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Newsletter for the international community providing views and analysis from the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT)

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## Winning friends in America

Yulia Tymoshenko, leader of the opposition and her eponymous block, met with US Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley last week to discuss recent events in Ukraine. The US officials pledged that their administration “would continue to support democracy in Ukraine” and viewed it “as a key country in the creation of an energy security system for the whole region, including the European Union”.



▲ While in the US, Yulia Tymoshenko met with senior political figures. Of equal importance was an opportunity to address the Ukrainian diaspora who gathered in Washington DC.

Ms Tymoshenko's visit to the US gave her an opportunity to highlight the constitutional turmoil and fragility of democracy in Ukraine. "As Ukrainians work to strengthen democracy and advance economic development at home, it is essential that we keep friends and allies around the world informed of our progress, challenges and recent developments," said Ms Tymoshenko.

She talked about Ukraine “as a leader capable of uniting all post-Soviet states around it for the formation of a truly democratic path.” At the same time Ms Tymoshenko left US lawmakers in no doubt that the country was regressing under the regime of prime minister Viktor Yanukovich and risked slipping once more into the Kremlin's orbit.

In an interview with the Washington Times, Ms Tymoshenko slammed Mr Yanukovich's increasingly hard-line government, expressing concern for the future should it serve out its full term to 2011, "If this government is in power until then, there would be nothing left of a democratic Ukraine, the territory would still exist, but it would not be Ukraine any longer."

When asked by reporters if she wanted parliamentary elections, she said, “We shall do everything necessary to hold an early parliamentary election in Ukraine so that the existing majority, which was formed through fraud and betrayal, vanishes.”

Despite her visit to the US being cut short due to a bout of flu, the trip was judged a success by observers at home and abroad. The visit follows a string of outreaches, including trips to Brussels and Berlin in November and Israel in January.

“It is important that the world knows what is going on in my country,” said Ms Tymoshenko, concerned over the use energy as a political weapon and threats to political sovereignty and Ukraine's aspirations to join the European Union.

She articulated the “disillusionment” she had noticed from western governments and reminded US officials that “a country as large and influential as your own has to lead this kind of work. Your country does not have the right to be fatigued about Ukraine's future.”



Tammy Lynch, senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy at Boston University observed, "As the US has painfully witnessed in the last several years, democracies are not created with the snap of a finger. Their development depends on the education and experience of not only the people of a country, but also their leaders."

American officials said that they would continue to support democracy in Ukraine. "If a Constitutional Court decides that Ukraine must call early elections and change the constitution, our efforts will be backed by the US," said Ms Tymoshenko, following her meeting with Condoleezza Rice .

On the final evening of the visit Ms Tymoshenko was awarded the Ronald Reagan award at a banquet held in her honour and connected to the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Hryhoriy Nemyria, Ms Tymoshenko's top foreign policy adviser was pleased with the trip. "We met with senior officials, senior politicians from both aisles of Congress, policy experts, media figures and our valued friends in the diaspora. We received a warm welcome and had a frank exchange of views that heartened us. Clearly we have friends who share our vision for a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Ukraine — a Ukraine at the heart of Europe and at ease with its neighbours."



▲ Madeleine Albright, who served as the 64th United States Secretary of State meets Yulia Tymoshenko in Washington DC.

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## Dancing to the Kremlin's tune

Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich declared his hand last week when he criticised plans by the United States to deploy a missile defence system in Europe.

The weapon system is designed as a defensive missile shield against Middle East countries such as Iran and will consist of a base in Poland with 10 missiles and a radar guidance station in the Czech Republic.

The leader of the Pro-Russian Party of Regions indicated that the siting of the missile defence system in Eastern Europe was harmful to relations with Warsaw. And called for urgent talks with the US and European Union.

In an interview with the German newspaper, Handelsblatt, Mr Yanukovich said that "The deployment issue should have been discussed with everyone in advance, including Russia and Ukraine."

"Only after there has been a comprehensive European discussion, a dialogue between Eastern and Western Europe, should a decision be taken," he said. "Europe should not be divided again like it was before the Iraq war." It was clear Mr Yanukovich supports the concern of Russia which views such a station as a potential threat to national security.



**“Ukraine must decide where its destiny lies, we believe that its future should be aligned with the best democratic institutions of a free Europe.”**



▲ Hryhoriy Nemyria, BYUT deputy and foreign affairs adviser to Yulia Tymoshenko.

“Ukraine must decide where its destiny lies,” said Hryhoriy Nemyria, deputy BYuT leader and Ms Tymoshenko’s top foreign affairs advisor, “we believe that its future should be aligned with the best democratic institutions of a free Europe. We need to foster a positive and strong relationship with Russia, but this hardly necessitates dancing to the Kremlin’s tune every time the piper strikes up.”

Britain’s Minister for Europe, Geoff Hoon, said that his country supports the deployment of the U.S. anti-missile defence system on European soil.

“Britain welcomes statements by the United States on the deployment of anti-missile defense systems in Europe... because this will protect Europe, and that is very important,” he said to reporters in Kyiv last Tuesday.

He reiterated that Washington was not aiming missiles at Russian territory. “The United States has made it clear that the systems are not aimed against the defence forces of Russia, and one should not forget that Russia itself has its own anti-missile defence systems,” said Mr Hoon.

President Viktor Yushchenko committed the government and the National Security Defence Council to study the US plans. “We must consider our national interests” and the country’s declared aim to participate in creating a unified security system for Europe, said Mr Yushchenko. Meanwhile, Mr Yanukovich is demanding talks with the US claiming “Ukraine can also make a contribution.”

Military experts are due to arrive in Kyiv early March for consultations over the plans.

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## **Party of Regions early election call trick**

Speaking to journalists at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC, opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko dismissed the Party of Regions proposal to hold simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections as a “special trick.”

The surprise proposal emanated from Party of Regions stalwart Vasyl Kyselyov, who indicated he would present a draft bill to parliament for early parliamentary and presidential elections on 30 September.

Ms Tymoshenko saw the proposal as nothing more than a spoiling tactic, “Trying to bind two things in one the Party of Regions practically destroys the possibility of any elections.”

BYuT has consistently called for parliamentary elections as a way to end the political deadlock. “Early parliamentary elections are so necessary because the parliament is in chaos. In my opinion the government is illegitimate. It was newly-elected lawmakers who generated the clash between power branches. I think it is high time to call early elections,” said Ms Tymoshenko during her visit to the US.

BYuT is keen that any move for new elections is subject to proper due legal process.

The leader of the Our Ukraine faction Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, thought the move was nothing more than a “continuing nervous reaction” to the recent accord signed between BYuT and the pro-presidential bloc.



Earlier President Viktor Yushchenko had hinted at a possible dissolution of parliament. "As the Head of the State I cannot ignore people's indignation and rejection of attempts to bring Ukraine back to despotism," said the president.

Appealing for constructive dialogue between the political parties, the president's words carried a thinly veiled threat, "I assure the Ukrainian society that in case of the slightest encroachment on the Basic Law and the citizens' freedoms I will exercise my constitutional rights to protect people, our national interests and the nationhood of Ukraine."

Speaking to the Associated Press, President Yushchenko highlighted the power struggle between his office and Mr Yanukovich's Cabinet of Ministers. He said that the latter's decisions have been "taken with such insufficient consideration that they can be based only on emotions and the desire for some primitive revenge."

Ms Tymoshenko, who has been helping American lawmakers and policy experts to understand the constitutional stalemate that grips the nation, said, "The message is clear, Ukraine needs a democratic and responsible government. The only way this is to be achieved is if the constitutional reform that robs the president of his powers is overturned by the Constitutional Court and early parliamentary elections are called. Let the people decide Ukraine's course and direction."

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