Ukraine's Election
The Role of One International NGO

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Many tales of Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" are now being told. The drama of mass demonstrations, East-West confrontation, poisoning of a political candidate, great power diplomacy, and political deals has drawn and kept the world's attention. This is a report on one part of this story, less high profile, yet part of the reason why fraudulent elections did not stand in the fall of 2004. It is one small, but perhaps not unimportant, part of the historical accounting of the quiet work undertaken throughout 2004 to support the conduct of free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine.

In May and October 2004, the Russia and Eurasia Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) conducted three high-level delegation visits to Kyiv with the goal of supporting the conduct of free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine. Three senior former U.S. government officials—Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Hunter, and Thomas Pickering—traveled to Kyiv to meet with Ukrainian leaders, politicians, businesspeople, and scholars from universities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The objective of the project was to engage with influential Ukrainians to deliver the message that the conduct of the 2004 elections would have a major effect on Ukraine's foreign relations and the opportunities for constructive economic and political engagement with the United States and that influential Americans were paying close attention. As a private, nongovernmental, bipartisan public policy institution, CSIS neither makes U.S. policy nor takes positions. It does, however, undertake research and activities aimed at improving U.S. understanding of the international system and improving understanding of U.S. policy abroad.

Because of the attention and high drama of much of the reporting and commentary on the 2004 Ukrainian elections, it is important to set out at the beginning what this account is not about as much as what it is about. This is not an account of American intrigue to defeat Viktor Yanukovych and install Viktor

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Yushchenko as president. It is not about U.S. government money clandestinely funneled to Ukrainian political parties or NGOs. It is not about a policy driven by Russophobia or neocontainment. It is also not about a major U.S. foreign policy strategy focused on Ukraine as a high priority.

Instead, it is the story of foreign policy and democracy promotion experts inside and outside the U.S. government who believed that Ukraine is important to U.S. national interests, that U.S. interests would best be served by a democratic Ukraine with a market economy increasingly integrated into global and European markets, that the conduct of free and fair elections were vital to such a Ukraine regardless of which candidate actually would win such elections, and that while the odds looked to be stacked against free and fair elections, there was a chance that efforts by NGOs as well as governments could make a difference. It is also a story of how many of those experts and officials were as concerned and committed to Russia's successful global and European integration as they were to Ukraine's, and their assessment that a prosperous and integrated Russia is more likely to be successful if Russia is a geopolitical neighbor, major trading partner, and even strategic ally of a democratic, transparent, and prosperous Ukraine.

Background

In the fall of 2001, the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program convened an informal working group on the upcoming Ukrainian parliamentary elections. Unlike topics relating to Russian security, politics, and economics, there are no established seminar series or forums for experts on Ukrainian affairs in the Washington think tank community. With the help of Richard Murphy, a senior counselor at CSIS with a long career in U.S. foreign policy matters, I convened the working group in order to bring together the people within and outside the U.S. government with expertise and interest in Ukraine. My objective was twofold. The first goal was to create an expert community network in Washington, D.C., by establishing a forum for work on Ukraine to support both scholarship and policy analysis. By creating a working group whose members were leading experts in the scholarly, NGO, and policy communities, we would enable them to meet regularly, and we would have a venue for public seminars and lectures as well. In addition to our private working group meetings, for example, we hosted Carlos Pascual, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, and Stephen Pifer, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state, for public lectures on U.S. policy toward Ukraine.

The second goal was to meet regularly in the months leading up to the Ukrainian parliamentary elections in March 2002 to share information, ideas, and experience on measures to support the conduct of free and fair elections. Individuals with positions in the U.S. government took part as observers; they did not represent the views of the U.S. government nor did they represent official U.S. government policy. Participants from the think tank, university, and NGO communities offered their expert insight and knowledge and their experience, since many of them worked extensively in the region.

In our discussions, one of the most striking recurrent themes was the extensive use of various administrative resources by Ukrainian state authorities during the campaign months before actual elections. Aspects of direct vote fraud are well known in many countries: how legitimate ballots can be replaced by fraudulent ones, how voter rolls can be manipulated to eliminate some voters and create false ones, how official results can disappear on their way from polling place to central election reporting offices and be replaced by falsified reports that report inflated numbers for official candidates. But in the discussions it became clear that as important as preventing these violations on election day is insuring the procedural guarantees of fair elections in the months before the polls even open. Preventing the intimidation of candidates or parties, training election monitors, developing balanced and professional election commissions, creating the capacity for professional and credible opinion and exit polls, insuring a diverse and free media—all these nonglamorous aspects of a democratic process are as vital to democracy as the more dramatic conduct of the elections on voting day.

It also became clear that the attention of experts to the conduct of elections is not enough. The Ukrainian government suffered no significant negative consequences from its use of administrative resources during the parliamentary campaign. One of the lessons we learned was that the working group was a valuable resource for educating and informing ourselves, but its reports and analyses were largely irrelevant to the conduct of the election itself.

The Project

The working group met occasionally through 2002 and 2003 and more regularly beginning in late 2003. Our goals were again, at minimum, to bring together expertise on Ukraine and to enable those experts to exchange information and reports on Ukrainian political developments and projects to support Ukrainian civil society and the electoral process. By early 2004, it was clear that the same pattern of state use of administrative resources to skew the political campaign in the months leading up to the actual elections would be a problem. In addition, it was not entirely clear that President Leonid Kuchma would step down after two terms as he was constitutionally required to do, raising the possibility that mere distortion of the democratic process would not be the primary story of the 2004 presidential elections.

Once again, our discussions made clear that Ukraine had the potential to conduct free and fair elections in 2004. Ukrainian civil society was far more developed, active, informed, and organized than civil societies in many other post-Soviet countries. The parliament represented diverse political and social forces, and Ukraine's political scene included many strong figures leading genuinely popular parties. Both domestic Ukrainian and international nongovernmental organizations were active in training nonpartisan groups in how to monitor the electoral process. The Committee of Voters of Ukraine was an active and professional democracy monitoring NGO. Ukrainian sociological institutes had the capacity to conduct credible public opinion polls and exit voting studies. International organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-

operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had expertise on Ukraine and were paying attention to the upcoming political season. U.S. NGOs such as the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy were working in a nonpartisan manner with Ukrainian political parties across the spectrum to support their programs to play a role in conducting a transparent and legal election.

Despite all these factors, which created the capacity for Ukraine to hold truly free and fair elections, the balance of resources clearly still favored those in power, should they be determined to conduct unfair and fraudulent elections. The missing element in attempts to support Ukrainian democracy, therefore, was a serious and credible effort to speak to Ukraine's political and economic leaders to convince them that it was not in their interests to violate the rules.

Through my discussions with U.S. government officials, I knew that several high-ranking U.S. government officials were planning to visit Ukraine and deliver this message to Ukrainian leaders inside and outside the government. Through my discussions with Ukraine experts and Ukrainians, I also knew that many in the Ukrainian leadership did not believe this message to be credible, because it was the view of a narrow and noninfluential "democracy cabal" in the U.S. Department of State. The view in leadership circles, I was told by several leading analysts, was that the real focus of U.S. policy was the war in Iraq and that the Ukrainian leadership had earned itself a free pass on the conduct of elections because it had contributed 1,600 soldiers to the coalition forces in Iraq. Furthermore, while democracy activists, NGOs, and a few international organizations paid attention to the 2002 parliamentary elections, in general the sense was that the conduct of elections in the region was not a priority issue for the U.S. government and that senior U.S. officials would not, in the end, pay much attention.

As a result of these discussions, the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program proposed to undertake three high-level delegation missions to Kyiv in May through October 2004 to support the conduct of free and fair presidential elections. The first delegation in May was led by Zbigniew Brzezinski, CSIS counselor and trustee and former national security adviser to the U.S. president (1976–1980), accompanied by myself and Richard Murphy. Robert Hunter, former U.S. ambassador to NATO (1993–1998), led the second delegation. The third was led in mid-October by Thomas Pickering, former U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation (1993–1996) and former under secretary of state for political affairs (1997–2001). The project was supported by two private American foundations, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Smith Richardson Foundation.

The purpose of the series of delegations was to support the strategic goal of Ukraine's eventual integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, a long-term objective for which 2004 was decisive because the precondition for Ukraine's becoming a member of the community was that it take a decisive step toward democracy—and that meant free and fair elections. We argued in our grant

proposal to the supporting foundations: "It is vital that the Ukrainian leadership, political parties, and civil society be encouraged to initiate a truly free electoral process, and that they convey through free and fair elections their own determination to remain independent, to consolidate a genuine democracy, and to sustain a long-term commitment to NATO, the EU [European Union], the WTO [World Trade Organization], and other institutions of the Euro-Atlantic community."

We proposed that the delegation visits would be of relatively short duration (two to three days) but with high visibility. The delegations would plan to meet with the Ukrainian president and prime minister as well as other senior government cabinet ministers, candidates for political office, officials responsible for the conduct of Ukrainian elections, leaders of NGOs working to ensure free and fair elections, and scholars and experts on Ukrainian politics, society, and relations with its Western and Eurasian neighbors. The delegations would be available for appearances on Ukrainian television, and each delegation leader would deliver a major speech.

Instead of a single delegation of several prominent people, we believed that a series of high-visibility visits by key individuals, whose names carry weight in Ukraine for their influence and experience as former U.S. officials, would have a greater impact. Although visits by any one of these individuals would surely attract great attention in Kyiv, a series of back-to-back visits would ensure that the message in support of free and fair elections would be unlikely to be forgotten or easily dismissed.

Further, we argued that while every year of the post-Soviet transition is an important one, 2004 was crucial, primarily because the presidential elections would be a key transition point—perhaps *the* key point—for Ukraine's political and economic future. Free and fair elections, whatever their outcome, would enable Ukraine to choose the path of democracy, transparency, market reform, balanced trade, and foreign partnership and investment. It would be a major step in the creation of an institutional basis for cooperation with NATO, the EU, and the WTO, as well as economic and political relationships with Russia based on Ukraine's national and sovereign interests. These elections, we argued, "could cement Ukraine as a part of Europe, not apart from Europe."

In contrast, violation of Ukraine's constitutional processes, or violation of rules and procedures that provide the basis for free and fair competition would lead Ukraine down another path: away from Euro-Atlantic cooperation, and toward a corrupt political economic system. Powerful special interests would collude to entrench corrupt oligarchic interests and authoritarian rule.

Despite negative trends, we argued that Ukraine's leadership and society truly stood at a decision point and that it would be possible to encourage it to make the right choice to conduct internationally recognized free and fair elections. Despite incentives to grasp immediate gains and restrict the political process, the carrots the West could offer the Ukrainian leadership were very significant and valued by that leadership: WTO membership and the trade and investment it can facilitate, the benefits of a robust relationship with the EU leading to expanded trade and

investment with the prospect of membership, and building on successful military cooperation with NATO to extend to political cooperation and perhaps membership.

In addition, we argued, the Ukrainian leadership's interests in a strong, productive, and cooperative relationship with Russia would be served by a strengthening of Ukrainian democracy and its integration and cooperation with Europe and the United States. Russia could have a constructive relationship with Ukraine based on respect for sovereignty and mutual gain, but not unless Ukraine's political and economic system become more open, transparent, and based on the rule of law. Furthermore, should Ukraine embrace the principles of a democratic election process, the Russian leadership and society could similarly be encouraged to move toward democracy and transparency after observing the positive opportunities offered to Ukraine from the international community.

This case needed to be made to the Ukrainian leadership, we argued, as it contemplated these choices in 2004. The U.S. government would do so through official public channels. Influential private individuals could deliver the same message to the Ukrainian leadership. It would enhance the credibility of the official messages that there would be a significant opportunity lost if Ukraine failed to meet its international obligations to organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe to conduct free and fair presidential elections.

To reinforce the point that democracy is not merely about a few officials in top state positions, we sought to engage civil society as well as the Ukrainian government. Each delegation would participate in a roundtable with experts drawn from Ukraine's impressive think tank and scholarly community on the role of the upcoming elections in Ukraine's future as a European country, a goal many post-Soviet countries, including Russia, aspire to. Members of civil society groups—both in the activist and think tank spheres—would be invited to attend the discussions. Each delegation would include press availability with as broad a representation of different media outlets as possible.

Discussions during the actual meetings were, of course, private and cannot be recounted here. However, in all three cases public speeches and press statements were strongly consistent with the main messages in those meetings and serve as a basis for the summary of each visit related below. In all three cases, extensive Ukrainian press coverage reported on the substance of the visits, which were consequently a matter of public record. This essay, therefore, merely provides a context and analysis of what eventually proved to be a successful effort at democracy promotion.

Meetings and Activities

During the course of our visits in May and October 2004, we met with government officials and politicians including President Leonid Kuchma, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, Defense Minister Yevhen Marchuk, Viktor Yushchenko, Yulia Timoshenko, Oleksandr Moroz, Oleksandr Zinchenko, Volodymyr Lytvyn, former president Leonid Kravchuk, Viktor Pinchuk, Serhiy

Tyhypko, Roman Zvarych, Georgi Kryuchkov, Oleh Zarubinskiy, Oleksandr Zadorozhniy, Sehiy Holovatyi, Stanislav Nikolayenko, Valeriy Pustovoiytenko, Yuri Kostenko, Foreign Minister Konstantin Hryshchenko, Deputy Foreign Minister Oleh Shamshur, former foreign minister Boris Tarasyuk, former foreign minister Hennadiy Udovenko, former ambassador Yuri Scherbak, former ambassador Oleh Bilorus, and former ambassador Anton Buteiko.

From the NGO sector, we met with intellectual and policy leaders from the Center for Peace, Foreign Policy, and Conversion (Oleksandr Sushko), the Razumkov Center (led by Anatoliy Grytsenko and Leonid Polyakov), the Atlantic Council of Ukraine (Oleg Kokoshynski), the U.S.-Ukrainian Human Rights Bureau (Semyon Gluzman), and the Center for European and International Studies (Hrihoriy Nemyria). Zbigniew Brzezinski gave a speech at Kyiv-Mohyla University, Robert Hunter at the Atlantic Council of Ukraine, and Thomas Pickering at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

May Issues and Visit

Zbigniew Brzezinski delivered a consistent two-part message in public and in private. First, although individual Americans might have their own views about the candidates for president in Ukraine, such views or preferences do not matter. What matters, and what he cared about as a friend of Ukraine, is that the elections be free, fair, transparent, and recognized as such in the West. He used various examples to develop this message (e.g., the 2004 Mukhachevo mayoral elections were not free and fair and must not be a precedent for the October 2004 presidential elections; or, regarding the upcoming 2004 U.S. presidential elections and the Ukrainian elections, no one could know who would win, which is a good thing for the legitimacy of the democratic process). The point was consistently made in every single meeting, every press appearance, every gathering over meals, and every event.

Second, free and fair elections are a necessary condition for Ukrainian membership in the EU or NATO. Ukraine must convince the West that the country has made a strategic choice to become a European country. In addition, however, Ukraine must consistently and with determination seek membership in these organizations. International institutions will not seek out Ukraine; that is not how it worked for Poland, Hungary, or the Baltics. Ukraine must show determination and progress; then the invitations will follow. Ukraine must have a credible and effective strategy to prove itself determined and qualified as a nation. Furthermore, do not believe statements that Ukraine can never be a member. Fifteen years ago, many in the West declared that Poland could not be a member of NATO or the EU; ten years ago many of the same people were saying the Baltic countries could not be members. Membership in transatlantic institutions is certainly possible, but an aspirant country such as Ukraine has to demonstrate that it has made the strategic choice. And in the immediate term, that means Ukraine must conduct free and fair presidential elections.

In the meetings, several issues were of particular importance.

- First, it was striking that the starting point for all discussions was, in fact, free and fair elections. Although some outside the government were concerned that the government's public commitments would not be adhered to, the underlying premise of all the discussions was that all parties in Ukraine had an obligation to live up to those international commitments. Many officials and those outside government agreed that Ukrainian politics enjoyed a high degree of competition and contestation and that Ukrainian voters had a true degree of choice before them in the upcoming elections. It was duly noted that the international community was paying attention and that international observers as well as Ukrainians would have a role in monitoring the elections. On many occasions, our discussions noted that in the transition from modern Ukraine's first president, Leonid Kravchuk, the country had already established a positive precedent for a transition of power in accordance with the choice of Ukraine's voters.
- Second, an important issue in May 2004 was the stalled constitutional reform that would shift some powers from the president to the prime minister and parliament. We found broad support for the reform on the merits of creating a better balance of power within the political institutions of the state. The issue was appropriate timing and whether such a reform might be a device for the government in power to retain control after the elections, with the implication that it would be better to implement the reform after the 2004 elections.
- Third, in May 2004 we found that many outside the government believed it possible that constitutional or other changes might still be attempted to enable President Kuchma to run for a third term. This must be noted to emphasize how important it was for the eventual outcome that in fact this scenario did not materialize. Although later in the summer President Kuchma did choose to throw his support behind the candidacy of Prime Minister Yanukovych, in May it was by no means clear that he would. Ukraine's politics were not as polarized between opposition and the party in power as was unfortunately often represented in media coverage in November and December 2004. The leadership itself was clearly fractured and internally competitive, a fact that proved to be a positive factor at the end of 2004, when many officials within the government itself chose to abandon efforts to sustain the attempts at fraud in the November runoff. As early as May, our discussions clearly showed that the leadership was far from united in its determination to retain power even if Ukraine's voters chose differently.
- Fourth, while Yanukovych did not in the end obtain more votes than Yushchenko in free elections, in May (and then later in October) our private as well as public discussions made it clear that it was by no means impossible that he could win in free and fair elections. This may come as a surprise to many in the West, where the assumption is that Yanukovych was an unpopular candidate. In fact, some credible polls in 2004 gave him

a substantial plurality of the vote and clearly suggested a genuine contest between him and Yushchenko. Although the government did take numerous actions that have been documented to get fraudulent results, it was by no means clear that a genuine campaign with free and fair processes would result in a Yushchenko victory. Of course, committed partisan supporters of the opposition argued that Yushchenko would surely win given free and fair elections (and that is proved to be the case), but it is important to understand that there was good reason to believe that there was a genuinely competitive political process possible in Ukraine. The question, of course, is why the government chose to avoid that process by violating the conditions for fair elections beginning in the summer and carrying through the fall, and why the government conducted fraudulent elections in November, but that is perhaps a question for historians.

- Finally, striking in our discussions was the sense that the West was not doing all it could to encourage and make possible Ukraine's global and European integration. In May 2004, Romano Prodi had made a public statement that seemed to rule out Ukraine's membership in the EU. We found considerable and consistent concern, across all political views and economic interests, that the West was closing Ukraine off from European and global institutions. Many of the people with whom we met pointed out that it seemed strange that other countries in the post-Soviet space—Russia among them—had market economic status but that the West had refused to grant Ukraine this recognition, a crucial step toward membership in the WTO. Many dismissed the idea that Ukrainian participation in the Single Economic Space was itself an obstacle to Ukraine's broader global integration and made the case that Ukraine does not have to make an artificial choice between economic cooperation and trade with Russia on the one hand and Europe on the other: Ukraine can and should pursue both. As one senior official framed it, Ukraine's economy is export oriented, so therefore it needs to join the WTO, increase trade with Russia, and deal with the EU.

October Trips

By October, the issues had shifted somewhat. Several international organizations and observer missions had declared that the Ukrainian presidential elections had not been conducted in accordance with the standards of fairness. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued a statement expressing "great concern" that in the preelection period Ukrainian authorities had not met their obligations to: (1) ensure that no candidate is restricted in presenting his/her views and qualifications to the citizens, including conducting public meetings and events throughout the country as well as billboard advertising, and that all candidates enjoy unimpeded access to television, radio, and print media on a nondiscriminatory basis; and organize impartial debates between the candidates on state television; (2) guarantee that there are no harassments of media and journalists, and in particular that the moratorium on media inspections is

maintained by all controlling bodies during the election campaign; and (3) stop the practice of participation of civil servants in the campaign, and the use of public resources for the purpose of campaigning.

By October, these developments had also attracted the attention and concern of more officials in the U.S. government. Efforts began to shift from an emphasis on exhorting the Ukrainian leadership to live up to its commitments, to specific efforts to increase transparency through election monitors, observer missions, and other ways to focus international attention on the actual conduct of the upcoming elections. The goal was to reduce the opportunity for hidden fraud, increase the chances for exposing fraud, and raise the cost of fraud. This inspired, among other initiatives, the Ukraine Democracy and Fair Elections Act of 2004, introduced in the U.S. Congress by Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.). The bill noted that Ukraine has taken on the obligation to conduct such elections as a member of the OSCE, and it provided for specific sanctions against government officials should the elections fail to be conducted freely and fairly.

Similarly, the focus of our delegation meetings shifted. Since the issue of fair elections was moot by October 2004, our role was more importantly to signal and credibly demonstrate high-level and public attention to the elections. Ambassador Hunter and Ambassador Pickering consistently delivered messages emphasizing the very real opportunity in Ukraine for enhanced investment, political engagement, and security cooperation, but they also noted the obvious: that engagement with the West for Ukraine in all these dimensions would be affected by the conduct of the elections.

With the U.S. elections following the Ukrainian first round by a few days, our meetings and discussions in October were a golden opportunity to highlight how elections work in the United States and how the issues of genuine competition, commitment to process, and respect for rule of law are crucial to U.S. prosperity, security, and global power. Like Brzezinski, both Hunter and Pickering emphasized that the message was *not* that Ukraine must choose between Russia and the West, but that it did have to choose between democracy and retreat in its political development. And like Brzezinski, both Hunter and Pickering emphasized that they were not in Ukraine to favor one candidate over the other, but instead to highlight that for Americans, the single criterion to judge Ukraine's election would be whether it was free, transparent, and met the clear and universal international standards to which the Ukrainian government had committed itself.

As in May, we heard in our meetings and discussions that competition and differences within the Ukrainian leadership remained substantial and that in fact they might be increasing. Several of the people with whom we met pointed to indications that the administrative machine was eroding, the chances of being able to actually succeed in stealing the election were decreasing, and that important Ukrainian political figures were beginning to view the long-term development of free elections as a value to be upheld. We also heard from people both inside and outside government that there were encouraging signs that Ukrainian society itself was engaged and informed about what was going on. As early as the first week of October, we were told that civil society groups were increasingly optimistic that

large numbers of Ukrainian citizens would come out into the streets to protest if the government tried to report and implement fraudulent results. The numbers cited, however, were in the tens of thousands, not the hundreds of thousands that proved to be the case in November and December.

As a result, the importance of credible exit polling and public opinion polling, as well as election monitors and transparency in electoral commission procedures, played a greater role in our October discussions. Ukrainian polling firms and election monitoring groups would prove crucial in assessing whether the government-reported results matched with evidence of how Ukraine's citizens themselves reported voting and whether election results matched with, for example, the number of eligible registered voters. Through the work that had been conducted for years by Ukrainian and international NGOs in nonpartisan training of election monitors, Ukraine's civil society had developed this capacity and was ready to monitor its government's conduct of the elections.

An Assessment

The ultimate success of Ukraine in conducting free elections in which its citizens chose their president and in which all political forces respected that choice was due to many factors. The most important of these was the citizens of Ukraine, who were engaged, informed, and committed to the future of their country.

Another important factor was the nature of the Ukrainian political system itself, which by 2004 had developed as highly competitive and contested. Despite the use of state resources by the government in power, Ukraine's diverse political forces remained engaged, active, and competitive. This meant that in the end there was a credible opposition candidate. It also meant that many Ukrainian officials faced the choice of whether they would actively support the use of state power against the wishes of their own citizens or whether they would abide by the constitution and law, whatever outcome that might bring in a truly free election. It is to the country's credit that so many officials made the choice they did for Ukrainian democracy.

The role of the international community was marginal, but I think important. That role, including efforts such as the one I have described by CSIS, was to focus international attention on the importance of Ukraine, which made fraud more difficult to sustain and which gave Ukrainian citizens greater confidence that they were not alone. The international community helped to inform and educate Ukrainian citizens and officials on their rights and responsibilities and on how to build their own capacity for insuring that the government would be elected and controlled by its citizens.

In other words, the international NGO and government impact on the 2004 Ukrainian elections was to help Ukraine itself build the capacity for democracy. Democracy is not easy: it is uncertain; it requires turnover in government; it means tough competition including a free and competitive media; it involves money and financing of campaigns; and it requires a very extensive and competent system for rule of law. It is tempting to think that all this is too high a

price to pay for security, prosperity, and stability. Therefore, the constructive role that the international community played in Ukraine was simply to help a Ukraine that wanted to make the investment in democracy.

The ultimately successful conduct of free and fair presidential elections in Ukraine should be viewed as a positive chapter in global security. International support helped to train political parties, election monitors, media, and other democracy support groups in a nonpartisan fashion that created a true Ukrainian capacity not only to motivate Ukrainian society to demand free and fair elections, but provide the capacity to insure them. The OSCE played a vital role in providing a credible and legitimate international presence to deter and detect election fraud, as did the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. U.S. and European diplomatic commitment and engagement enabled the international media to report the story and to provide moral support and ultimately concrete mediation assistance to Ukrainian politicians and citizens demanding an honest election.

The next step for the United States is commitment to a long-term strategy of integration and reconciliation, and that must move to the forefront of U.S. policy toward Ukraine. There is no simple formula for integration: different European countries have chosen a different mix of international institutions and have worked to combine integration with preserving historic traditions and societal differences as they work toward cooperation and harmonization. The same successful approach should be adopted by the United States in outlining a future strategy to support Ukrainian integration. The first principle must be that the Ukrainian people themselves must choose how and to what degree they wish to integrate. But the United States for its part must be ready to work with the Ukrainian government to implement integration where the country has made the commitment and has the capacity. In the short term, that means eliminating barriers to Ukrainian trade that are already irrelevant, like the Jackson-Vanik amendment. It also means expeditiously moving to negotiations on Ukraine's membership in the WTO. In the longer term, it means membership in NATO and the EU has to be on the agenda. There are no guarantees or short cuts, and Ukraine must be held to the standard requirements for membership. But if the Ukrainian people prove themselves ready to meet those requirements, the transatlantic community must be ready to live up to its traditions in full measure.

The United States has another, equally important, strategic task of integration and reconciliation as part of its Ukraine policy, and that is engaging Russia in the process. Russia and Ukraine have already begun the process of developing a constructive relationship after tensions and concerns expressed in the course of the election crisis in November and December. Ukraine's global and European integration, in whatever form or measure it ultimately takes, cannot be achieved at the expense of its strong economic, political, social, and cultural ties with Russia. Ukraine and Russia are major trading partners, and some sectors of their economy are highly integrated. Geography makes them neighbors and means that their security is interdependent. The United States has every interest in making Ukraine's global and European integration a positive-sum matter for Ukraine and

Russia, not zero-sum. Each country's entry into the WTO, for example, will be achieved more easily if both are handled as mutually reinforcing rather than competitively. The development of Ukraine's partnership with NATO in the next years will come at a time when the Russia-NATO relationship has been making concrete progress in practical areas of security cooperation ranging from counterterrorism to joint programs for search and rescue operations. The United States should resist the calls of some to engage Ukraine in order to balance against or contain Russia. The Ukrainian people have made it clear that their country will be democratic, independent, and sovereign, but they also have made it clear that they want good relations with Russia. A truly comprehensive transatlantic strategy should view the goal of Ukrainian integration as complementary to the goal of engaging and integrating Russia into global and European economic, political, and security dynamics.

About the Author

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