useful for me to join them in working out these problems.

Kravchuk then approached me after the meeting ended, and said he hoped to see me in Kiev. His deputy foreign minister, Oudovenko (longtime party hack and Ukrainian permrep to the UN) then gave me information on how to contact him in New York to arrange a possible meeting with the Ukrainian foreign minister. I do not intend to pursue this matter on my own.

But we can use this invitation, whatever motivated it, as a useful opening to help get money for the idea, which Bill has mentioned to me, of sending a group from Harvard to Kiev, offering some expertise on the varied security issues Ukraine faces. The nuclear issue, for example, has a critical technical dimension but is also likely to be linked to broader Ukrainian political concerns (such as the Crimea and Donbas), concrete resource issues to be negotiated with the Union defense ministry, and expectations for the future of European security. The group would need to meet with a variety of people extending beyond Kravchuk and his circle (whose future is uncertain).

President Bush's initiative will help by offering a coherent framework to energize republics in looking at their nuclear weapons inventories, especially the non-strategic nuclear forces located on their territory (which, in Ukraine, includes a variety of weapons, including those stocked for the Black Sea fleet). My understanding is that the US government, for good reason, is not yet able to initiate a substantive dialogue with the Ukrainian government on nuclear weapons or other security issues. Harvard is not similarly constrained.