

Kiev's Path to Europe

By Iris Kempe (www.cap.lmu.de)
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High up on the monument in the middle of the Maidan, Kiev's Independence Square, an orange flag waves. Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko defeated the old incumbents in free elections. Following a decade of dependent independence from Moscow, Ukrainians have, for the first time, chosen their president democratically. But free and fair elections do not, by themselves, make a democracy.

Yushchenko now faces difficult tasks. He has to lead reconciliation in Ukrainian society and rapidly chalk up some economic success. In addition, he has to fight corruption and untangle political power from the power of the country's business clans. To keep Ukraine on the difficult path to a democratic future, the country needs not only the will to make reforms, it needs a clear idea about its development, and it needs international integration.

Russia has failed in its efforts to shape the post-Soviet realm. The former satellite states have long since shown their preference for Europe. Yushchenko, too, has declared accession to the European Union as one of the goals of his reforms. Now he is hoping for signals from Brussels.

Over the last decade, the European Union has developed into an attractive and successful companion of reform in Eastern Europe. Brussels relied on the successful recipe of enlargement coupled with the simultaneous deepening of European integration. The EU was surprised by democracy's peaceful victory in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the Union has now presented a ten-point plan for supporting Ukraine as a signal of direction. With its plan, the EU plans to recognize Ukraine's status as a market economy and to smooth its entry into the World Trade Organization. Other parts of the plan include cooperating more closely with Kiev in foreign and security policy and easing the conditions for obtaining visas to EU member states.

The plan does not, however, foresee the accession that Yushchenko is aiming for. If Ukraine is to find its place in Europe, a new offer of integration from Brussels is necessary. The Union could change the current "no" to EU accession into a "yes" to association. Washington considers Ukraine's entry into NATO possible. All of these efforts may have good intentions, but the degree of integration into European and transatlantic structure must remain dependent on the results of Ukrainian reform.

A Ukrainian leap toward Europe would have far-reaching consequences, not only for Kiev but also for the European Union. The EU would immediately become a truly pan-European actor. Along this path, the EU would also have to answer a number of questions in the medium term: How will the EU close the gap between its acceptance of Turkey and its own ability to take in new countries while remaining manageable? How can the EU successfully stabilize the crisis-wracked countries of the Balkans? How can, over the long term, democracy be supported and cemented in Belarus, or in the Black Sea area, including Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan?

To be able to meet these challenges, the architects in Brussels need blueprints for a *multi-level Europe*. In the future, it will be important not to endanger the EU's ability to act with territorial over-extension. On the other hand, it will be equally important to be able to guarantee security and stability on the continent. In these efforts, it is worth considering associations with varying degrees of integration or partial memberships in individual areas of European cooperation. The members of the Schengen agreement and the European Economic Area (neither is coterminous with the current EU) are already examples of how not every EU member state participates in every area of integration.

Offering Ukraine prospects of cooperation with the EU, and thus supporting the country's transformation is the order of the day. What role Ukraine could actually play in the future EU depends not only on Ukraine's internal development but also on the course of European integration. Ukraine's struggles to become a democracy under the rule of law are also important for the EU. Pressure from the outside is challenging the Union to take up and strengthen its role as a pan-European actor. Kiev touches one of the EU's central tasks: the realization of central European values and principles of law.