



Taras Kuzio

Corruption flourished under Yushchenko

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Dear Editor,

Brian Mefford is factually wrong when he disputes the Kyiv Post's charge ([KyivPost editorial, Sept. 9, "Bad Choice"](#)) that corruption flourished under ex-President Viktor Yushchenko's tenure. ([Kyiv Post "Yushchenko deserves achievement award, Sept. 22"](#))

Transparency International's "Corruption Perception Index" showed Ukraine improving from 128th place under the final year of ex-President Leonid Kuchma to 117th just two years later under Yushchenko, a gradual but noted improvement.

Transparency International found that Ukraine improved its battle against corruption only in 2005-2006 (primarily due to the efforts of the Yulia Tymoshenko government, not Yushchenko) but then stagnated rapidly from 2007 back to low levels found in the Kuchma era. In 2009, Yushchenko's last year in office, Ukraine's Corruption Perceptions Index ranking was worse than in 2004, Kuchma's last year in office. The return to high levels of corruption in 2007-2009 is a product of the country's lack of leadership, weak political will to combat corruption, political crises and intra-elite conflict.

Georgia represents a different trajectory to Ukraine since the Rose Revolution in Georgia with President Mikheil Saakashvili showing the political will that was absent under Yushchenko to combat corruption and provide a better business environment. The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business gave Georgia 16 and 11 annual rankings in 2009 and 2010, placing it alongside European and North American economies. Ukraine was ranked during the same two year period as 146 and 142nd. The World Bank's rankings on Starting a Business and Protecting Investors showed a similar gulf between both countries with Georgia ranked 5 for Starting a Business in both 2009 and 2010 while Ukraine was ranked 126th and 134rd. Georgia was ranked 38th and 41st in 2009 and 2010 under the Protection for Investors ranking while Ukraine again received a poor ranking of 143rd and 109th.

A similar gulf between Georgia and Ukraine exists in their rankings by Transparency

International. Georgia entered the post-revolutionary era in a worse position than Ukraine with the country a de facto failed state. Between 2005-2009, Georgia's CPI ranking dramatically improved from 130 to 66th. During the same period, Ukraine's CPI ranking improved from 107 to 99th between 2005-2006 during the first of two Tymoshenko governments but then regressed over the next three years to 146th position, lower than in the last year of Kuchma's rule (122nd).

Transparency International found that Georgia progressed in its battle against corruption each year since 2004. In 2009, only 5 countries in the European Union and the European Free Trade Agreement had better rankings in dealing with corruption than did Georgia. The 2009 Global Corruption Barometer ranked Ukraine 4.3 (with 5 the worst and 1 the best) while Georgia received a ranking of 3.1, a level better than the USA (3.7) or Canada (3.2).

In the last years of Yushchenko's presidency, 78 percent of Ukrainians did not feel there was a struggle against corruption with 22 percent seeing efforts to combat corruption. Political instability and weak political will influenced the deterioration in Ukraine's CPI ranking during the last three years of Yushchenko's presidency.

Mefford is one of the few persons in Ukraine who believe that Yushchenko successfully fought corruption even though he received a paltry 5 percent and 5th place in the 2010 elections. In comparison, then President Leonid Kravchuk managed to receive 44 percent after hyperinflation in the 1994 elections – the same figure Viktor Yanukovich received in December 2004.

Voters in democracies are the final judges of a politician's time in office.

Yours sincerely,

Taras Kuzio

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