



# COMMENTARY

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## Democracy Advances in Ukraine

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With reports of 31 to 33 percent of the vote for former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's Party of Regions, 22 to 24 percent reported for the Tymoshenko Bloc led by Orange coalition former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and 12 to 15 percent for the Our Ukraine Party of President Viktor Yushchenko, the Ukrainian voters, as expected, have sent a message of disappointment and criticism to the Yushchenko government.

However, since it was a coalition of the forces of Tymoshenko and Yushchenko that combined in the presidential elections of late 2004 to poll a majority of support for Yushchenko as president, the key number in these preliminary results is the combined vote for the Orange coalition parties, which is 34 to 39 percent. Although this result is hardly a resounding endorsement of the Ukrainian leadership in the last year, it is certainly not a reversal of voter sentiment away from the parties that advocate reform, modernization, and a European integration course for Ukraine.

If the results enable the Orange coalition parties to cease their recriminations and instead form a parliamentary coalition majority that can choose a coalition prime minister to head a renewed reformist government – which the preliminary results certainly suggest they should be able to do – the outcome should be on balance a major success for the people of Ukraine in their ongoing post-Soviet transition. They will have voted in free and fair elections without illusions, held their government accountable for its policies, and signaled the policy course they expect of their government. That, more than the electoral victory of this or that politician, is what will make Ukraine a successful European democracy.

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