

ICPS newsletter®

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Ukraine's Foreign Policy: Time for a re-think

Ukraine's foreign policy is in a difficult situation. Ties with its most important partners are at an all-time low and the country is unable to adequately pursue its interests in the international arena. What might be the way forward? What are Ukraine's key interests and how should they be pursued? Too often, answers to these questions are geographically-oriented, treating relations with partners as ends rather than means. ICPS and the Institute for World Policy propose a different approach to the formulation of Ukraine's foreign policy, structured around a limited number of strategic interests

Today, Ukrainian foreign relations are at a crossroads. Not between East and West, but between relevance and irrelevance. The country's economic and geopolitical importance will keep it on the international community's radar screen for the foreseeable future. But unless Kyiv pursues a consistent foreign policy based on clearly-defined strategic interests, it will not be treated as a credible actor.

Ukraine's top four priorities should be:

- regaining credibility;
- restoring key partnerships;
- preserving sovereignty and independence;
- becoming a more active and constructive regional player.

Over the next five years, Ukraine will have to concentrate on improving its international image. The country will not be seen in a better light until it removes the negative prism through which it is perceived today. But even the best communications strategy will prove fruitless unless it is based on real accomplishments. Ukraine immediately needs to improve relationships with its most important partners: Russia, the European Union and the United States. This means replacing ideological rhetoric with concrete cooperation and, most importantly, pushing through key reforms it has been avoiding for nearly two decades.

Ukraine will also have to better play the regional game, because its independence depends on its ability to manage complicated security and energy relationships. Balancing various interests and values will be difficult, but success will immeasurably strengthen both Ukraine itself and its global status. Finally, Ukraine must be more active and more constructive in dealing with its neighbors. This will allow the country not only to pursue its own interests more effectively, but also to prove to its partners, near and far, that it is capable of a positive, multi-layered foreign policy.

With great challenges come great opportunities. It is now up to the new President to prove this adage true. ■

The full report, "Ukraine's New Foreign Policy: Four strategic priorities" can be downloaded at: http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/55/81/NFP_15_Ukr_for_site.pdf. This analytical report was prepared under the "Unite for Reform (UNITER)" project, funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and executed by Pact Ukraine.

As part of this project, a joint report called "Ukraine's New Foreign Policy: The analysts' view" was also prepared and can be downloaded at: http://www.icps.com.ua/files/articles/55/80/Uniter_UKR_last.pdf

ICPS helps Swiss formulate Ukraine cooperation strategy

The International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS) is one of the few think-tanks that analyzes how effective foreign assistance is. Two recent ICPS studies, "European Integration: New context, new institutions" and "Monitoring the ENPI in Ukraine" were the first publications to put problems with providing and coordinating foreign assistance to the country on the agenda in analytical circles in Ukraine.

For that reason, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has invited the Centre to help develop a Strategy of Cooperation with Ukraine for 2011-2014.

On 23-24 February 2010, ICPS's Foreign Aid Program manager Viktoria Humeniuk participated in the development of this Strategy and offered suggestions regarding key areas of cooperation where donor assistance is extremely important.

Ms. Humeniuk noted that assistance from international donors should be directed exclusively at reforms and serve as a catalyst for change in Ukraine.

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