

Commentary

How to Help Yushchenko

By [Jennifer Moroney](#) and Taras Kuzio

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The months leading up to the 2006 parliamentary election in Ukraine give the United States the opportunity to pave the way for better relations and integrate Ukraine into the community of democratic market-oriented nations. Based on the substantial popularity of President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, the Yushchenko camp seems likely to control two-thirds of Parliament after the election next March. So building stronger ties with the Yushchenko government in the months ahead could lead to even greater improvements in U.S.-Ukrainian relations next year.

Yushchenko's visit to the United States in early April ushered in a new chapter in U.S.-Ukrainian relations. In sharp contrast to the past 10 years, when Ukraine was led by Leonid Kuchma, today America is able to have a constructive dialogue with a partner that shares its values.

But this is only the first step toward meeting goals outlined in the New Century Agenda signed by Presidents Yushchenko and George W. Bush on April 4. There are several roadblocks that need to be cleared in the short term. Bush could do this with the following steps:

Ask Congress to repeal the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which requires an annual review of most-favored-nation trading status. Passed in 1974, the amendment limited trade with Communist-bloc nations because of their restrictions on emigration, and is still applied to Russia, Ukraine and the other states that replaced the Soviet Union.

Coordinate with the European Union to grant Ukraine market-economy status, which Russia obtained three years ago. Market-economy status allows for trade in goods without quantitative restrictions. This is an important steppingstone to World Trade Organization membership.

Support Ukraine's bid to enter the WTO, which would provide new markets for Ukrainian goods, increase the flow of foreign investment and encourage economic reforms.

A medium-term objective after the election would be to consider full NATO membership for Ukraine. While Yushchenko has been coy about membership — joining NATO is not a popular notion in Ukraine — Bush has said he supports the idea, and his administration backed an offer of intensified dialogue on membership issues with Ukraine at the meeting of the alliance this month in Vilnius. The first step would be adding Ukraine to NATO's Membership Action Plan. Ukraine would then need to make political, military and economic reforms to qualify for membership, just as the other countries that have recently joined NATO did.

A target for NATO membership could be 2009, when Yushchenko's term in office expires.

A more long-term objective is to ensure that Ukraine is integrated into the EU. Here, of course, America has less of a direct role to play since it is not an EU member. Still,

the enlargement of the Union to include Turkey and Ukraine would support U.S. interests by bringing stability and prosperity to the greater Eurasia region.

Many new post-Communist EU members back Ukraine's membership, though the governing elites of "old Europe" are less inclined to support Kiev's aspirations. The United States can lobby large EU members, like Britain, to throw their weight behind Ukraine's membership. Britain, a staunch supporter of EU expansion, played a crucial role in promoting Turkey's membership.

It is in America's interests for the Bush administration and Congress to strongly back Yushchenko in these areas. Fortunately, the goals outlined above are linked, and are likely to produce a spillover effect once the international trade issues are resolved.

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