

# UKRAINIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON U.S.- UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

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**WELCOME/MODERATOR:**

**Ambassador James Collins,**

Director, Russia/Eurasia Program

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**SPEAKERS:**

**His Excellency Kostyantyn Gryshenko**

Minister for Foreign Affairs,

Ukraine

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Washington, D.C.

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JAMES F. COLLINS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us. I'm Jim Collins, and I direct the Russia/Eurasia program here at the Carnegie Endowment. Carnegie has been extremely fortunate to play host to a distinguished group of speakers on the future of Euro-Atlantic relations, from French minister Alain Juppe to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. And we very much look forward to continuing that conversation with our distinguished guest tonight.

Indeed, we are privileged to have with us Ukraine's minister of foreign affairs, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko. His long and impressive career includes posts as ambassador to Washington, ambassador to Moscow, and an earlier stint as foreign minister of Ukraine from 2003 to 2005. Minister Gryshchenko's visit to Washington comes at an important time for relations between the United States and Ukraine.

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Two previous administrations in Kiev and in Washington agreed, in 2008, to a charter on strategic partnership, which the current governments have taken up and implemented in the form of a strategic partnership commission. This commission met for the first time here in Washington in 2009, again in Kiev last year, and they'll meet for a third time tomorrow here in Washington.

What are the shared interests, values and challenges that will define priorities for the U.S.-Ukraine strategic partnership? Does the partnership extend beyond the two sides' most basic shared security and economic interests to embrace an exchange of views on values and institutions of governance, both national and global?

Are both sides prepared to learn from one another as we tackle the lingering consequences of the financial crisis? Through our centers in Washington, Brussels and Moscow, the Carnegie Endowment and its scholars are deeply engaged on many of these questions, and we've recently launched the Euro-Atlantic security initiative, also known as ESI, to help lay the intellectual foundation for an inclusive Euro-Atlantic security community.

A significant part of that effort has focused on Ukraine. And working jointly with my colleague, Matt Rojansky, we are also in the process of significantly expanding the endowment's work on Ukraine and on U.S.-Ukraine relations. As part of that effort, just this afternoon, we convened a track-two workshop here at Carnegie to discuss Ukraine's economic and political development, along with its foreign policy.

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The workshop included highly productive interchanges between U.S. and Ukrainian civil society experts, as well as government representatives. Working groups divided to discuss the most pressing challenges related to economic reform, democratic development and civil-society and human development. The groups enumerated specific problems in each of these areas and began to propose solutions calling not only for government action but also for cooperation between civil society groups and their governments.

And we anticipate opportunities to continue to make such recommendations and suggestions as the strategic partnership matures and as the commission conducts its business. Before I want to turn the floor over to Minister Gryshchenko, I want to highlight just one recurring theme from today's discussion.

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That was how to improve engagement between civil society experts and policymakers in the government. We suggest that the workshop we held today, combined with the discussions the governments will undertake tomorrow, begins to answer that question. And we hope that this effort will continue and be repeated the next time in Kiev.

We stand ready to support this effort and we know that many of you in this room do, as well. So here to share his thoughts on the future of relations between the United States and Ukraine, it gives me great pleasure to introduce foreign minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, a longtime friend. (Applause.)

KOSTYANTYN GRYSHCENKO: Well, thank you so much for this opportunity to address this esteemed audience. And again, I'm very grateful for the introduction. I'd like to remind you that a certain moment of time, back when the Soviet Union was still in place, we were only, I believe, four or five people which were allowed to share a secret, which was not a very pleasant one and which led to a major effort of the government, then, more liberal, more attuned to the demands of the time.

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The Soviet Union and the United States and British government had to deal with a major, then, problem that could have become an explosive issue in the relationship. I believe at that time, we met this challenge. And I am still very thankful that minister, counselor, second in command in American embassy was magnanimous enough to deal, sometimes, with the first secretary.

Well, as it appeared, it doesn't really matter what level you are. It matters what you wish to achieve. And from that perspective, I would like to stress that Ukraine, being a country of rather significant importance, if you look at its size in a European context, clearly, it is not comparable to the United States. It's a great, global power with interests from Afghanistan through Iraq through the Mediterranean through Europe – global power.

But our relationship with the United States is clearly an important factor of our own internal development. And here, we need the relationship which is based on understanding what, exactly, is happening in Ukraine and where we can interact in promoting development inside the country. I think that this audience is very well-informed of the opportunities and the effort that is being placed on development of bilateral relations and our interaction on the international arena, where we do support each other in many instances.

And I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the support the United States government has demonstrated in the decision that led to a consensus for our assuming chairmanship in office of the OSCE in 2013. A country that is not respected would never get this particular high office. Whatever you may think of the process, it is not an easy one, where all aspects are being taken into consideration. And I must say that we were not struggling for it. We simply offered what we can do to promote the high principles of OSCE in the year in which it might be crucial for the development in this larger area.

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But I really wanted to address this audience with something which is so often the major theme when Ukraine is being mentioned in mass media, in discussions – what is happening inside the country. What is the logic of the events? Where it could lead to and why? Why, again, sometimes, as I believe the message is misunderstood.

Let me begin by thanking you for your interest in Ukraine. Today's Ukraine is a country that truly makes a difference, both in terms of regional and pan-European development. It defines whether a truly united Europe of

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the east and west has a short existence. It has a direct impact on success or failure of the democracy project in many post-Soviet countries. But most importantly, it carries some of the keys to the economic success of the whole region stretching from the Black Sea in the south to the Baltic Sea in the north.

I will focus my presentation on how Ukraine's government intends to use these keys in order to utilize the considerable geopolitical potential of our country. To the case of Ukraine's independence produced more questions than answers. The country firmly established itself as an active and equal participant of international political life. Yet, it has not completed its evolution on the way to a truly European state.

Politically, it was balancing between the west-oriented aspirations of some Ukrainians and the Russia-oriented sympathies of others, but almost always wound up only with ad hoc solutions. Diplomatically, as a European nation, it was relying on the promised embrace by the European Union, but in most cases, found only polite restraint, instead. If many questions regarding the present and future remain chronically unanswered, it means that a drastic change is in order.

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To quote from President Obama's recent State of the Union address, every nation needs to periodically reinvent itself. This captures quite well what is happening in our political thinking these days. Ukraine is reinventing itself. It's shrugging off the haplessness and helplessness of previous years. It's growing a backbone domestically and finding its own voice on the international scene.

Just recently, President Yanukovich spoke of 21 directions of Ukrainian social and economic life, in which the nation undergoes, or is about to undergo a deep, far-reaching transformation. Social administrative, territorial administrative, judiciary, military, pension, education, financial, health care, law enforcement and other reforms are already underway or getting started. It is no secret, however, that after two decades of political intramural fights and occasional stalemates, some find these latest developments in Ukraine too abrupt.

Misunderstanding and even suspicion occur. Obviously, there is need for talk – I would even say, for straight talk. This is why I am here speaking to our longstanding and reliable American friends, and those who came from Ukraine to criticize and appreciate what I would be saying right now. Ladies and gentlemen, for starters, let me address the primary concern expressed by the west these days regarding Ukraine's adherence to democracy and freedom of speech.

Let me assure you, Ukraine is not reinventing the values that it is based upon. They remain the same. Democracy and human rights are the undisputed pillars of our statehood. If two decades of Ukraine's independence gave at least one definite historic answer, it is this: The point of no return is past. There is no way back to the authoritarian government, muzzled media and choked dissent. Like many Ukrainians, I cannot imagine living in a society where one cannot freely express own opinion and pursue political activity in a democratic way.

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However, as you might guess, starting from this point, my assessment will differ from those who criticize the government today. In particular, I strongly disagree with the political Cassandras who see Ukraine's democracy deteriorating. These speculations reflect emotions of a part of Ukrainian society who still cannot accept the result of the presidential elections. Yet, they, I believe, do not, at the very least fully, reflect the facts.

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If you come to Ukraine one of these days, you'll encounter a level of political transparency comparable to only western democracies. The amount of political and economic revelations dumped on Ukraine's civic audiences on an almost day-to-day basis can be compared only to the amount of snow that fell on America this winter. The same goes for the press. The same goes for the Internet.

Like in every country of the world, Ukraine's civil society is a society of dissent. But rephrasing the scripture, man shall not live on dissent alone. In the recent years, Ukraine's political and economic organism has been lacking not as much the vitamin D – democracy – but rather, the vitamin F – functionality. If you remember numerous roundtables on Ukraine that had taken place over the tenure of the previous presidency, the one thing the world was expecting from us was this: The Ukrainians should finally get their act together.

In other words, the country was in dire need of a functioning government, from election booths to the presidential office and from the tax collector to district attorneys. The situation where the opposition and the government were mutually side-tracking each other to the point where the country was effectively gridlocked took a heavy toll on Ukraine's self-assessment and reputation. It was politically deplorable, economically malignant and emotionally frustrating.

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Addressing Ukraine's overdue needs was Viktor Yanukovich's biggest pledge to Ukraine's people when he was running for presidency a year ago. The big question was how to deliver on that promise. The government took a four-step approach: one, by consolidating and streamlining the government; second, by making it less ideological and more economically conscious; third, by formulating and implementing a viable reform agenda; and fourth, by cracking down on corruption.

Now, the government has been often criticized for implementing this agenda too zealously, or to use the lexicon of Ukraine's opposition, in a bulldozer manner. I suppose sometimes the current government does make an impression of trying to outrun the time. But only for one reason: Because too much time was wasted in previous years. The truth about Ukraine's reform is this: It's either the hard way or no way. And no way is not an option for this reform-starved nation.

For instance, it was either passing a rather painful tax code or living on the tax hierarchy. It was either firing from 30 to 50 percent of public servants – an incredibly painful step the cabinet undergoes right now – or having one of the world's most bloated bureaucracies, as compared to the bottom of our economy today.

It was either cutting some social benefits or living with an unbalanced budget and driving the economy into default. It was either reaching painful compromises with Russia or living in discord with our biggest neighbor, and with the absolute majority of Ukraine's population who just happens to sympathize with this neighbor and wishing to have no more relations with it. In other words, it was a choice between the past and the future, and we have chosen the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, in some cases, it does take a bulldozer to clear the rubble and make way for daily commute. Obviously, the most tender spot here is the ongoing crackdown on corruption. Just like there is no tax code that would make everybody happy, so there is no humanly possible way to fight corruption without stepping on somebody's toes.

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For the first time in Ukraine's history, influential public figures from both the opposition and the government face investigation for committing alleged corruption. For the first time in Ukraine's history, there have been opened over 360 criminal cases on the corruption charges against representatives of the current government, 166 of them at a senior level. And the figures are not exactly up-to-date; they are from a week ago or so.

You asked us to get our act together and fight corruption. This is us doing it. Clearly, no one in sane mind would ever oppose the idea of combating corruption. It is the action and the manner of the government that many politicians in Ukraine are uncomfortable with. The key word has been "selective justice," meaning the opposition notion that their crooks are prosecuted more fervently than those affiliated with the governing coalition.

Just think about it. After decades of inaction, we speak about which group of corrupt officials gets a harsher treatment. To my mind, this only speaks in favor of the current government and not to its detriment.

Those who criticize the government are talking about selective justice because they know for sure not a single – they know for sure not a single act of investigation, prosecution they speculate about is legally unfounded. More than this, they know for sure that their crooks have a guilty conscience.

Politically, they are trying to create what in American legal system is called reasonable doubt. Must admit, it's a very smart technique that in some cases succeeds. We have quite a number of cases where this presumption of reasonable doubt works in the minds of those who do not understand the realities on the ground. I find no pleasure in speaking about my country in terms of "us" and "them." But the reality is harsh.

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Ever since the Orange Revolution of 2004, the Ukrainian elite and to some extent the nation split. And a significant proportion of its elite would rather exploit the chasm than heal it. No matter what the government does, a certain part of the political class and society will grudge, nag and hustle.

Just a small example from Ukraine's recent political life: In late January, the country was outraged by a YouTube reel of a traffic officer from a south Ukrainian city of Odessa making derogatory remarks about the Ukrainian language. The opposition was riding the wave. Yet, as soon as the action of the said officer was officially condemned and he was expediently fired from the law enforcement, not a single political statement on the opposition ensued. Not a single vote of approval was voiced.

Dissent is patriotic. But taking your dissent to every thinkable international venue and damaging Ukraine's reputation every time things do not go your way domestically is not. Sadly for many Ukrainian politicians, it's not about the nation's interest. It's not even about reaching justice.

But I must say that this particular excerpt from what I wish to deliver in my speech is essentially based on American ethics and what the American politicians believe is rightful to do in their approach to criticizing their own government. It's about preserving injustice as long as it's under the right ideological source and as soon as the matter loses its political toxicity, it's dropped and disposed of just like – (inaudible) – is used to – (inaudible).

Let me also give you another example. One political force in Ukraine is relentlessly claiming its European identity and strives to monopolize the title of the most European party by words and deeds. Yet in 2010, this very political force had not cast sufficient number of its votes for at least six draft clauses crucially important for Ukraine's European integration. Significant – I mean, seriously significant.

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This includes the law on the public procurements on the ratification of the Council of Europe conventions on laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime and of the financing of terrorism, as well as some action against trafficking in human beings. How one claim being pro-European and not voting for these particular pieces of legislation? And neither any people's – (inaudible) – was expelled from the faction of these local parties in the parliament, nor was he criticized for hindering European integration of Ukraine.

Now, I think it's enough to talk about what is happening inside Ukraine. I wouldn't even touch upon the issue if it were not something which I understand was discussed in previous sessions here. I simply have to be very clear on what the government is doing and what is the logic of its action and what is its program and what's its motivation.

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If you bear with me, I will use another quotation from President Obama's State of the Union address. "Around the globe, we stand with those who take responsibility, helping farmers grow more food, supporting doctors who take care of the sick and combating the corruption that can erode the society and rob people of opportunity."

In my opinion, it's a very important and fundamental realization. Responsibility is and will remain for a while the key word of the modern political vocabulary.

Today's Ukraine is a nation that takes responsibility for its own fate and for the fates of the East European region, at the very least. It remains true to its European calling, as after long years, it finally starts doing what the EU calls "homework," that is, adopting the national norms and legislation to Europe's *Acquis Communautaire*. Within just one year, Ukraine passed the whole set of laws that have long been overdue in terms of its European integration, starting with the law on state procurement and ending with a long-expected law on access to public information.

Not a single government even touched on this particular issue before. Never in the nation's history was the government's work as transparent and accessible for journalists as under this legislation, which, by the way, was introduced by the opposition, passed in a bipartisan manner and emulated in many aspects a respective American bill. If only bipartisanship could become more typical for Ukrainian political life.

Ukraine's interaction with EU became more self-reliant. We arrived at the point when we realized that domestic European-oriented reforms are more important to us than any political gestures on the part of the European Union itself. Of course, we are saddened by the fact that EU is not ready to stimulate our domestic transformations as generously as it did with the East European candidate states.

However, because Ukrainian civilizational choice is not as much about immediate EU membership but rather about changing the nature of Ukrainian state in society, we focus on what is feasible now and relevant to our citizens. Therefore, the newly opened visa-free action plan between Ukraine and the EU means more to us than volumes of political statements. We see it as a sign that our bilateral dialogue finally becomes a dialogue of open language and can trade commitments that will give Ukrainians more freedom and dignity in Europe.

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The same goes for the Ukraine-U.S. dialogue. The foundation of our strategic partnership remains solid and future-oriented because our countries want the same things out of this relationship: more security for the world; more democracy in the post-Soviet space; more exchange for our students, scientists, NGOs, partner cities and many others.

We undergo the same process of making our policy more pragmatic and down-to-earth. We've also dropped the zero-sum rhetoric and accepted the fact that a true success in the current world can only result from uniting the efforts, not making them collide, which means we must be straightforward and constructive when speaking to each other.

Just like Ukraine's policy of reforms, its foreign policy becomes more responsible. In harmony with prevailing Euro-Atlantic trends, we successfully reset our relations with Russia and are in the process of entering new cooperation venues in the emerging markets of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Ukraine is opening itself to the world and pursues a friendly, eager and engaged policy towards all its partners, neighboring and distant.

This policy will either fail or prevail, depending on whether Ukraine is interesting for the outside world and in line with global trends. And this, in turn, depends first and foremost on the condition of our economy. Therefore it is instrumental that not only legislation and political rhetoric is changing but the overall economic climate in the country.

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Ukraine's business environment is about to be profoundly liberalized. Up to 90 percent of state-issued licenses for various entrepreneurial activities have been simply lifted. Bridges and roads are being built. New subway stations are being unveiled. The cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank has been renewed. The GDP grew last year by 4.5 percent. The outlook for 2011 is positive too.

In other words, it's safe to say that economically, Ukraine is out of the woods and in for the most dramatic economic transformation in its history. After only one year of Yanukovich's presidency, at least three key elements of successful reforms are present: a strong-desired majority of political elite, a stable economic foundation and a strong team of managers capable of implementing the stated agenda.

We do hope that Ukraine's opposition will be patriotic to support the reforms and democratic changes enough to finally accept the view of their own people, expressed at the presidential elections of 2010. And it's not needed just for the appreciation of the current government or people in power. It's needed to provide the European framework for interaction between those who are governing and those who have the opportunity to govern in the future, when they win next elections.

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Ladies and gentlemen, you might ask, isn't the picture you are being given is too rosy (ph)? If things go so well, why doesn't the nation appreciate it?

Well, as a matter of fact, the majority of the population is far away from ideological battles that shake up the political class. And the government appeal goes out, first and foremost, not to the political media elite but to the Ukraine's honest, hardworking people living from paycheck to paycheck. They want their government to be less ideological and more down-to-earth. They want it to be reform-minded and future-oriented. They want it to be hard on those who trespass on law and in defense of those who are socially disadvantaged.



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We are trying to be all those things for our people. If we sometimes don't live up to their expectations, I think it's understandable for a government who hasn't been in power even for one year. As they say in American Westerns, the day ain't over yet.

Nothing comes unearned and goes unnoticed in a democracy – that is the beauty of it. And that is why the current government is in a hurry to make the point, to make the difference, to be more reality-bound and effective than those who were before us.

Admittedly, sometimes things don't go as smoothly as they ought to. Sometimes the government makes mistakes. In many ways, it's unavoidable considering how little experience of practical – I would like to stress this – practical transformation Ukraine amassed in the years of independence.

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Yet we are confident that we would prevail. We are confident that Ukraine, in a few years, will become a different state with different ethics, different logic of its development and a different set of rules that govern interaction between Kiev and the world, capital and provinces, between us and the people and those who govern us because we have elected them. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

MR. COLLINS: Kostyantyn, you can sit down and he'll put the mic on you; let you get off your feet.

Mr. Minister, thank you very much. And I wonder if we could prevail on you to take a few questions from the audience. And we won't keep you too long but we would like to give the audience an opportunity to say a word or two.

So, yes, sir, first in the back with the glasses.

Q: Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: And could you identify yourself please?

Q: Thank you. My name is David Nikoradze. I represent Georgian television station established in Washington, D.C.

Minister, how would you comment Ukraine-Georgia relations? And how do you see partnership between two countries in the future? And also, I was wondering to ask if you could give me any commentary about Ukraine's policy towards Georgia's territorial problems, please? Thank you, sir.

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MR. GRYSHCENKO: Well, Georgia is a member of the GUAM and that is an important international structure that we believe is now entering a new phase its life. We believe that it has a very important economic mission, first in the area of being a transit breach and an important, also, instrument of promoting cooperation in the cultural, scientific and many other areas.

It is also an important example in some of the sectors of the very deep reforms that were done in a very short time and produced serious results. Obviously, not everything can be important to Ukrainian realities. But

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quite a number of members of our government have visited Georgia lately just to see for themselves whether we can find some of the examples that could be used for our own reform agenda. We think that with Georgia, we have very normal, very pragmatic, very open relationship that is important to both sides. Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Yes. Right here, please. And the mic's coming here.

Q: Good evening. Mr. Minister, I am Yevgen Brezinski (ph); I represent the – (inaudible) – Foundation, which partly funds this conference or dialogue between civil society representatives and governmental people.

I have a simple question. What do you – I mean, Ukrainian government, current government – needs or need in a dialogue with the civil society organizations – NGO sector, first of all. And what dialogue do you need? How do you think the government should organize such a dialogue?

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MR. GRYSHCENKO: Well clearly, one cannot be effective, efficient in introducing whatever changes are needed in society without listening to plethora of views, which are based on the experience of different experts of different (pointed groups ?). And from that perspective, we believe that this dialogue can only enrich the final result of what both the government and nongovernmental experts are now trying to achieve.

Let me give you example for the reform agenda. The committee on reforms that was instituted by the decree of the president from the very outset had as a purpose to involve the international experts and the people with authority from various stratas of society who represent, among others, both of the civil society and the scientific institutions.

Only through this debate inside the specific groups aimed at specific reform agenda, we were able to arrive at specific recommendations that if not everyone is comfortable with, at least we have acquired the knowledge of the attitudes of society so that we can communicate with it when it comes to defending these reforms in parliament on the legislative agenda.

Now, there is also always a kind of equilibrium. What you can do as government in debate with civil society without going too far in your transparence – you know, WikiLeaks have shown that not everything is being discussed publicly everywhere, all the times. And it should be so because you should do some things in confidence. You should first develop the idea, then you need to fine-tune it. And then, you need to be prepared to defend it publicly. But in the process, you might have different approaches – five, seven, 10. And then, you need to develop one, but on the basis of understanding different views.

So I think the interaction between government and civil society will only grow and will become a major part of the decision-making process in Ukraine. Thank you.

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Q: Thank you. My name is Andrei Sergansky (ph). I'm with ITAR-TASS news agency of Russia. I thank you, Mr. Minister, for your remarks. There is a lot of talk about a future European missile shield, and a possible participation of such non-NATO countries as Russia in it. The question is, does Ukraine want to be part of it, to be covered by this system? And if so, how could Ukraine contribute to this project? Thank you.

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MR. GRYSCHENKO: Well, it is a well-known fact that we do have two facilities that were a part of the ABM defense system of the former Soviet Union. One is Sevastopol, the other in Mukachev. If it could be put to a good use through a joint, or as I understand the difference in terminology between United States and Russia, common system, then we would be happy to participate.

We also have serious, and as far as I know, advanced experience in developing some of the ideas which might be relevant to the effectiveness of this particular system. But first and foremost, we need to understand the logic of the current – I would hesitate to say negotiations, but exchanges between United States and Russia on where, how, on what scale and even for what purpose it would be established. So we are ready to be positive in participating in this debate. But usually the introduction of your offer of help in discussion among the two is not always welcome that much. When it would be welcome, we are ready. Thank you.

Q: Thank you. Matt Rojansky, Carnegie Endowment. Taking off on that last question actually, it seems to many of us who watch Ukraine's foreign policy in particular that very often it looks like basically sort of a marketplace policy. And I don't mean that necessarily in a – in a capitalist sense. I mean that in a – Ukraine is very good at negotiating between offers which are made by opposite sides, less good at laying out a vision of exactly what it wants the landscape to look like, what it wants the market to look like.

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So in the case – for example, Ambassador Collins mentioned in his introduction the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative. In some respects, this also tracks with President Medvedev's proposal for a new Euro-Atlantic security treaty. The ideas are out there.

You mentioned, you know, OSCE chairmanship. There are so many different vehicles. I guess my question would be, what is Ukraine's kind of ideal scenario? Or what is Ukraine's proposal for how we ought to deal with this problem of a disconnected Euro-Atlantic security space, and yet, you know, the transnational threats that we all have to deal with?

MR. GRYSCHENKO: Thank you for this very important question. You know, there are two kinds of approaches to what you should be doing on international fora in presenting your position inside your country and outside. You know, the usual task of Soviet and then Ukrainian diplomats before each year's session of United Nations General Assembly was to invent, propose, advance a new initiative. The initiative had to be always of a scale that had to catch attention, to be very significant, to be very worthy and to help resolve some global issue immediately.

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And if you look into the minutes of the General Assembly, you would find scores of these initiatives coming not only from the country of the region, but from many other countries. They liked to be very eloquent, very flashy. But we all know, those who deal with this professionally, that it's mostly hard work – not the way how you present an idea that helps resolve the problems which are real, which are serious and which need to be attended to.

Having said that, let me also say what I think would be the most realistic but still the visionary approach to European security, unresolved issues which we face today. First and foremost is Transnistria. It's close to our borders. It is important. We know that unresolved conflicts might at very unexpected time lead to a very hot conflict as such.

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We have an understanding of both the problems, the motivations of the parties to this conflict, and of the tools – how we can provide incentives. But we also have to face reality where the constitutional issue in Transnistria is not being resolved yet.

We also believe in the need of resolving as soon as possible on the basis of international law of this Armenian – on Nagorno-Karabakh, let's say, issue. It is being – again, the search is being conducted within the Minsk Group, with the full enrollment of President Obama, President Medvedev, President Sarkozy for that matter.

We will be supportive of the process when we are chairman in office. We all know that many of the approaches were tried before. What is needed is essentially is last push, not a grand idea that everyone should be living in freedom and in fraternity because there is real serious problems on the ground, which needs to be addressed seriously and with incentive to both sides.

We think that the debate on the future structure of European security that would take into the full account the needs of the countries like Ukraine, which is a non-bloc state, which has abandoned a nuclear option and which believes in a system based on international law guarantees that should be observed by all states – which, again, is not an invention but essentially a reconfirmation of what already exists in international law – is something which is both achievable and workable.

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We have ideas for other areas and for other solutions. For example, for us, fighting piracy – you know, it's ridiculous – NATO providing umbrella security and not being able to address the piracy issue, among other instruments. So if you cannot fight a few hundreds of pirates, how you can fight the newly developed threats worldwide? How you can define the mission of a major instrument that needs to address issue like that? Because here, you need military force.

We, again, have developed ideas that we have proposed to our EU, NATO partners, and within the framework of NATO how we can be part of the solution. It's practical; it has serious concern for Ukrainian people and for Ukrainian government.

You know, the slogan, the motto of this government is talk less, do more. We had previously so many people who promised the world to everyone and to the world, and did nothing. We'd rather stick to the point where we propose something that could be done. Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Take one last question. Yes, ma'am.

Q: Thank you. I'm Olena Chekov (ph) of UNIAN news agency. Mr. Minister, in your description of internal situation in Ukraine and Ukrainian international image abroad, you did not mention one important event, which was pretty unprecedented for Ukraine. I mean, the case when Czech Republic granted a former governmental official from Tymoshenko government political asylum.

So does this mean that Czech Republic found some evidence that Ukrainian government is doing political repression in Ukraine that we are not talking publicly here? Or how do you interpret this step? Thank you.

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MR. GRYSHCENKO: Well, I've omitted this particular passage from my statement because I thought that I've already made a point about interaction with opposition and what I personally believe is essentially the basis of the whole debate – but if you believe so, obviously.

You know that in the years of our independence, the Czech Republic has granted asylum to – what, close to 200, I believe, something like that. I don't remember exact figure. Two hundred people, and the peak of the asylum which was given was in 2009. The peak of the numbers – and as far as we know, official ones.

So the logic of the Czech government would be better explained by the Czech government itself, because if at any given time, whatever government is in place in Ukraine, taking this kind of decision, the logic is not clear to me at the very least.

And as far as particular case of Mr. Danylyshyn, and as far as I understand, he never was part of any political campaign. He never was part of political party efforts to gain power through elections or any political activities. He became minister because he is, as the previous government thought, an ideal expert or good expert. And he was presumably – and as far as I understand – made to sign many documents that then lead to legal responsibility.

And that is exactly what was investigation that he was part was all about. Why he sign certain documents that were clearly outside the realm of legality? What led him to do so? And nobody says that he would have been condemned. Or in his case, he's already settled from the very outset. He used an opportunity to go to a country that is known to provide more easily than the others asylum. And he received it there. We believe it is wrong.

[00:56:21]

We believe it is wrong when people who need to face corruption investigation would hide behind political kind of concerns, or something like that. We believe that in Ukraine, one has adequate means to have legal protection in the investigation. But again, you know, there are not only Ukrainians, but other countries including quite a number within the EU whose citizens have received the same treatment (in ?) as far as we know.

I wouldn't even take that much time on this particular issue, but I have to because you asked. I have omitted something which was written here along these lines – maybe a little bit shorter. It is truly less than significant. What is significant is the need for my country to have a very clear message to everyone in the current government, in previous and in future governments that if you break the law, you will be held accountable for that – very simple, important statement that needs to be sent to society at large. Thank you.

MR. COLLINS: Mr. Minister, thank you very much for your time and your candor in answering. And we very much appreciate you being with us. Thank you very much.

MR. GRYSHCENKO: Well, thank you. Thank you. It's always a pleasure. (Applause.)

(END)