

# Ukraine and the Bush Doctrine

By Taras Kuzio,  
Sep 25, 2003 Kyiv Post Op Ed

When the Bush administration came to office in January 2001, it already possessed within itself, alongside the more traditionally conservative philosophy that the candidate Bush had espoused on the campaign trail, a seed of neo-conservatism: a triumphalist, universalist view of American political, cultural, economic and technological superiority. This U.S. triumphalism was reinforced by the shock of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

United States strategic planning is not driven by the relatively dovish U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, but by the neo-conservatives who dominate other sections of the executive branch. They are going nowhere: President Bush is likely to be re-elected in November 2004.

The development of the so-called Bush Doctrine represents the real end of the Cold War, because it affirms that America was the war's victor. U.S. triumphalism was reflected in the declared willingness, in an autumn 2002 National Security declaration that became the core of the Doctrine, to undertake pre-emptive strikes against rogue states or terrorist groups.

During the Clinton era there wasn't the same willingness to trumpet this American superiority. Indeed, the Clinton era's alleged "weakness" on international terrorism (such as when it withdrew from Somalia after attacks now known to have been carried out by Al Queda) has been blamed by the Bush administration for helping to allow 9/11 to take place.

## **Iraq and the Middle East**

The Bush administration never hid its strategy of wanting to achieve regime change in Iraq. That made U.S. policy on Iraq different from Britain's, which emphasized the alleged imminent threat of weapons of mass destruction. (No weapons of mass destruction — or Kolchuga's, for that matter — have been found.)

The Bush administration won't tolerate the regime in Iran, either, if that country is found to possess nuclear weapons. Indeed, Western intelligence sources fear that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons within 18 months, and it is not out of the question that the United States could launch air strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities. (A full invasion is thought to be unlikely.) Another option would be to covertly support domestic opposition groups inside Iran, with the goal of facilitating "regime change."

The EU position on Iran has moved closer to that of the United States. Nevertheless, the EU is far from being ready to undertake regime change in Iran. Tensions between the U.S. and EU positions already exist when it comes to the issue. The United States is suspicious as to why France has arrested Iranian opposition leaders in Paris, when the United States has increasingly been developing an interest in working with opposition groups. The wads of U.S. dollars the raids uncovered suggest covert support to the Iranian opposition might already be in progress.

## **Russia and the United States**

Russia's refusal to halt nuclear cooperation with Iraq makes it unlikely that Russia-U.S. relations will soon rebound to the level of the "strategic partnership" proclaimed after 9/11. Russia, despite its influence in Central Asia, is considered in Washington to be even less of a serious partner than the EU.

President Vladimir Putin has been criticized by his military and security service allies, whose officers increasingly dominate the

presidential apparatus, for his support for the United States after 9/11. Their main complaint was that the United States did not treat Russia as an equal. They are right. Clinton was willing to take into account Russian sensibilities, but Bush isn't. NATO, a thorny issue for the Russians, was enlarged to include the three Baltic states at its November 2002 summit, and Ukraine could be invited to join at the 2007 summit. These developments make the Kremlin uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, U.S. troops will be in Georgia and Central Asia for the long term, not temporarily, as was promised to Russia after 9/11. Azerbaijan has offered military bases to the U.S. The United States is also, for the first time, now supporting the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) regional group within the CIS.

## **U.S.-EU**

The EU has proved unable to develop a coherent foreign and security policy: one reason for what western Europeans perceive as the Bush administration's condescension to them. Although the EU's European Foreign and Security Policy (EFSP) is likely to become more developed by 2008-2010, the United States will continue to remain ahead, on account of its huge technological advances.

Also, Europe is no longer seen as a place where security threats originate, so U.S. attention is focusing elsewhere: the U.S. simply doesn't take Europe as seriously as it once did. Europe is in no position to act globally; it's important only as an occasional ally, as in the Middle East peace process. (But not, of course, in Iraq.)

## **The United States and Multilateral Institutions**

As the world's only "hyper power," the United States has less need of multilateral institutions or allies. Allies are sought on tactical grounds,

as when the U.S. cultivated Russia so that it could establish bases in Central Asia before the Afghanistan invasion. Multilateral institutions are seen as too cumbersome to work with when it comes to dealing with perceived threats to the United States.

This U.S. unwillingness to cultivate multilateral institutions to the same degree as during the Clinton presidency is causing difficulties in diplomatic relations with France and Russia. The only manner in which Russia can any longer be recognized as a “great power” is through its permanent seat on the UN. France has a similarly functional view of the UN, but Paris sees the EU’s EFSP as a way for it to regain its “great power” status — it wants to lead the EU into action on the world stage. Both France and Russia, therefore, feel threatened by U.S. “unilateralism,” and support a return to a multipolar world.

## **New Bases**

One aim of the new U.S. global strategy is to relocate military bases throughout the world, for a new variety of “force projection,” utilizing lighter, faster units. Many central and south eastern European states have offered bases to the United States and NATO. There are both financial and psychological reasons for this. Countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and the three Baltic states are in fact pro-American, and see a continued U.S. presence in Europe as vital for their security. Poland heads one of four stabilization sectors inside Iraq (that sector includes Ukrainian troops). Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz was quoted in *The New York Times* thus: “Our Western European partners and friends have to realize and accept that Poland is a serious partner, and should be respected. Its arguments should be listened to.”

## **The Bush Doctrine and Ukraine**

What should be Ukraine's policy towards the Bush Doctrine? Given that Russia clamored to join the international coalition against terrorism immediately after 9/11, it would be foolish if Ukraine did not now do the same.

The Bush Doctrine's "unilateralism" will, as an unintended consequence, work to resolve Ukraine's major foreign policy conundrum: that is, whether it should join NATO in the face of Russian objections. The Bush Doctrine provides cover for Ukraine to ignore Russian carping about joining a western-oriented defense effort to an extent that it could not have ignored it during the Clinton administration. That is, Ukraine can now reasonably claim that it had no choice.

The Bush doctrine will therefore help Ukraine join NATO later this decade. U.S. officials have tirelessly reiterated that Ukraine should hold free and fair elections in 2004 as a precondition for NATO entry. A good bet is that if elections are indeed free and fair, Ukraine will be invited to join NATO at its next summit in 2007.

On their side, U.S. officials can afford to let Ukraine into Nato without any institutional deformations: NATO, after all, has an open door policy. The same isn't true of the EU, which means that it can't offer Ukraine membership as a reward for holding legitimate elections.

Ukraine has already improved its relations with the United States by sending troops to Iraq. It should now go a step further and follow the lead of other central European states, such as Romania and Bulgaria, in offering the U.S. and NATO bases. The Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol is no obstacle to such bases. Kyrgyzia and Tajikistan host both Russian and U.S. bases.

U.S.-Ukrainian relations won't regain the good status they enjoyed in the 1990s until Leonid Kuchma leaves office next year. Defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk is therefore being unduly optimistic in believing that Ukraine will move a concrete step closer to European integration after the NATO summit in 2004. That development is

possible only after Kuchma goes. An attempt by Kuchma to meet President Bush at the UN this month was turned down by Washington.

If next year's elections are free, they should lead to victory by Ukraine's most popular candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. The U.S. should invite Yushchenko to Washington soon after the election. That would signal that the Kuchma era is over, and that the United States and Ukraine are reviving their strategic partnership.

*Dr. Taras Kuzio is a resident fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies and adjunct professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto.*