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Presidential Election in Ukraine: A Test of Democracy and People's Trust

On January 17, 2010 the first presidential election after the 2004 Orange Revolution will take place in Ukraine. The campaign has turned out to be quite tense and competitive. It is hard to predict who will win. Eighteen candidates have registered at the Central Election Commission (<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2010/WP0011>) so far, including the incumbent President Viktor Yushchenko. However, only two candidates – Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and the leader of the opposition pro-Russian “Party of Regions” (PoR) Viktor Yanukovich – have realistic chance for victory. The third place in public opinion polls is shared between Yushchenko, former parliamentary speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk and former National Bank Chairman Sergei Tihopko. The vote may go to a run off (unless electoral fraud occurs) as it is very likely that nobody will secure majority on January 17. The reasons for such forecast are manifold. People are worried and sceptic because their ideals of democracy, so vigorously proclaimed by the Orange coalition in late 2004, have not been realized and the country continues to suffer from low standard governance. After the August 2008 war in Georgia the

conflict between the once Orange coalition fellows – President Yushchenko and Premier Tymoshenko – has deepened. Tymoshenko moved to a more pragmatic and lately even accommodating Russia position, while Yushchenko strengthened his anti-Russian stance. This political infighting was further exacerbated with the advent of the economic and financial crisis which hit severely Ukraine and reduced its manoeuvres for stabilization. The downgrade of Ukraine from Western actors' priorities increased Moscow's chances to re-acquire the lost place in determining Ukrainian politics and led to a re-definition of politicians' visions. A general lack of consistent domestic and foreign policies and of a durable consensus on what national interests should be is displayed in the frontrunners' electoral programs and gives little hope that the situation can improve in the near future.

What went wrong after the Orange Revolution?

To some extent, the current political and social situation can be traced back to the 2004 events. The Orange Revolution was an expression of Ukrainian people's desire for democracy, justice and

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Abstract

The first presidential electoral campaign taking place in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution has turned out to be quite competitive. It is hard to predict who will win and a run off is very likely between Premier Tymoshenko and pro-Russian Yanukovich.

The reasons for such forecast are manifold. People are sceptic because their ideals of democracy have not been realized and the country suffers from low standard governance.

After the August 2008 war in Georgia the conflict between the once Orange coalition fellows – President Yushchenko and Premier Tymoshenko – has deepened. This infighting was exacerbated with the advent of the global crisis which reduced Ukraine's manoeuvres for stabilization.

The downgrade of the country from Western actors' priorities increased Moscow's chances to re-acquire its lost role in Ukrainian politics. A general lack of consensus on what national interests should be gives little hope that the situation can improve in the near future.

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freedom. It also showed a need to defeat the corrupt, authoritarian and old, almost unchanged, institutions inherited from Soviet times. It provoked a process of national self-reflection and re-assessment of the historical, social and political orientation of Ukrainian society. For the first time since 1991 it opened the way for civil society and middle class participation in the process of the country's democratization. However, «The elite change failed to produce a regime change – Orange parties came to power without clear vision of what needed to be done. Major political blocks continue to seek power-sharing arrangements behind the scenes ... political competition [continues to be] a zero sum game. Every elite group presents its own version of the 'national interest', while its actual political behaviour is primarily motivated by narrowly defined group and even industry-specific interests»¹. Therefore, reform of areas such as local self-government, decentralisation, land reform, reform in the energy, health and housing sectors, judicial reform, development of small and medium-sized businesses, was not properly carried out. These sectors do not always match political groups' interests and are too risky. Strategic national interests seem being reduced to the

¹ A. BOGOMOLOV - A. LYTVY-NENKO, *Ukraine's Bottom-Up Democracy*, in M. EMERSON - R. YOUNGS (eds.), *Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties*, CEPS 2009, pp. 79-86.

level of political bargaining chips.

Some even describe the 2004 events not as a watershed moment of the post-Soviet history of Ukraine but rather as a phase of its cyclic type of evolution. According to this view, after the post-USSR search of an own system of pluralist governance, at the end of the 1990s, during Kuchma's second presidential term, Ukraine entered an authoritarian regime. The 2004 Orange Revolution pushed the country toward a return to democratic values and standard of governance. But their implementation was somewhat spoiled by the instauration of oligarchic clans' power-sharing schemes. Parties are now instruments in the struggle for power between different financial-industrial groups². People's trust in domestic politics and enthusiasm started diminishing. Something more, those who were and still are in favour of a more rigid, "authoritarian" style of governance, thought more adequate to establish order in the country, may even prevail over those who in 2004 were freezing at the Maidan square to safeguard the unaccomplished and immature Ukrainian democracy. As a recent survey of social attitudes in Ukraine reveals, the appeal of a strong leader over democratic form of government in Ukraine is very marked while the approval of democracy has significantly decreased since 1991 passing from 72% of people's support

² I. TORBAKOV, *Going Round in Circles*, in «Russia Profile», January 5, 2010.

to 30% in 2009³. Unfulfilled promises, lack of transparency in policy-making, resistance to fight corruption, publication of fake income declarations, murky deals – all of this has contributed to people's growing scepticism.

Political infighting and negative effects of the global crisis

People's disenchantment with current politicians is further heightened due to two more factors: political infighting between President and Premier and their inability to cope with the economic and financial crisis. The once strong Orange camp, united as it was by democratic values and an expression of the emerging new political elite and culture, did not resist to the appeal of political and economic personal gains, which replaced its founding ideals. Instead of developing democracy and stabilizing the country, Yushenko and Tymoshenko split up and entered a period of daily reciprocal accusations of betrayal of country's interests, corruption, selling out national industrial complex and energy transportation grid, and so on. None of them achieved anything from such politics; instead a long-standing legislative instability and a significant worsening of Ukraine's image abroad were produced. These quarrels let the 2004 looser Yanukovich to

³ *Two Decades After the Wall's Fall. End of communism cheered but now with more reservations*, The Pew Global Project Attitudes, November 2, 2009, www.pewglobal.org.

take some advantages and to promote his own interests. He succeeded to block legislation when deemed inconvenient and to show that his presence on Ukrainian political landscape is vital, even for his previous rivals from the Orange camp. Something more, public opinion surveys project him as the country's next President. According to a poll carried out by the *Kiev International Institute of Sociology* between 12 and 24 December 2009, Yanukovich will walk away with 30% of the vote in the first round and 43% in the second round. Yulia Tymoshenko will get 16% in the first round and 29% in the run off. Viktor Yushchenko, will get just 3.5% in the first round⁴.

As mentioned above, the economic and financial crisis made more intolerable the situation of continuous political uncertainty. The country's output experienced its deepest drop owing to its dependence on commodity exports such as steel, and on external financing (IMF, see below); national currency is under pressure; public debt is growing while wages are still low and so it is consumption (see Table on Key Macroeconomic Indicators). The major complication is that the crisis was exploited for electoral gains and its negative effects were included into populist campaign slogans, rather than stimulating timely economic intervention and overall economic wisdom.

⁴ A. RETTMAN, *Ukraine election campaigns ignore EU relations*, «EUobserver», January 11, 2010, <http://euobserver.com/9/29238/?rk=1>.

Two telling examples of the last months of 2009 illustrate this: the law on social standards and the IMF refusal to disburse the final tranche due in November 2009 of its US\$16.4 billion stand-by loan aimed to alleviate the effects of the financial crisis on Ukraine. On November 1, 2009 a controversial law raising the minimum wage was signed by President Yushchenko despite the firm opposition of the government. According to the law, the minimum monthly wage will increase from the equivalent of \$84 to \$109 from January 1, 2010 and further in several stages to \$115 from December 2010. The following revisions of the law, as requested by the government, regarded only increases for pensions and private-sector wages and some small-scale social assistance, excluding wages for public-sector employees. The limited scope of the revisions was justified by Yushchenko as being an attempt to protect the poorest strata of the Ukrainian society but many view it as a populist move ahead of the presidential race. With an equally populist strategy, the government tried to reinforce its position by citing the analogous criticism over the issue expressed by the International Monetary Fund. According to the latter, these rises may lead to lifting up the already high inflation level or to significantly downsize the public sector workforce. The approval of the social standard law discredited the government of Tymoshenko towards the IMF, which ultimately decided not to pay out the tranche citing

lack of compliance with agreed loan conditions and high deficit in the 2010 budget (4% of GDP whereas the IMF estimates 8% of GDP)⁵. So far, even the 2010 budget has not been passed by the Parliament⁶, hence the fate of the IMF tranche will be decided after January 17 when the next parliamentary session is scheduled to take place.

The delayed tranche creates not only risks of considerable destabilisation and loss of confidence in the Ukrainian financial system and economy but it also results in missing resources to finance the growing budget deficit and to meet payments for the Russian natural gas imports. The government needs external financing as it is unlikely to raise the needed amount domestically. After the refusal of the IMF, the only option left for Kyiv was the EU, with whom Ukraine started negotiations on a €610 million loan. However, as long as the IMF financing is frozen, the EU too refuses to provide the loan to Ukraine.

⁵ On December 31, 2009 the IMF permitted the Ukrainian government to spend \$2 billion from the National Bank's gold and foreign exchange reserves (as of early December 2009 international reserves stood at a little over \$27 billion) to pay for Russian gas deliveries among other things. Naftogaz Ukrainy paid on time for December Russian gas deliveries.

⁶ Yushchenko blamed Tymoshenko for Parliament's failure to pass the state budget for 2010. However, this is only partially true as Tymoshenko's coalition does not control a majority in Parliament, so her budget bill could be easily blocked by the opposition.

Table 1: Key Macroeconomic Indicators

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009F	2010F	2011F
Nominal GDP, UAH billion	345.1	441.5	544.1	720.7	949.9	912.3	1032.4	1169.0
Real GDP, % change	12.1	2.7	7.3	7.9	2.1	-15.0	2.5	3.5
Consumption, % change	9.7	15.7	12.4	13.6	9.0	-15.9	2.4	4.6
Fixed Investment, % change	20.5	3.9	21.2	23.9	1.6	-53.6	6.1	8.0
Export, % change	21.3	-12.2	-5.6	3.3	5.2	-18.4	2.8	2.5
Import, % change	15.5	6.4	6.8	21.5	17.1	-35.3	1.9	6.1
GDP deflator, % change	15.2	24.6	14.8	22.7	29.2	13.0	10.4	9.4
CPI, % change eop	12.3	10.3	11.6	16.6	22.3	13.8	10.6	9.3
Current Account Balance, % GDP	10.6	2.9	-1.5	-3.7	-7.2	-0.6	0.1	-2.1
Terms of Trade, % change	3.5	8.3	4.9	9.8	6.1	-8.0	0.4	0.3
Budget revenues, % GDP	37.1	41.8	43.7	42.3	43.9	40.6	41.7	42.2
Budget expenditures, % GDP	41.5	44.1	45.1	44.3	47.0	47.6	45.7	44.6
Fiscal balance (w/o bank recap), % GDP	-4.4	-2.3	-1.3	-2.0	-3.1	-7.0	-4.0	-2.4
External debt, % GDP	47.1	45.3	50.4	58.6	83.6	92.6	82.4	72.0
Public and Guaranteed Debt, % GDP	24.7	17.7	14.8	12.4	20.1	36.7	41.7	40.7

Source: Ukrainian Authorities, WB projections

Source: Ukraine Economic Update, October 2009, World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/UKRAINEEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21845311~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:328533,00.html>

Does Euro-Atlantic scepticism equal a re-consideration of Russia's appeal?

In stark contrast to the 2004 mood, today Ukrainians appear for the first time sceptic toward the Euro-Atlantic community. From 2004 on, Yushenko misinterpreted what could have been a real democratic path for Ukraine. His politics reflected a conclusion that Ukraine needed Western allies to support its domestic smooth democratic advancement, while being an unflinching helm against assertive Russia. The country was ideally re-positioned from the post-Soviet space into new Europe, following the model of Central and Eastern Europe. However, the reliance that the West would counterbalance Russia was a risky assumption, on which to build on a long term foreign policy. Additionally, the issue of the country's commitment became somewhat a minor priority. Thus the reform

process gradually slowed. Such a dependency on external actors became too obvious in 2008. The NATO summit in Bucharest and the August war in Georgia (as well as the coming in 2009 of the US administration of Obama, who promoted a "reset" of relations with Moscow and favours a more balanced and pragmatic conduct in the region) definitively modified the balance of forces in the post-Soviet space. As result, Ukraine found itself lonely and disregarded in its ambitions to enter the NATO Membership Action Plan and the EU. True, in the case of the EU we observe a doubtful and not always constantly cooperative behaviour. «EU approach presumes that the region's numerous problems will somehow fade away, settling down on its own terms while the EU's policy continues to oscillate between cautiously measured engagement and

withdrawal»⁷ mainly due to Russia's factor. We often listen to statements emphasizing Ukraine's need to reform itself and then try to secure Euro-Atlantic integration but nothing about reciprocal Western incentives or strategies for doing so. «European leaders ignored not only the potential boost that a clear plan of integration could give to the Ukrainian elites, but also the possible exacerbation of the existing deficits as a result of disillusionment with the seemingly futile European path»⁸. Brussels still struggles (or it simply accepts its inability) to draw a clear vision on the country (see for example its latest policy called Eastern partnership) and avoids to address directly Ukraine's major setbacks. The EU-Ukraine summit held in

⁷ A. BOGOMOLOV - A. LYTUVY-NENKO, *Ukraine's Bottom-Up Democracy*, cit., pp. 85-86.

⁸ V. KULYK, *The End of "Euro-romanticism" in Ukraine*, «SWP Comments», 28, December 2009, p. 4.

Kyiv on December 4, 2009 did not produce a breakthrough moving the country closer to the West. An Association agreement was not signed (despite President Yuschenko's optimistic expectations and likely political achievement he would have gained ahead of the presidential race) because a free trade area accord⁹, an essential part of the agreement, was not ready. Ahead of the summit, the EU envoy Jose Teixeira stated that Ukraine had failed to reform after the break-up of the Soviet Union (meaning combating corruption and oligarchs' presence in chief political posts) and this is the reason of its current economic crisis. Teixeira warned that a free trade agreement would be signed once main economic players agree to launch real economic reforms, possibly in 2011 or 2012. European Commission President Jose Barroso criticized the Ukrainian leadership for slow reform and said that Ukraine should move from words to deeds after the presidential election.

Is it only the EU approach to justify the end of Euro-romanticism? Probably not. The reconfiguration of powers in the post-Soviet space created with the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 explains the rest of the story and reveals a twofold change: President Yuschenko strengthened further his anti-Russian views (while still hoping for a re-

thinking on the part of the West) whereas Tymoshenko during and in the aftermath of the war in Georgia preferred a neutral, then pragmatic and lately even friendly stance on Russia. Her (presumably pre-electoral) way of "courting and respecting" Moscow was often opposed by the Ukrainian President. Yuschenko, for example, suspects and calls for a full review of the agreements on Russian gas supply to Ukraine and gas transit reached in January 2009 between Tymoshenko and her Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, as well as their amendments signed in November 2009 between Gazprom and the Ukrainian state-run gas company Naftogaz Ukrainy¹⁰. Whatever the criticism from her opponents, Tymoshenko succeeded to avoid the kind of confrontation with Russia that led to the crisis in Ukrainian-Russian relations in the winter of 2008-2009, and to ensure that heating supplies to the electorate are not cut off. She also managed to adjust some of the disadvantages for the Ukrainian part on the basis of an apparently friendly gesture by Putin. In fact, November 2009 amendments relate to two aspects. First, they formalize earlier verbal promises that Gazprom would not fine Ukraine for consuming much lower

volumes of gas in 2009 than agreed in January 2009. Second, Gazprom has reduced Ukraine's import commitment for 2010 to 33.75 billion cubic metres, and has consented to relax the take-or-pay commitment, so that Ukraine can consume up to 20% less gas without incurring fines. Although both these amendments can be assessed positively as they reflect Ukraine's real needs and possibilities, two further questions remain unanswered: the mismatch between import needs from 2011 onwards and the issue of how Ukraine will pay the gas import bills.

The political support displayed by Putin *vis-à-vis* Tymoshenko should be viewed as a pre-election strategy of Russia to show readiness to inaugurate a new relationship with Ukraine (especially after the harsh tone of the August 2009 President Medvedev's open letter to President Yuschenko): one based not on energy leverages or power tactics but on strategic and, if possible, friendly relationship¹¹. Why is Moscow so confident that such an approach toward Kyiv can actually work after the painful 2004 episode? Today's Russia is aware of its different to 2004 Ukrainian presidential election status in international affairs. In addition, Western actors who support Ukraine's Western integration are steadily shrinking. Some even optimistically talk about Ukraine as being «left out in the cold [so it may] have to turn to Moscow rather than Brussels for military protection,

⁹ Differences over sanitary norms in agriculture, intellectual property rights, trade quotas and the EU's refusal to allow visa-free travel impeded the signing of the free trade zone agreement.

¹⁰ In early January 2010 he even affirmed that 70% of Ukraine's gas transport system does not belong to the country (but to Gazprom) and that the agreements with Russia will lead to the bankruptcy of Naftogaz with the subsequent lost of Ukraine's energy and economic independence.

¹¹ The very fact that energy agreements are signed for a ten-year period confirms this thesis.

becoming part of the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) rather than NATO. Ukraine's presidential election might well put a decisive end to the country's NATO hopes if a more Russian-oriented leader wins. Now, the CSTO's expansion to the West seems far more likely, and at the same time, Russia's relations with NATO are flourishing¹². Another reason is that the Orange Revolution, once feared by Moscow as an American project aiming the long-lasting destabilisation of the countries along Russia¹³, did not succeed in building a political elite, culture and governance standards, which would have once and for all disrupted the links with Moscow. The latter, on the contrary, succeeded in "convincing" Ukrainian presidential candidates that they should take its concerns into account. This, in Russia's view, is a sufficient basis for launching good neighbourly relations. The appointment of Petro Poroshenko, a former key ally to Yushenko, to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs is symptomatic of the recent trend in Ukrainian government politics of a greater engaging with Russia. Poroshenko stressed that the Russian direction will be a priority of his foreign policy

and clarified that relations with Russia should be «less emotional, more pragmatic and equal».

In addition to these developments, if we take into account the presence in Ukrainian politics of the pro-Russian Yanukovich, it seems that today there is an asymmetry in «foreign policy statements and Ukraine [is getting] closer to Russia than to the West. This is not to say that foreign policy will be drastically reoriented from the West to the East and Ukraine will discontinue its participation in existing European co-operation frameworks [but that a new] balancing act [is likely to occur]. Relations with Russia will become as important as those with the West, and the emphasis will be shifted from mutual respect and benefit to partnership or even friendship»¹⁴. In fact, pragmatism and real balancing of foreign actors' influence, not just sway politics or provisional electoral approaches, should be the next step of Ukrainian post-Soviet evolution in order to avoid that the country becomes a bone of contention between the West and Russia. If correctly carried out, pragmatism may in the long term boost stability and democratic advancement.

Fragmentation of national priorities

On January 17 Ukrainians will have to deal also with a clear-cut and somewhat fragmented vision on national foreign policy priorities. The electoral

programs of the five leading candidates mentioned above seem all one-sided, not exhaustive and lacking a long term perspective. Furthermore, considering that it is likely that no candidate will immediately achieve the required majority and hence the future president will have to seek support from other parties in the Parliament, perhaps with different positions, it appears that the post-electoral period may present some difficulties in finding consensus on national interests. This refers to Yushenko and Yanukovich's programs. **Viktor Yanukovich's** election program "Ukraine For the People!" is based on policies he and his party have previously supported, namely a foreign policy according to which Ukraine is a non-bloc state pursuing its "national interests" with a pro-Russian orientation. Additionally Yanukovich follows faithfully the Russian position of blaming Ukraine's President for the deterioration of bilateral relations with Russia (he shares President Medvedev's criticism on President Yushchenko; he has also adopted Moscow's position on the Georgian leadership, initiating a parliamentary commission investigating the supply of arms to Georgia; Yanukovich also supports Russia's lobbying effort to extend the Russian Black Sea Fleet lease of Sevastopol beyond 2017; and he backed the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia)¹⁵. Yanukovich does

¹² S. SHUSTER, *Eastern Europe's Third Wheel. NATO and Russia are getting closer - and leaving Ukraine out*, in «Foreign Policy», December 14, 2009, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/12/14/eastern_europes_third_wheel?page=0.0.

¹³ V. KOROVIN, *SeShA poidot na raskol Ukrainai*, in «Rossia Segodnia», December 4-10, 2009, p. 11.

¹⁴ V. KULYK, *The End of "Euro-romanticism" in Ukraine*, cit.

¹⁵ Torbakov believes that «there are no pro-Russian political forces in Ukraine. Neither President Tymoshenko, nor President

not reject the idea of a common market with the EU (relations with Brussels should be pragmatic, not Euro-romantic) but prefers to establish such one with the Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He is unlikely to pursue alternative sources of energy in order to reduce Ukraine's dependency on Russia and he might try to involve Russia in the modernization of Ukraine's gas transport grid¹⁶. Unlike his previous 2004 centrist-patriotic electoral platform, today **Viktor Yushchenko** is a nationalist and even more pro-Western than in 2004. His election programme makes no direct reference to NATO but aspires to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic system of collective security together with European neighbours. Regarding the EU, he only speaks of a visa-free regime and membership, overlooking the free trade area agreement. However, his presidential mandate was characterized by a widening gap between rhetoric and substance, frequent government turnovers, lack of collaboration

Yanukovich would be prepared to do Moscow's bidding. Both are pragmatic politicians who will be pursuing Ukraine's interests as they understand them, not Russia's. Both Ukrainian front-runners are representatives of powerful industrial-financial groups that are viciously competing with their Russian opposite numbers in the world markets». See I. TORBAKOV, *Going Round in Circles*, cit.

¹⁶ T. KUZIO, *Ukrainian Presidential Candidate Viktor Yanukovich: Foreign Policy Priorities*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 202, November 3, 2009.

between President and government, and grave political instability raising concerns in the West. All of this significantly lowered the level of trust of Ukrainian people in Yuschenko's capacity to deliver on his promises¹⁷.

It is different when talking about **Yulia Tymoshenko**. Lately she tried to slightly modify her previous Orange Revolution connotation, by adding a pro-Russian nuance, and to be more responsive to people's needs, disillusionment and to initiate building some kind of order in Ukrainian politics. Some playfully defined her Ukraine's Putin¹⁸. Her pragmatism has surely roots in the (pre-electoral) infighting with President Yuschenko but, if elected, may save her mandate. Her electoral programme «Ukraine will be victorious. Ukraine that is you» focuses mainly on integration in Europe entailing a strong commitment to reforms by Ukraine itself. It states: «I believe that we are capable of raising the level of European standards in democracy, human rights, standards of living, and political culture. And when we will have built Europe in Ukraine, Ukraine will become a member of the European Union». The pro-European course of her programme is primary based on domestic commitment to European standards. Euro-

¹⁷ T. KUZIO, *Viktor Yushchenko's Foreign Policy Agenda*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 230, December 15, 2009.

¹⁸ M. DELIAGHIN, *Vzgliad iz Rossii*, UNIAN, January 6, 2010, <http://www.unian.ua/rus/news/news-355488.html>.

peanization means modernization for Ukraine. More specifically, Tymoshenko's pressing goals are an Association agreement with the EU and a free trade agreement. The pro-European orientation however does not ignore the establishment of viable, good relations with Russia as well (see recent agreements with the Russian Premier Putin). The very fact that Putin backed her government in a critical moment in late 2009 is a sign itself that should be taken into account by the pro-Russian population of Ukraine. Her programme lacks any explicit reference to NATO; instead it states that any membership of Ukraine into a collective security system should be decided only on the basis of a referendum¹⁹.

The priorities of **Arseniy Yatseniuk**, thought to be a rising star of new generation of Ukrainian politicians, recall a search for Ukraine's identity. Yatseniuk advocates Ukrainian isolationism and "third way" stance. Yatseniuk calls for a new «Eastern European Union» of countries not given a membership option by the EU, which he defines as «Greater Europe». The latter is an alternative to Western and Russian integrationist projects and should focus on four joint projects in energy; transport and communications; industry and access to world markets, and on military-industrial complex. According to Yatseniuk, the

¹⁹ T. KUZIO, *Ukrainian Presidential Candidate Yulia Tymoshenko's Foreign Policy*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 211, November 16, 2009.

Greater Europe idea is rooted in the powerful geopolitical project, i.e. Kyiv Rus', which should be revived²⁰. It is easy to understand that such a vision is somewhat anachronistic and does not provide any answer or strategy on how to overcome the difficulties Ukraine is facing today.

Finally, the last candidate is **Sergei Tihpko**. He defines Kyiv's policy for the past five years as aimed to "participate in a cordon sanitaire" around Russia, a policy that has economically damaged Ukraine, weakened its position in the post-Soviet area, and turned Moscow into a powerful opponent of Ukrainian interests. Tihpko argues that the chimera of Euro-Atlantic integration has served to blind Ukraine to its real foreign policy priorities: multi-vector policy, refusal to seek NATO membership, normalization of relations with Russia, rebuff of seeking a political rapprochement with the EU, focus on pragmatic dialogue and "economic diplomacy", and establishment of constructive relations with neighbours such as Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Although he has little chance of winning the January presidential race, his statements reach all frontrunners. The idea refers to the historical and socio-ethnic fact that Ukraine is an ethnically-diverse nation, lying between Russia and the EU, and it should therefore avoid

choosing just one foreign policy direction. Following the EU or NATO overt refusal of a membership perspective, at least in the short term, a similar standpoint seems indeed appealing, especially at the run off race. Tihpko's priorities are an indication of a general trend of return from one-sided (pro-Western or pro-Russian) politics to a broader and more balanced one, giving Ukraine more room for manoeuvre.

Future scenarios

Most of the polls and sociologists predict the end of Yuschenko's presidential career while agreeing that the first two places will be contended between Tymoshenko and Yanukovich, who will re-run in February. The third place is most likely to be divided between Tihpko, Yatseniuk and Yuschenko. Yanukovich has established a clear lead in the opinion polls over Tymoshenko, whose popularity is suffering because of the economic crisis. However, it would be unwise to write off Tymoshenko. She is a good campaigner and a considerably more charismatic figure than Yanukovich. She is also a "predictable" partner for Russia, with whom Moscow has already showed to be able to come to terms (unlike Yuschenko). Her softer tone on Russia may provide her with some votes from pro-Russia Ukrainians. An additional drawback for Yanukovich is that he is not popular in central Ukraine, which has proved a crucial region in recent elections. Furthermore, Yanukovich's pro-

Russian orientation clearly cannot make him all-Ukrainians leader because a general discontent will persist in Western Ukraine. If he will be elected, he should take into consideration the implementation of a balance between Eastern and Western parts of the country. The major battle hence will be after January 17. The presence of so many candidates fragments the electorate and at the second round both Tymoshenko and Yanukovich will have to unite the failed candidates' voters on the basis of similarity of electoral programmes. Here the position of incumbent President will be decisive as he has three options: support Tymoshenko, support Yanukovich, or call on his supporters not to vote. As a result, the run off may change the initial combination of candidates. The third place will be important in terms of support or hindrance of post-election policies' implementation. Moreover, the candidate positioned third will have a sufficient leverage to bargain for some strategic institutional posts.

Unlike the 2004 election where Yuschenko and the Orange coalition gained an indisputable legitimacy to govern, in 2010 election such a scenario will not occur. Whoever is to win the presidential race, he/she will not be able to rule solely by him/herself as there will be insufficient social and moral support for doing so. People's scepticism, tiredness of political infighting and loss of trust in politicians will be a central factor in the upcoming poll and a powerful sign of not fully functioning democracy. This is

²⁰ T. KUZIO, *Ukrainian Presidential Candidate Arseniy Yatseniuk's Foreign Policy*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 215, November 20, 2009.

why besides different guesses on who will be the winner, a crucial issue is the percentage of votes the winner will be able to gather in order to deliver on electoral promises. Indeed, it may be tempting for the winner to initiate an early parliamentary election so as to consolidate his/her power. Such a move, however, will not be viewed positively and social unrest could destabilize further the country. An alternative may be a realignment of political forces within the existing parliament – an even more difficult task. To finish, the 2004 election was a test of Ukraine's (as a nation) willingness to break with the practices of the Soviet-style governance. The 2010 election will be a test for Ukrainian politicians' capacity to restore people's faith that democracy can still survive in Ukrainian political conditions.

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