

ICPS newsletter[®]

France's election: Lessons for Ukraine

On 6 July 2007, the International Centre for Policy Studies held a roundtable called "Right Turn: France's experience and elections in Ukraine." At this roundtable, ICPS presented the experience of France's rightists in promoting rightist values and reforms during the 2007 presidential election. Participants in this roundtable—politicians, Government officials, experts, and journalists—had an opportunity to hear the contents of debates between French rightists and leftists. Two Deputies to the French Parliament visited this event in ICPS: Michel Voisin (UMP faction) and Alain Neri (PS faction)

Ukrainian parties do not have real platforms

The ICPS mission is to promote democracy in Ukraine. One of the challenges at the current stage of democratic transformations is to form political parties on the basis of ideology and platforms and to make party competition progress to a competition of approaches to managing public resources. The confrontation between these approaches that, in western democracies, is embodied in political competition between rightists and leftists is positive for the country's economy.

"We have not left behind the Soviet Union in terms of our political institutions and our stereotypes," stated Honorary Chair of the ICPS Supervisory Board and President of the National Academy of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine Vira Nanivska. "At the recent summit of the Yalta European Strategy, representatives of the four biggest political parties in Ukraine, when asked about their political platforms, could not explain what they are."

The lack of clear self-identification of a party, deliberate withdrawal of parties from ideological principles, and excessive use of populist slogans—all these are common for practically all Ukrainian parties. Participants in this roundtable agreed that the issue of rightist and leftist ideology is the key point in Ukraine. However, understanding of this issue is very low, both among the public and among politicians.

A problem with the Ukrainian party system is the fact that, in Ukraine, parties are backroom parties and there is practically no dialog between them and voters. "Dialog emerges

only before the elections and this dialog is specious,"—said Haidai.Com Director for Strategic Planning Serhiy Haidai. The reason behind the leftist mood of Ukrainian voters lies not in the activity of leftist parties, but in their soviet past. "There has been no promotion of rightist ideology over the last 15 years," added the political scientist.

Right turn in France: the opinion of ICPS specialists

Rightist forces won the presidential and the parliamentary elections in France in 2007. New President Nicolas Sarkozy promised French voters to implement a program of reforms that will foster economic growth in the country. For the first time in decades, French voters elected a president who has publicly and openly promoted liberal values: the freedom of enterprise and the rejection of a leveling social security system.

France is a country where market economy laws have been functioning for a long time, but at the same time, there has been a very strong social security system that is a peculiar sacred cow of the French socio-economic development model. However, a lengthy policy of raising social outlays through excessive burden on workers led to negative results. Over the last 25 years, France rolled down from the 7th to 17th place in the global ranking in terms of per capita GDP, while unemployment among young people constitutes 20%. The state is already not capable of shouldering the burden of total social security. At the same time, the class of the so-called "drop-outs" is growing. Drop-outs are permanently unemployed residents of urban outskirts (*banlieues*) and immigrant ghettos, without any prospects for

By the way...

On 13 July 2007, the International Centre for Policy Studies presented the results of a project called "Lessons of Democracy: World Practice for Ukraine".

During the meeting, ICPS experts presented a compendium of articles designated to make Ukrainian policy makers and the general public familiar with Western democracy by using coalitions, opposition rights, cohabitations, primaries, lobbying and the delegation of power.

education and employment, for whom social benefits of the state constitute practically the only source of incomes.

A program of reforms proposed by Mr. Sarkozy does not raise doubts regarding the social security system, but gives the priority to labor and enterprise as the main sources of growth. As a presidential candidate Mr. Sarkozy fought the stereotype that only socialists have the monopoly for social justice—without economic growth, there will be no financial resources for a powerful social policy.

The competition between leftists and rightists

Despite the fact that the French party arena is fragmented—both the leftist and the rightist are not homogeneous and are represented by different parties and flows within parties—, the debates between Michel Voisin and Alain Neri in the ICPS Conference Hall proved that the main divergences can be found along one tangible line that conventionally divides the leftist and the rightist. These principal differences between political philosophies that are represented by leftists and rightists are embodied in very practical, urgent and important issues for the French society: the size of taxes, the healthcare system, the duration of a working day, or the future of the European Union. However, according to Alain Neri, "we should not be afraid of ideology. For various problems arising before the society, there are always certain concepts for their

solutions that can come from the rightist or the leftist political flank, but all of them foster the initiation of discussions in a democratic society that bring us closer to answers to these questions.”

If there is a crisis, it is possible that leftists and rightists will team up

Over the political history of France, a joint coalition of leftist and rightist parties existed only once—at the end of the Second World War as part of the Committee for National Resistance, when all political forces that stood against the Nazi regime joined efforts. Certainly, there have been and there are Governments that consisted of specific representatives of a political force that was in opposition to the government, mentioned Michel Voisin, but they joined the Government according to an individual procedure.

According to Alain Neri, French voters reject the format of a union between rightist and leftist forces, while the existence of a coalition Government is possible only in a severe crisis.

“In fact, the format “neither leftists, nor rightists” can seem attractive, but it is unreal. When everybody unites, it turns out that everybody has different strategies for resolving problems and it is impossible to combine them. It is possible to imagine such a situation where one horse goes to one side and the other horse goes to the other side. Finally, such a team will end its way somewhere on the roadside,” adds Michel Voisin. In the opinion of Mr. Voisin, the existence of a coalition Government is

possible and justified only in the instance of a serious crisis that the country is facing. At the same time, democracy can only win from the existence of the leftist and rightist vision of the country’s development. Such a discussion helps find decisions that are socially useful.

During the last presidential campaign in France, Francois Bayrou—a candidate who was against both the leftist and the rightist—achieved significant success, with 19.5% of votes. However, in the opinion of Alain Neri, in this instance, the situation deals rather with a new format of a political figure, than with the emergence or the initiation of a new ideology.

The election as a way out of a crisis

The French politicians emphasized that France had gone a long way of creating a state over the past 200 years. The country went through a number of political and economic crises and one of the ways out of a crisis frequently was pre-term elections. “When there are problems between the president and the parliamentary majority or between the president and the public opinion, when there are powerful mass manifestations, France has a way out—there is a mechanism for dissolving the parliament that is used by the president in a critical situation to resolve a problematic situation,” mentioned representative of rightist forces Michel Voisin. Ukraine is only at the beginning of this way, emphasized the French politicians, this is why political crises are natural. ■

Participants included high-profile politicians, Government officials, businesspeople, specialists, and representatives of foreign

countries, such as, the Head of the French Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and UMP faction Deputy to the French Parliament Michel Voisin; member of the French Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and PS faction Deputy to the French Parliament Alain Neri, VR Deputy Oksana Bilozir, VR Deputy Yuriy Miroshnychenko, Viche leader and Deputy Minister of Justice Inna Bohoslovsk, Presidential Adviser Oleh Rybachuk, POR leader Andriy Yusov, Honorary Chair of the ICPS Supervisory Board and President of the National Academy of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine Vira Naniivska, ICPS Director Volodymyr Nikitin, ICPS expert Natalia Shapovalova, 5 Kanal anchor Yegor Sobolyev, Expert political editor Oleh Voloshyn, Haidai.Com Director for Strategic Planning Serhiy Haidai, and First Counsellor at the Embassy of France to Ukraine Hugues Fantou.

The roundtable called “Right Turn: France’s experience and elections in Ukraine” is the second event in the series of roundtables that are organized by ICPS as part of a campaign to foster democratization of Ukraine. Materials of this roundtable and also of the previous roundtable called “Rehabilitating Kurkuls: Legitimizing conservative ideology in Ukraine” can be downloaded from the ICPS website at: <http://www.icps.com.ua/eng/project.html?pid=130> or <http://www.icps.com.ua/eng/project.html?pid=127>.

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Second Phase of Political Reform Consultations begins

The second phase of public consultations on political reform in Ukraine under a project called “Public Consultations and Awareness Campaign on Political Reform in Ukraine” is underway. As part of this project, ICPS Political Analysis and Security Programs Director Viktor Chumak visited Chernivtsi on 21 June, Lutsk on 22 June, Dnipropetrovsk on 25 June, Mykolayiv on 26 June and Simferopol on 5 July.

Participants discussed issues related to the structure of Ukraine’s system of local administrations, its drawbacks, problems facing these administrations, their main sources, and possible steps to reform. According to Project Manager Viktor Chumak, participants in all public consultations say that local government reform must actively involve the community. Another important conclusion made by participants was that, as long as there is a political crisis, it would be impossible to implement local government reform.

During the discussions, the organizers described global experience in cooperation between the public and government bodies at all levels. In developed democracies, local government is based on a civil society where voters demonstrate the readiness to take on political responsibility. Local government formulates

and fulfills objectives on a democratic basis and remains transparent to voters. So far, public consultations have been held in five Ukrainian cities during the first quarter of 2007: Dnipropetrovsk, Lutsk, Mykolayiv, Simferopol, and Chernivtsi. In addition, two brochures were published recently: “Political Reform from the Public Viewpoint,” and “Political Reform from the Government Viewpoint.”

The project is being carried out by the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education (CURE) and ICPS, with the support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), Great Britain. The project involves using the mechanism of public consultations so that different stakeholders can discuss political reform at both the national and local levels. The project goal is to increase the role of public consultations in the policy-making process and to inform the public, including policy-makers, of the many aspects of political reform and opportunities to implement it in an open manner that considers voter opinion.

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