



# Focus on Ukraine

March 26 – April 1, 2012





**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

***I. Overviews of political events of the week.....3***

***II. Analytical Reference.....5***

*Foreign policy.*

***Yanukovych and Obama meet tete-a-tete: looming isolation, lessons not learned.....5***



## *I. Overviews of political events of the week*

**March  
26**

**U.S. approves removal of enriched uranium from Ukraine, President Barack Obama stated at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, Korea held on March 27.**

He said this is testimony to the progress in the fight against nuclear terrorism – control over hazardous materials that can be used with bad intent and are critical in reinforcing security in the use of nuclear energy.

**Former governor of the Kharkiv oblast and leader of the oblast branch of the Batkivshchyna party Arsen Avakov was detained in Italy.**

On January 26 he criminal charges were pressed against him for abuse of power and on January 31 the prosecutor's office of the Kharkiv oblast put out an international all-points bulletin for Avakov. Interpol joined the manhunt for the opposition party member.

**March  
27**

**Viktor Yanukovich met with Barack Obama in Seoul at the summit on nuclear safety issues.**

The White House informed on its official website that Obama spoke with Yanukovich about the selective persecution of the political opposition and the status of democracy in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine's president told journalists that he discussed with his American counterpart the nuclear program.

**March  
29**

**Representatives of the PACE Monitoring Committee expressed their concern at a press conference about Ukraine's hesitancy to fulfill recommendations of the Council of Europe on releasing former government officials from prison.**

The European officials said they met with Yuriy Lutsenko in the Lukyanivka temporary holding cell and discussed the political situation, his health and his possible run in the upcoming parliamentary elections. The officials were not granted permission to meet with Yulia Tymoshenko at the Kachaniv Penitentiary.

On a positive note, co-speakers of PACE said the Ukrainian government is ready to change the Criminal Code.

**March  
30**

**Ukraine and the EU signed the Association Agreement, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed.** The document signed by Deputy Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin and EU Foreign Policy Chief Miroslav Lajcak replaces the Agreement on Partnership and

Cooperation signed in 1998. The two sides confirmed the agreement made in December 2011 on the Free Trade Zone and assumed the obligation to review the legal aspects of the document and all appendices and protocols.

---



## **II. Analytical Reference**

### **✓ Foreign policy**

#### **YANUKOVYCH AND OBAMA MEET TETE-A-TETE: LOOMING ISOLATION, LESSONS NOT LEARNED**

**On March 27 Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich had a brief meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korea. Although the meeting was not official and only lasted no less than five minutes, it was very meaningful for the Ukrainian leadership. The nature of the talks between the two presidents confirmed the international isolation of Yanukovich and his willingness to learn from his mistakes.**

*What does the nature of the meeting between Viktor Yanukovich and Barack Obama testify to? What must Ukraine do to renew its international prestige?*

### **Meetings on the run**

The nature of the coverage of the meeting between Yanukovich and Obama by representatives of Ukraine's Presidential Administration was strangely reminiscent of a similar incident last September, when Yanukovich managed to meet Obama in the corridors of the building of the UN Assembly in New York, which the Ukrainian side captured on film and immediately placed it on the official website of the Ukrainian president. While it was obvious that the Ukrainian side wanted to show that this meeting of heads of state was highly significant, its informal nature, brevity and the absence of details about the content of their conversation pointed to its seemingly official nature.

The Ukrainian side chose to use a similar tactic on March 27 by momentarily placing photos of Yanukovich and Obama on the

official website of the Ukrainian president. Despite this, it immediately was learned that this meeting, just as the previous one, took place in the corridors, meaning it was not official and lasted a mere 5 minutes. Clearly, the two sides could not discuss any serious issues in such a short time. Meanwhile, the intentions of the Ukrainian side were obvious – it wanted to deny the threat of isolation that Ukraine faced due to the fact that Yanukovich has not held official meetings with heads of states in Europe and South America over the last months.

The organization of at the very least unofficial meetings between Yanukovich and influential players on the international political scene during the summit in Seoul was clearly the main objective of Ukraine's foreign ministry.

Mind you, certain success was achieved: the Ukrainian president managed to have an informal talk



not only with Obama, but also with President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso.

Yanukovich admitted that neither of the meetings produced tangible results. Conversely, these short corridor chats proved the unwillingness of European and American high-standing officials to lend an ear to the Ukrainian president. Furthermore, it is totally possible that even Yanukovich's brief visit with Obama may have not happened at all had Ukraine earlier not made a concession to the U.S. by

### ***Double standards***

Uprooting the main causes of the isolation of the Ukrainian president would be a much more effective strategy. However, the chances of this are rather slim. Moreover, over the past months the Ukrainian leadership has demonstrated like never before its intention of ignoring the challenges and recommendations voiced by the European community. Both the politically motivated sentencing of Yuriy Lutsenko, the active continuation of the criminal case against Yulia Tymoshenko, the persecution of member of the opposition party Batkivshchyna Arsen Avakov and the blatant unwillingness of the Ukrainian parliament to heed the recommendations offered by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January are clear testimony to this. Just as is the case with the image of Yanukovich on the international arena, instead of attempts to rectify his gross violations of the fundamental

backing down from the use of enriched uranium.

How the Ukrainian side is once again trying to save face and extricate itself from this complicated situation appears quite strange. The actions of Yanukovich prove that he has already reconciled with his cold and indifferent attitude towards world leaders and instead of trying to change it he is focusing his attention on forming a positive attitude regarding his international status on the Ukrainian arena. Due to the serious divergence between desire and reality, such a strategy is already splitting at the seams.

principles of democracy, he is masking them. The recently activated PR campaign of the Ukrainian leadership in Western Europe with the aim of "whitewashing" the main figures in the criminal proceedings against the Ukrainian opposition, in particular Deputy Prosecutor General Renat Kuzmin, is clear testimony to this.

Seeing as Ukrainian politicians quite often do not keep their word by their actions, it will be very difficult for them to change the opinions of Europeans. It is quite possible that Ukraine's government officials are consciously aware of this fact. Given this, it appears that holding onto power for an indefinite period of time is more important than renewing normal relations with the European Union and other western countries. The greatest threat is that Ukrainian citizens that are deprived of that chance to make their choice on the domestic and international arenas will become hostage to scale of priorities.



### **Conclusions**

So, the brief talks between Viktor Yanukovych and Barack Obama at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korea demonstrated the unwillingness of the leaders of western countries to pay serious attention to the president of Ukraine and the fact that the Ukrainian side is trying to conceal this fact using fairly dog-eat-dog methods in disseminating information.

Looking back at a similar story in September 2011 it becomes crystal clear that President Yanukovych does not want to learn from his lessons and try to change people's attitudes towards him. Instead, he is trying to mask his attitude through propaganda campaigns in Ukraine and beyond its borders. Whatever the case, hoping that such campaigns will mollify Yanukovych's international isolation is nothing but an exercise in futility.



**“Focus jn Ukraine”** – weekly informational-analytical news bulletin prepared by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (<http://dif.org.ua>).

**DIF Analysts:**

**Iryna Bekeshkina**  
**Oleksiy Sydorчук**  
**Julia Ilchuk**  
**Maria Kutz**

**Editor-in-chief:**

**Iryna Filipchuk**

*The “Focus on Ukraine” is published by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) as part of its project implemented under Ukraine National Initiatives to Enhance Reforms (UNITER) program, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact Inc in Ukraine. This information product is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of the publication are the responsibility of DIF and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, Pact Inc. or the United States Government. No part of this report may be reproduced or transferred in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or including photocopying or by any information storage retrieval system, without the proper reference to the original source.*