



Ukraine: The Changing of the Guard

by Jan Piekło

- *The promise of Orange Revolution was not fulfilled. The objections of old EU member states and fear of Kremlin's adverse reaction made it impossible for the EU to offer Ukraine the "carrot" of membership. At the same time political instability, corruption and lack of reforms resulted in "Ukrainian fatigue" syndrome in the West.*
- *The declaration of newly elected Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich on the neutral status of his country met with enthusiastic response in most of the old EU member states and the phrase about his "pragmatic approach" became popular in Berlin, Paris and Brussels.*
- *The EU and Ukraine should continue negotiations on Association and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement. The EU should strengthen the monitoring of EU-funded assistance programmes. Brussels should also negotiate with Ukraine a realistic roadmap towards visa-free regime, while easing the existing travel restrictions as much as possible.*
- *EU should involve Ukraine in strategic bilateral energy security projects based on diversification of transport routes and energy suppliers and should assist Kyiv in modernization of its energy system, while promoting energy efficiency.*
- *EU member states and partner countries should further develop Eastern Partnership, taking into consideration important regional security issues and encouraging Ukraine to play a more active role in the Black Sea Region. EU should also enhance the role of civil society organizations in further development of the EaP.*
- *In the wake of the Bandera debacle, strengthening the reconciliation process between Poles and Ukrainians remains an urgent challenge. One-sided historical narratives carry the risk of heightening tensions between our two societies, which can work to the advantage of third countries (Russia).*
- *The joint organization of the Euro 2012 European football championships is a unique chance for cooperation on all levels between Poland and Ukraine as well as for promoting the cause of Ukraine in the EU Member States.*

2010 Presidential Election's Outcome

The winner of the 2010 presidential race in Ukraine was Victor Yanukovich, the leader of the “blue” Party of Regions, who had lost the election to the “Orange Revolution” coalition five years earlier. Yanukovich voters believed that he would finally bring “order and stability”. They blamed the Orange camp for broken promises, internal fighting, a corrupt economy and a deepening chaos.

Both the international community and Ukraine’s political elite were ready to accept the result of the election. There have been no reports of serious violations of electoral procedures bar the changes made in the electoral law just a few days before the second round of the election which had been proposed by the Party of Regions and immediately signed by President Yushchenko. Yanukovich’s rival in the presidential race – Yulia Tymoshenko – the Prime Minister at the time, contested the result in the courts on grounds of electoral fraud, but later decided to withdraw this claim. She was defeated by only 3.5 percentage points which has left Yanukovich with a rather weak mandate. He received broad support in the Russian-speaking east and south of the country (including Crimea), but in the Ukrainian-speaking west, he lost virtually every region to Tymoshenko. This means that his presidency might contribute to deepening the division between the west and east of the country. Western Ukraine, the stronghold of the Orange Revolution supporters, distrusts him and remembers Yanukovich as a former criminal convict and pro-Russian leader of the oligarchic group from Donetsk who, supported by the then outgoing President, Leonid Kuchma and the Kremlin, tried to defraud the 2004 presidential elections.

In the eyes of the international community the recent Ukrainian elections met democratic standards and confirmed Kyiv’s pro-European orientation. The Kremlin has learnt its lesson from the previous failure in promoting Yanukovich’s candidacy in 2004 and this time it did not get involved in direct support for either of the final round’s presidential candidates (although it appeared as if Moscow’s favorite was Yulia Tymoshenko). The new president delivered his first address not in Ukrainian but in Russian sending a clear signal to his blue electorate and increasing antagonism in Western Ukraine.

On February 25th Viktor Yanukovich was sworn in as the country’s fourth president since Ukraine gained independence. In his speech at the ceremony in Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) , he called for reforming the system of government. He described the economic situation of the country as “catastrophic” and appealed for effective cooperation between the president’s office, parliament and government.

The new president’s inauguration took place in the half-empty chamber of parliament. Neither Tymoshenko nor outgoing President Viktor Yushchenko showed up for the inauguration. The BYuT (Yulia Tymoshenko’s Bloc) deputies boycotted the ceremony. This clearly highlights how difficult it will be for Yanukovich to rule and unite the country.

It is worth noting that in spite of the presence of prominent guests from abroad (including Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy & First Vice President of the European Commission, Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Lech Kaczynski, President of Poland and some other presidents of European countries) neither the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev nor Prime Minister Vladimir Putin attended the swearing in ceremony. This may have contributed to

the change of Yanukovich's plans in paying his first visit not to Moscow, as it was previously announced, but to Brussels.

At Yanukovich's invitation Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia conducted a prayer service in Kiyv Pecherska Lavra before the presidential inauguration and then he also attended the swearing in ceremony. For Western Ukrainians and members of the Ukrainian Church of Kyiv Patriarchate that is not recognized by the Patriarchate of Moscow this event represented a symbolic gesture of yielding Ukraine's independent ambitions and following the Russian Orthodox line.

Yanukovich has sent out mixed messages, which has created confusion and were interpreted by some as wise diplomatic maneuvers and by others who know him better as further examples of earlier committed faux pas. He is famous for his blunders and his weak knowledge of the Ukrainian language. During his interview with Euronews he confused Kosovo with Serbia and Montenegro and South Ossetia with North Ossetia. While in Brussels he faced problems in commenting on the Association Agreement Ukraine is currently negotiating with the EU. He also made ambiguous comments on the prospects of recognizing the sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and on backing the Russian Gazprom projects of South Stream and Nord Stream.

Yanukovich has never been an independent politician with his own strong strategic vision. He represents the interests of the regional oligarchs in Donetsk (where he was a governor from May 1997 till November 2002). Although these oligarchs are Russian speaking, they have oriented themselves towards the EU. This was the case at least until the economic crisis hit hard. Now, because their businesses have been seriously damaged by the recession, they have shown less enthusiasm for integration with the West. However, they have little interest in getting too close to Moscow, because Russian businesses are their biggest and their most dangerous competitor.

International commentators have described him as a "pragmatic" politician who is well able to move through the corridors of power. He has occupied the post of Prime Minister of Ukraine on three occasions – twice under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, the third and the last one under Victor Yushchenko when in December 2007 Yanukovich was replaced by Yulia Tymoshenko.

The Legacy of Victor Yushchenko's Presidency

There is a huge contrast between the scenes from the time of the Orange Revolution – when protesters on Maydan Square applauded Victor Yushchenko enthusiastically as the victor of the presidential elections repeated due to the earlier fraud – and the results he gained in the first round of recent presidential race. In 2004 he received 52% at the re-vote, this time he gained only 5.45% of the vote which resulted in his elimination from the contest in the first round. Most of the 2010 vote came from Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. But it seems that in spite of such a weak result, Victor Yushchenko is determined to stay in politics.

People blame him for being a weak and unprofessional politician. He is burdened with the guilt for political instability, corruption and the scale of the economic crisis. The jokes about him declare that the only thing he knows about is how to deal with bees and the history of

Cossacks. Yushchenko, certainly, did not meet the high expectations raised by the Orange Revolution and soon became the victim of his own success. The same phenomenon happened to Lech Walesa, leader of the Polish opposition movement. The Orange Revolution's story very much resembles a similar division of the Solidarity movement in Poland. It looks as if the further fragmentation of the pro-democratic movements in the Central and Eastern European countries is a standard factor of the democratic transition process. Placing all the blame on Yushchenko is the easiest way to get rid of the frustration caused by the turmoil of transition and by the economic crisis. But his presidency has confirmed Ukraine's commitment to the democratic values praised at the time of Orange Revolution. Yushchenko did not drift towards dictatorship although he confronted some of the Orange Coalition members and twice dissolved parliament. He was inconsistent in his political decisions. In spite of his promises he did not make a clear break from his predecessor's past. He failed to investigate cases such as the wild privatization from the Kuchma era as well as the murder of the opposition journalist, Georgyi Gongadze, and the assassination attempt aimed at Yushchenko himself through dioxin poisoning in 2004.

During his term Ukraine began its not very successful affair with the European Union and with NATO and developed a free media and a strong civil society sector. A middle class has been created and free market economy has also grown up, challenging the mindset of big oligarchs, who still influence the country's politics. He did not manage to combat corruption and to reform the country. The constitutional division of power pushed him into ongoing battle with the government and parliament causing an overwhelming feeling of frustration among Ukrainians. But under his presidency Ukraine became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which has anchored Kyiv in the Western economy.

He will probably be remembered as the father founder of modern Ukrainian identity. Lacking sufficient courage and parliament's support for launching fundamental reforms, Yushchenko concentrated on history and the process of building up the national identity. As a reference point he has chosen different moments of Ukrainian history – from promoting the ancient Trypillya culture, through Cossacks hetmanat's state, lost to Russians at the Poltava battle, to Semen Petlura's 1919–1920 war for independence, the 1932–1933 Holodomor (artificial famine in then USSR) and the OUN movement lead by Stefan Bandera. His concept of nation was based on values not commonly shared by the Russian speaking (and psychologically Soviet) Eastern Ukraine. Under his presidency the Ukrainian language became more widely spoken and was legitimized as the only official language of the state. In such a situation it did not come as a surprise that Ukrainian-Russian relations deteriorated.

After the Orange Revolution Ukrainians became enthusiastically interested in travelling westward, and foreign tourists and western investment found the Dniepr River country very attractive. The disappointment came with the expansion of the Schengen visa regime to Central European countries and with the crisis. Somebody had to take the blame – Yushchenko was well suited as a target of this frustration because he did not care much about his own PR image.

His efforts to strengthen the Ukrainian position in the Black Sea region and to build a coalition of countries supporting democracy and counter balancing the influence of Russia have also failed (Community of Democratic Choice). His partner and personal friend – Georgian president Michael Saakashvili – faced growing opposition in his own country, then Georgia was invaded by Russian troops under the pretext of retaking Tskhinvali in

August 2008. Moscow managed to demonstrate its proactive role in the region leaving other countries in the role of reactive follower. At this point the Ukrainian-Russian relations reached their hottest level. Yushchenko demanded a withdrawal of Russian Black Sea Fleet from the Crimean port of Sevastopol by 2017 and accused Moscow of distributing Russian passports to the inhabitants of Crimea.

One might say that the record of Yushchenko's real achievements is not very impressive, but certainly he will be remembered as a democratic president who was confronted with the challenges he simply could not stand up to. He was not a charismatic strong man with a strategic vision, his background was accounting and finance. He failed the test of calculating in global political terms and in leading his country in the very difficult time of transition and crisis. Paradoxically, his term in the office paved a way for his old rival Victor Yanukovich (whose manipulation of the voting results initiated the Orange Revolution) to win fair and democratic elections this time round.

The Western Syndrome of Ukrainian Fatigue

The potential of the Orange Revolution was not fully realized for both internal and external reasons. The use of the best "carrot", namely the prospect of EU membership, which worked well in the case of Central European countries, was not forthcoming due to old members' objections as well as misgivings about possible Kremlin reaction. Instead, the EU proposed a new programme called the European Neighborhood Policy for Ukraine and for other non-EU states. It is a flexible, policy-driven instrument designed to support sustainable development and approximation to EU policies and standards on the basis of the agreed priorities in the ENP Action Plans. Kyiv's reaction was one of disappointment and frustration; Ukrainians considered themselves to be an European nation not the neighbors of Europe as is the case of Maghreb countries. Although Ukraine accepted funding from ENPI (European Neighborhood Policy Instrument) there was no widespread information of the structure of this assistance within the country. In many cases even the staff of governmental agencies did not know that part of their budget was coming from ENPI funds. The monitoring mechanism was weak and not transparent which led to an impression that European Commission bureaucrats had made a deal with their Ukrainian colleagues on transferring funds to Kyiv on the basis of the following mutual understanding: we pay you, you can spend it as you like and we do not ask but instead you must give up the rhetoric on prospective EU membership. Such an approach didn't stimulate a genuine drive for modernizing the country.

The internal reasons: lack of consensus between the main political factions in Ukraine, corruption, stagnation and the deferral of necessary reforms resulted in the birth of "Ukrainian fatigue" syndrome in the West. At the same time a symmetrical syndrome of "EU fatigue" has been born in Ukraine deepening the frustration and giving ammunition to supporters of the "pragmatic" approach of the Party of Regions.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) – a new Polish-Swedish initiative was announced on May 23rd, 2008. Polish diplomacy secured the support of Stockholm for proposing to Brussels an upgrade of ENP (European Neighborhood Policy). Soon afterwards, the events in Georgia demonstrated the weaknesses of the ENP so that new ideas were needed for strengthening

the EU offer in the Eastern dimension. The EaP covers six Eastern partners: Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Belarus. Ukraine has welcomed this new initiative, finding it more convincing and attractive. It should be stressed that Brussels also addressed the new offer to the civil society inviting NGO organizations to form an EaP Civic Forum consisting of EU and EaP partners. The launch of the EaP initiative raised a skeptical response from Russia. The Kremlin claimed that EaP is aimed at undermining Russian interests in the region defined by Moscow as the “close neighborhood”.

In spite of “Ukrainian fatigue” in the EU and “EU fatigue” in Ukraine Kyiv continues the advanced negotiations with Brussels on Association and on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement. President Yanukovich paid his first foreign visit to Brussels canceling his previous plan to meet the Russian leaders in Moscow. This shows that the ties to the EU and access to available funding is the number one priority for the new Kyiv administration. EU leaders are happy with Yanukovich’s “pragmatic” approach and appreciate with a sense of relief that he is not insisting on Ukraine’s EU membership prospects. This may be the reason why such prominent EU politicians showed up for his inauguration and then Kyiv was rewarded with a paragraph on potential membership in the last European Parliament resolution on Ukraine.

The former President Yushchenko’s efforts to join NATO structures have also failed because of resistance from Berlin and Paris. The Alliance’s Bucharest summit in April 2008 rejected the Ukrainian and Georgian applications for MAP (Membership Action Plan) while formulating a statement on leaving the open doors if the time comes. Then war in Georgia successfully erased the agenda of NATO expansion to the East for the time being. The question might be raised if President Putin while coming to speak at the Bucharest summit had already developed a plan for Russian intervention in Georgia or whether the summit’s results convinced him to do so.

Now, the newly elected Ukrainian president’s declaration on the neutral status of his country met with the enthusiastic response of most of the old EU member states and the phrase about his “pragmatic approach” became a winner in the minds in Berlin, Paris and Rome. Washington did not join in with the same enthusiasm, as it was busy working on the strategy for Afghanistan and dealing with the situation in the Middle East.

The Ukrainian-Russian Relationship – New Challenges

Russia has a major problem with coming to terms with Ukraine’s choice of becoming a sovereign state. Losing Ukraine is an overriding trauma. For many Russians Kyievan Rus has always been the spiritual centre of the Russian Orthodox tradition. Moscow without Kyiv becomes an organism lacking in spiritual essence. Its soul remains enshrined in the onion shaped golden copulas of churches on the hilly bank of the Dniepr. Paradoxically, these are the same churches which the Soviets had once tried to brutally destroy.

Yushchenko’s concept of building the national identity was constructed on the selected moments of common history when Ukrainians suffered most at the hands of Russians or later Soviets. He supported the regional Ukrainian tradition, promoted the Ukrainian language and claimed after researching his genealogy that his family could be connected with Ivan

Mazepa, XVIII century's hetman who tried to restore Ukrainian statehood joining Swedes against Russia. Yushchenko operated on the level of historical symbols and myths, characteristic in Slavic tradition (as Serbs did with the famous battle of Kosovo Polije). When he raised the issue of Holodomor, the famine engineered by the Soviets in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic on the orders of Stalin, an action which led to a death toll of around 3 million, and demanded that it be recognized as genocide, Moscow reacted with anger and frustration. Yushchenko's policy on joining NATO and then war in Georgia contributed to a deepening deterioration of Ukrainian-Russian relations. It looked as if the issue of Crimea could become the next hot spot in the Black Sea region.

Yushchenko's successor, Victor Yanukovich, represents the Russian speaking region of Donetsk and the completely different pro-Soviet tradition. At the time of the presidential election in 2004 he was supported by the Kremlin and President Putin congratulated him twice on winning the contest. He was perceived as a puppet of the Kremlin. Today, after his victory over Yulia Tymoshenko the situation is different than 5 years ago. Ukraine is not the same country and the Russian Federation is different. Ukraine has managed to develop the solid basis of a democratic system with a vibrant civic society sector. Russia went in the opposite direction strengthening central power and limiting individual freedoms. The oligarchic group that Yanukovich represents is not interested in becoming subordinated to Moscow. Moscow also treats the new Ukrainian president with a dose of distrust and skepticism, although right now it is difficult to say what kind of game they both play. The Russian leaders did not participate in Yanukovich's official inauguration, while he paid his first official visit to Brussels not to Moscow, in spite of a previous announcement. On the other hand he has made some confusing statements on the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Ukrainian participation in Nord Stream project and on prolonging a lease of the Sevastopol port to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Both capitals, Kyiv and Moscow, announced the improvement of Ukrainian-Russian relations, but the difficult economic situation of these countries will limit the scale of bilateral concessions. Russia is interested in gaining control over the Ukrainian energy transport system, while for Ukraine this is a very valuable asset in its dealings with the EU. Russia has at its disposal a powerful weapon of gas supply. Kyiv is interested in the re-negotiation of the current agreement with Gazprom and can use in this dispute an argument about prolonging the lease for Russian Black Sea Fleet in the port of Sevastopol. During his visit to Moscow Yanukovich received an invitation for Kyiv to join the custom union with Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. If he agrees, further negotiations with the EU on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement might come to a dead end.

In the wider region, Ukraine under Yanukovich will follow the Kremlin line. This means that neither the new pro-European Moldovan government nor Saakashvili's regime in Georgia can count on cordial relations with Kyiv. Also Europe should not expect to involve Ukraine in solving "frozen" conflicts in such places as Transnistria and in the South Caucasus. However Brussels should continue to try, at least, to push Kyiv in this direction.

It seems that the situation of Yanukovich might resemble that of his close neighbor, Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus, who is balancing between the EU and Russia. But the position of the Ukrainian leader remains less comfortable. He might face a dangerous confrontation with a powerful opposition led by Yulia Tymoshenko and resistance from well developed civic society. The real test might come soon. Following the last European Parliament resolution's paragraph on Bandera, he promised the Kremlin that

he would cancel his predecessor's decrees on granting the title of Ukrainian national hero to OUN leaders Stepan Bandera and Roman Szuchewych before the celebration of May Victory Day in Moscow. If he accedes to this, the internal division of Ukraine will deepen, opening the way for a fierce confrontation with the opposition and Western Ukraine. Yanukovich's team of advisors comprises people who know politics well and should understand that the new president's margin of maneuver is pretty narrow.

The New Government and Its Priorities

It looks as if the Party of Regions had prepared in advance the scenario for taking over power. Soon after the presidential election an amendment to the parliament's code of conduct was passed in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) changing the rules on forming coalitions. The opposition claimed that this change was unconstitutional, but thanks to this amendment the Party of Regions managed to set up a majority and propose a new cabinet. The majority consists of 235 out of the 450 deputies from the Party of Regions, the Communist Party, Lytvyn's Bloc and deputies of other factions (Our Ukraine and People's Self-Defence Bloc). The parliamentarians' predominant motivation to form this coalition was a fear of early elections which will be called in case of failure.

The new prime minister is Mykola Azarov, an ethnic Russian technocrat, one of Yanukovich's closest collaborators. He was the first deputy prime minister and finance minister from 2002 to 2005 and again from 2006 to 2007, and also served as acting prime minister for two short periods in late 2004 and early 2005. One of the British commentators described him as "the most Russophile member of the new cabinet". The pro-Russian faction in the government consists also of Yuriy Boyko, Minister of Fuel and Energy, and Dmytro Tabachnyk, Education and Science Minister, who promotes a vision of Ukrainian history closer to Moscow's heart. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is Konstantyn Hryshchenko, an experienced career diplomat, former Ambassador to US and Russia. He is expected to promote a policy of balancing between EU and Russia. The Deputy Prime Minister, Borys Kolesnikov, represents the interests of Donetsk oligarch Rinat Akhmetov's clan in government which supports closer links with Western economies. The another Deputy Prime Minister is Serhiy Tigipko, who managed to receive 13.05% of the vote in the first round of presidential elections due to his distance from Ukraine's political scene. He is responsible for introducing deeply needed economic reforms.

The structure of the government shows that its focus will be on the economy. Ukraine needs drastic reforms in order to reestablish its cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and to secure access to IMF and EU funds. It seems that this cabinet will run a policy similar to Kuchma's era – a two vector policy of cooperating with Russia and Western democracies. Such a concept will meet the expectations of politicians from the big EU member states, alleviating the allergy on Ukrainian membership requests. Azarov's cabinet will concentrate rather on completing the negotiations on Association and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement, talks with Moscow on renegotiating the gas contracts and securing access to Western funds. Such a policy, if effective, can, in fact, pave the way for preparing a good foundation to Ukraine's EU membership prospects. But the issue of fighting widespread corruption will not be a priority for Yanukovich's

people. This cabinet will continue a tradition of oligarchic bureaucracy's administration and will defend its vital interests.

The news about the formation of a new majority government in Kyiv cooperating closely with the president has raised hopes in the West that Ukraine will restore stability and start moving in the desired direction while not antagonizing its Eastern neighbor. But the President's mandate is weak and the new coalition's base looks fragile, so there remains a strong potential for a new political crisis.

Dynamics of Ukrainian-Polish Relations

The Polish policy of supporting Ukraine's European and transatlantic ambitions has turned to be largely counterproductive. The Polish leaders' verbal declarations on these issues did not bring Kyiv closer to Europe, but resulted in growing skepticism and widespread "Ukrainian fatigue" syndrome in most of the Western EU countries and in Brussels. Since Citizens' Platform (PO) formed the government Warsaw has slowly begun to reshape its Eastern Policy focusing more on strengthening its position within the EU. The Polish-Ukrainian bilateral relations have become less intensive in the verbal sense but focused more on practical issues such as the new Schengen visa regime, small trans-border traffic, economic cooperation and preparation for the Euro 2012 football championship in Ukraine and Poland. The discussion on the new visa regime showed the potential of Ukraine's frustration and its disappointment with the EU approach towards this country. As a result, the wider Ukrainian political elite stopped viewing Poland as its most important ally in Kyiv's efforts to join the EU and instead started intensive communication and lobbying directly addressed to Berlin, Paris, London and Brussels.

But Warsaw has not forgotten about Eastern Europe. Securing the support of Sweden, in 2008 Poland proposed to Brussels a launch of a new initiative – the Eastern Partnership. Soon the EaP was adopted as a new EU project covering 6 Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Belarus. The EaP proposal declared:

- The deepening of bilateral co-operation. An offer of more profound integration with the EU should be extended to all eastern partners. First and foremost Ukraine would benefit from this; others would follow according to ambition and performance.
- The creation of a permanent formula for multilateral co-operation complementary to the existing regional co-operation schemes.

The work has begun for putting the content of concrete project ideas into the framework of this new initiative, but the real success of the EaP depends on how seriously it is treated by all partners including also by the EU. One might even say that the EaP initiative is the final test of EU credibility in the region and if it fails Russia will benefit from this regaining full control over "its close neighborhood". While preparing for the EU presidency Warsaw should work on strengthening the EaP initiative and securing political support for it within the EU and among European Western allies.

A great chance for Poland and Ukraine to demonstrate to the world that both countries can effectively cooperate and properly manage the massive movement of people through the

EU/Ukrainian border is Euro 2012. The then agreed measures on easing the visa regime could be later implemented as a routine procedure.

Yanukovich's election to the office of Ukrainian President raised mixed feelings in Poland. In 2004 Poles strongly supported the Orange Revolution and now felt embarrassed by the recent Yanukovich remark on the "massive wave of Polish election monitors who were coming together with Georgians and Lithuanians to support Tymoshenko". On the other hand, Warsaw had become disillusioned with the Orange camp performance and the political chaos in Ukraine, so the position was formulated that a change of the guard might bring something positive. Poland decided to give some credit to Yanukovich and prominent Polish politicians (Lech Kaczyński, Jerzy Buzek, Radosław Sikorski) attended the oath-taking ceremony in Verkhovna Rada.

A few days later the European Parliament passed a resolution on Ukraine welcoming the results of a democratic presidential election and rewarding Kyiv with a paragraph on the prospect of further EU membership for Ukraine. Unfortunately, thanks to the initiative of Polish group of euro-deputies this resolution contained also another paragraph commenting on the last decree of outgoing president Yushchenko on granting the title of Ukrainian national hero to OUN ideologist Stepan Bandera and requesting condemnation of such act if Ukraine really wants to be treated as a democratic country. Such a move was received by the predominantly most pro-European population of Western Ukraine as interfering with its internal affairs and contributed to rising new tensions between Poland and Ukraine. Western Ukrainian frustration with the "blue" Yanukovich's election to the office got new fuel poured on it. Until now the controversy on past events from World War II, when Ukrainians clashed with Poles, was dealt with by historians and by some marginal fundamental groups trying to realize their narrow political objectives. Now Poles, like Greeks in the case of Macedonia, used the EU for their historical debates and this kind of "toxic memory" poisoned the main stream. This put Yanukovich in a very difficult position. Although he promised while visiting Moscow to cancel his predecessor's decrees on granting the title of Ukrainian national hero to OUN leaders Stepan Bandera and Roman Szuchewych before the celebration of May Victory Day in Moscow, he knows well that such decision will increase tensions between West and East of the country, deeply dividing the Ukrainians.

It seems that in this situation Poles and Ukrainians have to cope with this issue in order to prevent further deterioration of bilateral relations. It is a pity that instead of focusing on the future and preparation for Euro 2012 championship Ukrainians and Poles will again get stuck in continuing the never-ending historical debate over their past, which should be left to historians and academics. The right question to be asked is who benefits from raising this topic at such high level, certainly neither the Ukrainians nor the Poles themselves.

Conclusions: what's next for Ukraine?

The EU should build working contacts with different political factions and regions in Ukraine, keeping in mind that Yanukovich's mandate is weak. In particular, Brussels should focus on economically less developed and now neglected pro-European Western Ukraine, which borders with the EU.

The EU should continue negotiations on Association and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement, testing the political will of the new regime in Kyiv. It should also strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of EU assistance programs and funds dispersal, encouraging Kyiv to prepare and then launch necessary reforms aimed at modernizing the country, such as structural financial reform, judiciary, agriculture and decentralization administrative reform. Negotiations should be speeded up on a realistic road map towards easing the existing visa restrictions as much as possible and finally establishing a visa-free travel regime. Special attention should be paid to engaging Ukraine in strategic bilateral energy security projects based on diversification of transport routes and energy suppliers and assisting Kyiv in modernization of its energy system while promoting at the same time energy efficiency policy. One of the top EU priorities should be building of people to people contacts through offering stipends for Ukrainian students and scholars in EU countries and setting up relevant youth exchange mechanisms. The EU should also broadly involve civil society organizations from EU and non-EU partner countries in the work and further development of the EaP initiative, since their recommendations might offer a good ground for developing new, important for regional stability projects.

EU member states and partner countries should concentrate on important regional security issues and stimulate Ukraine to play a more proactive role in the Black Sea Region. A way has to be proposed to engage Turkey in cooperation with EU regional initiatives (including EaP) because without active participation of Ankara it is impossible to solve the problem of “frozen conflicts” in the Black Sea region and strengthen its security. A good point of departure is the fact that Ukraine and Turkey share similar strategic objectives in this region and are both interested in the EU membership. Although at present Kyiv’s relations with Bucharest are not good, Ukrainian-Romanian effective cooperation should be encouraged and stimulated in order to ease the tension between Moldova and Transnistria and to develop mechanisms of conflict resolution. While working with Kyiv EU should demonstrate to Moscow that bordering with democratic, secure and stable Ukraine is beneficial for Russia and other countries of the region. The EU, in cooperation with NATO, should also prepare a plan for a black scenario of possible conflict and deepening chaos spreading through the region, although the chances for such a scenario are at the moment low.

While preparing for the EU presidency Warsaw should work on strengthening the EaP initiative and securing its political support within the EU and among European Western allies. Poland could initiate an establishment of a group of “Ukraine’s Friends”, which would be made up of the countries inclined to support Kyiv on its integration with Europe. This group would presumably be composed of the Baltic countries, some of the Nordics, the Visegrad 4 countries and the United Kingdom, but also of the non-EU countries: US, Canada, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Turkey. The Weimar Triangle might be a good political instrument for cooperating with Ukraine. Poland could initiate the revival of this initiative, this time targeting Eastern Europe. A plan might be to launch a Weimar Fund (in parallel to the International Visegrad Fund established in 2000), which would provide funding for multilateral programs supporting democratic changes in Eastern Europe. Such a Weimar Fund could make a significant contribution to the revitalization of the European and transatlantic democracy assistance efforts.

The joint organization of the Euro 2012 European football championships is a unique opportunity for cooperation at all levels between our two states and societies as well as for promoting the cause of Ukraine in the EU Member States. This cooperation should be given

the highest priority. In the economic field, state institutions must support Polish investment in Ukraine. We should encourage Ukraine to improve its legislation in such a way as to make business feel more secure and trade more effective. Solving the visa issue and easing the flow of people and goods across Polish-Ukrainian border is a top priority. These issues determine Poland's image and credibility in Ukraine.

In the wake of the Bandera debacle, strengthening the reconciliation process between Poles and Ukrainians remains an urgent challenge. One-sided historical narratives carry the risk of heightening tensions between our two societies, which can work to the advantage of third countries (Russia).



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