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# Who'll Vote for Freedom? Elections in Belarus and Ukraine

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## **TRANSCRIPT**

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CELESTE A. WALLANDER: Thank you for joining us today. We are honored to welcome Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried to CSIS for a discussion of two very important countries in the heart of Europe, Belarus and Ukraine.

The issues that these two countries pose for U.S. policy, especially in the context of elections in each country in the coming weeks encapsulate the range of challenges and opportunities for U.S. policy in Europe and more broadly throughout Eurasia. It's a privilege to be able to host Ambassador Fried for his views on the issue of who will vote for freedom elections in Belarus and Ukraine.

Daniel Fried took the oath of office as assistant secretary of state on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and serves as the head of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. He served as special assistant to the president and senior director for European and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council from 2001 until 2005 and was principle deputy special advisor to the secretary of state for the newly independent states from 2000 to 2001.

Ambassador Fried has a distinguished career of government service in the field beginning in 1977. He has held a number of positions with the State Department serving in

Washington as well as U.S. post in Leningrad, today St. Petersburg, and Belgrade. He served on the NSE staff during the crucial period of 1993 to 1997 and played a central role in designing and implementing U.S. policy for integrating newly independent countries of the Soviet bloc into Europe, and most importantly into NATO.

He was of course, as you all know, the ambassador of the United States to Poland from 1997 to 2000. Ambassador Fried, it's a great pleasure to welcome you to CSIS, and we look forward to hearing your perspective on the ongoing work of democratic transformation and integration.

DANIEL FRIED: Well, colleagues and friends, I am at a disadvantage here because I am in the presence of people who know the situation on the ground in Ukraine and Belarus better than I do. We have a former ambassador to Ukraine sitting with us, Steve Pifer. We have former ambassador to Russia, former ambassador to Turkey, former head of the Soviet desk back in the 1980s. So I am in the presence of expertise on these issues.

Let me review with you where I think we are, where the administration thinks we are with respect to the upcoming elections in two very different countries. We are here to discuss Belarus and Ukraine. In Belarus we have to deal with the last – what is called the last dictatorship in Europe, the last outpost of tyranny, as Secretary Rice has said, where we are seeing the kinds of abuses which are familiar to use from study and life in other repressive regimes.

In Ukraine, by dramatic contrast, we are seeing an election which promises to be free, fair, and open. It is an open election because we have – none of us have any idea who is going to win. In Ukraine we are dealing with a post-communist messy democratic transition. In Belarus we are dealing roughly with a pre-democratic set of tensions.

Now, to step back, to put this in a larger context, the question we are dealing with is how far in Europe will the Democratic wave that began in 1989 extend? How far will the frontiers of freedom move? And this – the question of whether and if so how far democracy can establish itself within Eurasia, the territory of what used to be the Soviet Union, is a question with profound implications for a continental-sized area.

The Bush administration in fact – frankly, the Clinton administration that preceded it in which I also worked, did not believe we do not believe that certain countries or certain peoples are pre-ordained to succeed or fail with democratic transformation. If we believe that, we would have accepted the views of most experts that democracy would probably not succeed in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary because that was, you recall, the prevailing view in 1989.

If democracy can succeed in those post-communist countries under conditions whose difficulty now is scarcely remembered, then it can in principle at least succeed anywhere in the

post-communist hemisphere. And if it can succeed anywhere, then the question is not whether one country or another is doomed to failure but what conditions make it possible for democracy to succeed.

So the question of Belarus and its democratic evolution and the question of democratic consolidation in Ukraine have a profound impact on us all. The question of democracy's consolidation in Georgia, democratic progress in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the possibility of reform and democracy even in Uzbekistan are also – will also be affected by the results in Belarus and in Ukraine as different as those countries are.

Now, let me turn to Belarus and review it. The news is obviously not good and you needed no one from the State Department to tell you that. We are witnessing increased detentions, seizures of persons as the election approaches. The Belarusian regime is attempting to create a climate of fear and intimidation. Opposition candidate Alyaksandr Kozulin was beaten and detained on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. He may face criminal charges. One of his assailants was the notorious Colonel Papachenko who is said to be connected with some of the disappearances in 1999 and 2000.

I note also that the regime's security forces roughed up the press that was covering Kozulin, which also tells us what kind of a regime they are dealing with. Today, today in Minsk, a court sentenced several members of opposition candidate Milinkevich's campaign team, including Mr. Verchorka (sp) who I know personally, to 15 days for supposedly taking part in an illegal demonstration. Activists from the civil society organization partnership have been detained under the rather fanciful and frankly absurd claims that they are engaged in a violent revolutionary plot led by Americans.

I note also that NDI has been accused of seeking to foment violent revolution and with all respect to my friends in NDI, I have trouble imagining Nelson Ledsky engaged in anything like that. He sends good e-mails about detention of activists. He doesn't do anything like the regime is charging him with. This is Soviet style in its absurdity.

So we must assume that there will be a deeply flawed election, in fact an election, which may not deserve the name. What can we do in the circumstance? Principally, what we the United States government and we the larger community of those in the United States, North America and Europe who support democracy is to shine a bright light on Belarus and the regime's record. We can help those activists who are struggling for democracy to promote democratic change in the longer run.

We can break the regime's strangle hold on information and most important, we can through our support of the – of an election process and our support for the opposition's efforts to open up that process, can create a sense that there is a different future for Belarus than perpetual rule by Lukashenka and an eventual dictatorial successor.

The Congress and the administration have worked together to this end. I must mention and must applaud the passage near unanimously in the House yesterday of House Resolution 673, which urged the government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair election and express the support of efforts of the Belarusian people to establish a full democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

For our part, the administration has invested \$12 million in Freedom Support Act assistance to implement programs to support Belarusian efforts to build democracy in that country. We plan to sustain that level of funding this year, and will try to do so, Congress willing, into the future.

The president of the United States has personally engaged in this effort. He met with widows of two disappeared opposition figures, and he has spoken out, including yesterday in remarks in International Women's Day, about the plight of those whose husbands have presumably been murdered by the regime.

Secretary Rice, Undersecretary Burns, my deputy, David Kramer and I have all met with leaders of Belarus' opposition and civil society. David Kramer was in Minsk two weeks ago to deliver a message to the authorities that we would watch them closely, and we would take steps appropriate to the level of election fraud that we found taking place. He also met obviously with representatives of the opposition, with civil society, students, and independent media to reassure them directly that the United States, with Europe, has not forgotten Belarus and will not forget it.

I myself met with opposition candidate Milinkevich in Warsaw briefly and again in Brussels. Now, the United States has not taken a position about which candidate we favor, but I must say that I am impressed by the courage of the opposition in Belarus. They know that they are in what is – can be accurately put, a farcical campaign, but they are nevertheless doing what they can to use this campaign to spread their message among the Belarusian people.

We are working also with the European Union. I had tried myself to go to Belarus on a joint mission with Robert Cooper, my European Union counterpart. We had intended to go together to deliver a message to the senior Belarus leadership about the need to react – to act responsibly in the elections.

The Belarusian authorities refused to receive us at the same time. They first said that my European colleague could go but I could not. Then they said that I could go but my European colleague could not. And in the end we decided that we would go together at not at all. And I regret that Belarus declined this opportunity for dialogue with the United States and Europe.

Well, that is the character of the Belarus regime. We know that it is engaging in a process that will lead to its increasing self-isolation. We know that the presidential

administration plays a large role in the economy, including a maintenance of separate reserve – presidential reserve fund, which is – which stands apart from the state budget. Lukashenka once himself admitted publicly that that fund possessed a billion dollars and noted that that fund was supported by secret arms sales from Belarus to countries around the world. We have reports that link Belarus to the transfer of weapons and other military equipment to Syria, the former Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein, and others. It is said in Belarus that Lukashenka is not only the richest man in Belarus, he is one of the richest men in the entire former Soviet Union, which is saying something.

What can we expect on March 19<sup>th</sup>, and what will we do afterwards? It is a fairly easy prediction to say that the elections will not be free and fair. It is also a fairly easy prediction to say that the opposition will emerge from those elections with a greater sense of itself, with an identity, with a self-consciousness.

We must, we, the supporters of freedom and democracy in Belarus must be prepared for a long game. We must be prepared to work for the years it will take to build on the united – the base that the United opposition has presented and to work with civil society in Belarus and to make our message clear. The United States will be engaged on behalf of the Belarusian people for the long haul.

Now, let me turn from this to a radically different situation, which is Ukraine. Two hours ago I had the pleasure of attending the meeting between Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Tarasyuk. And I must say it is a pleasure to be working with a government which is conducting an election, which is by all accounts going to be the freest and fairest of any election in that country.

Ukraine is in the midst of a post-democratic political turmoil. The Orange coalition has found that governing is the hard part and that the Orange Revolution turned out to be in retrospect easy though no one thought so at the time. This is not unique to Ukraine. Almost every democratic coalition that has come to power since 1989 has faced a period usually of some years of post-democratic political turbulence. Most of those countries – in fact, almost all of those countries have managed to get past this initial period and move forward, and we hope the same will be true of Ukraine.

Now, it was a pleasure that in this meeting between the foreign minister and the secretary, the two ministers were able to note the real progress in U.S.-Ukrainian bilateral relations recently, to note some of the achievements in the last two months. The United States has restored the generalized system of preferences, GSP trade benefits to Ukraine. The United States has accorded Ukraine market-economy status. We recently signed a bilateral WTO market access agreement, and just yesterday, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to graduate Ukraine from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which follows on similar Senate action earlier this year.

Each of these steps required prior actions by Ukraine. They were not unilateral American gifts to that country. They were the result of our response to Ukraine's reforms. So when I speak of a post-Orange-Revolution period of political turbulence, it is also important to keep in mind that the Ukrainian government did, when given the opportunity, manage to push through reforms, which made possible our positive response.

Now, it is true to say that Ukraine faces a very tough road ahead. We have watched the Orange Coalition develop fissures. We have seen turbulence at the top. Ukrainians themselves have admitted that they have missed some opportunities.

We are looking forward to dealing, however, with the next Ukrainian government, and we will judge that government – assuming, as I do assume, that the elections are free and fair, we will judge that government on its actions.

Many of us were enthusiastic and greeted – welcomed the Orange Revolution, but it is up to the Ukrainian people to give us the government of their choice, and up to us to work with a democratically elected government on the basis of its actions. Now, as an analytic statement, many believe that a reconstituted Orange coalition will be best for that country's reforms.

But as – again, there is a difference between analytic judgments and the administration's policy. What we want to work with is a reformist Ukrainian government that fights corruption at home, that pursues a policy of integration with the Euro-Atlantic community abroad, and which stands in its region for democracy, for good relations with its neighbors, for which Ukraine bears only half of the responsibility, and for cooperation with the EU and with NATO and our joined efforts around the world.

I am happy to report that by all accounts, there is no – we are not witnessing any kind of the systematic administrative – abuses of administrative resources that we dealt with in the previous elections. So we must now look past – start to look past those elections and think about our response afterwards when we get the next government.

We do look forward to partnership with Ukraine. WE do support its aspirations to move ever close to the institutions of Europe. We are going to think about our policy steps – what we do as we see the new government emerge.

Let me stop here and take questions, but one final thought: We don't know and should not seek to draw great conclusions from the current state of democracy or the current state of relations among the different states of the former Soviet Union and Eurasia. We don't know where history is going to land. We don't know that the current very mixed picture of democratic reform is the final picture.

We have to be very clear about what it is we seek, which is democracy spreading as far as it can and cooperation with NATO extending as far as it can. And then the work is the responsibility of the peoples and the countries of that region. We must be very clear about what we want, very patient about what we can achieve in any given year, in any given election. And we must remember that change is sometimes for the better, even though we deal with the problems of the moment.

And with that, thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

(Applause.)

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike.)

Q: Natalie Gawdiak from Brama online Ukrainian news service.

You spoke about International Women's Day and that the president had met with widows from Belarus' disappeared. You Ukraine, we have some very good women friends who are fighting against trafficking, who are law professors, and the more – I think the more – I think it's a generalization, but the more enlightened women in Ukraine despise the convention of International Women's Day because it is a Soviet-era thing, and it's as if – you know, this makes some men yawn, but it's like women have that one day and yes we will bring you flowers and so on, but there is a great deal of inequality in the way that women are treated in many of these countries, and Ukraine unfortunately is still one of them. And I would just like to hear your take on this, and is the – maybe the administration needs to think in those terms about that.

MR. FRIED: Well, certainly – (chuckles) – you know, I work for a secretary of state who has very strong views of issues of gender equality. There is no mistaking who runs the Department of State, and there is no mistaking President Bush's views. He has said many times that he lies – he enjoys working with the strong women in his administration.

With respect to gender inequality, post-communist societies generally – I won't disagree with you about your characterization of the way International Women's Day was usually conducted in the former Soviet Union. I know what you are talking about. The post-communist societies are modernizing very quickly. As part of that modernization process – and I say this as an observation rather than a policy prescription – gender equality and moves toward gender equality has become a – one of the facts on the ground.

There are various reasons for it. I had one Polish sociologist once explain to me that in his – in post-communist Poland, women in the economy perform the classic role of previously excluded outsiders, and usually that meant in practical terms they were less connected to the corrupt old boys, pre-1989 networks, and therefore if you wanted to appoint someone as head of an equity's fund, the odds were slightly better that a woman would be less – would be more

honest. Now this was a sociologist observation. I don't know whether that is true, but I do note that in the process of post-communist transformation, women did tend to advance rather rapidly.

Now, I don't dispute the way you characterize Ukraine. You have – the example of Yulia Timoshenko, but more broadly, I think that as Ukrainian society modernizes, the same phenomenon they hold true.

Q: Adam Garfinkle, *The American Interest*. Dan, that was a really good speech, and I'm something of a connoisseur. With such a good speech that you managed to speak about Ukraine for something like 15, 20 minutes, and never mentioned the 800-pound gorilla in the room, which is the gas deal – obviously I don't expect you to comment publicly on the dynamics of all of that, but what I'm really curious about is I have heard a different range of views about how important what happens in Ukraine will be to the future of Russia. And I am wondering if we and the Europeans, as we discuss this together have a similar assessment of that larger question.

MR. FRIED: Well, I am very happy to comment on the gas deal. In fact, I remember vividly how I spent New Year's Eve and New Year's morning. (Laughter.)

First, Secretary Rice was quite eloquent on the subject. She spoke of the problem of the evident use of gas as a political tool. She spoke about this almost immediately. She was, as she is always, very clear about her views. But let me be clear about the nature of the problem of that deal. It was not that anyone objects to Russia being a major source of gas for Europe, or Ukraine, or anywhere else; Russia is and will be a source of gas. That is fine. Under the best scenarios, Russia will be making buckets-full of money selling oil and gas. Nor is it necessarily a problem that Russia want to move gradually to market prices, although what market prices are in gas, is not quite the same as what they are in oil.

But that is not a problem. There ought to be no problem in principle with moving to – beyond subsidized Soviet-type prices. The problems that critics have raised with respect to the Ukrainian gas deal have to do with transparency with some of the terms and frankly with the role of the middleman firm, Rusukaninervo (ph) which is largely widely regarded to have rather dubious connections. Transparency is important. Openness of the industry is important.

The – as a government, we want to see openness and transparency characterizing the energy markets in that part of the world so that we don't find ourselves in similar situations. The Ukrainian government is obviously debating within itself the terms of this deal. It is a tough business and this issue will be with us for some time.

The impact of Ukraine on Russia: Well, many people, Dr. Bragenski (sp) for one, has said that if Ukraine success in consolidating its democracy and developing strong relations

with the West, it will have a beneficial impact on Russia. I would put it this way: That Ukraine success will demonstrate that any country in the former Soviet Union, not just the Baltic countries which we never regarded as being – as having been part of the Soviet Union can succeed in a post-communist democratic free market transformation.

If Ukraine can do it, so to speak, well, any country can, and that includes Russia. I do not believe – it is common in Washington now to say that Russia democracy is finished, that it's doomed, it's the return of the Soviet Union – all of that – I don't think so; I don't think so. I think we should take a longer view and recognize that Russia's own evolution hasn't ended, and we should – we should think about our own time horizons as we analyze it, and I think Ukraine's progress will be beneficial in this context.

Q: Stephen Olynyk, the Atlantic Council.

Different electoral systems – likely to produce different outcomes. The Ukraine changed its electoral system from mixed to wholly proportional. Do you believe that this is an appropriate system for Ukraine, and what can we expect in terms of the results in this election?

MR. FRIED: No American government official should really express an opinion – we are not very well equipped to express opinions on the details of electoral counting. We don't have proportional systems in this country; we have what the British call first-past-the post, so we really don't understand the different models. They have different effects, sometimes unintended. What we look for in the elections is basically – is a rough sense the level – that the playing field is level. It seems to be the case in Ukraine today.

The polling data – well, I think we all know that it generally shows regions – Yanukovich's party ahead. It shows Nasha Ukrayina in second place, Timoshenko's party in third, Lytvyn's (ph) party after that. The question is going to be what the numbers are and what this translates into in terms of seats. We will deal with the result, but I am certainly not going to comment on the details of the electoral process.

MS. WALLANDER: I was remiss in reminding you. Could everyone make sure that you have turned off the phones and pagers. I hear a little bit of ringing here and there, and please silence them or turn them off until after we are done with the conversation.

Q: (Off mike) – good to see you, Dan.

I have a very specific question about Belarus. You have mentioned that one of the future actions after the upcoming election, depending on the results, that U.S. administration envisions is the emphasis of information campaign bringing more information to people in Belarus. Intermedia's survey work for the past several years there – we have been doing public opinion – shows clear connection between the people that receive information from

international broadcasters. This group of population feels less closely to Lukashenka and they are also less optimistic about the future of Belarus. They are more concerned about it.

Yet, the 2007 budget that U.S. administration proposed has seized 13.5 percent increase in budget to the Middle East. There really is not a substantial budget increase to programming directly in Belarusian language that our – (inaudible) – and indeed, as you said, it's one of the last tyrannies in that part of the world. Is this just an omission or you think that the number of programming that is available or the venues by which it is still overt is sufficient?

MR. FRIED: We have increased our programs, our immediate programs with respect to Belarus and we have worked with Europe as it has increased its media programs for Belarus. I know that Poland, which is – has a very deep knowledge base about Ukraine is doing very much the same. If you are asking me whether I would be happy with additional funding for Belarus or any other democracy programs in my domain, well, I wouldn't complain.

But the – we think we have got – the budgets we have are sufficient to do a good job. Could we do a better job? Well, perfection is – sure. You can always do more with more. But the questions are we able to put together media programs, which have the potential to be effective? And I think the answer is yes. There are a number of them. Some of them are rather innovative; there are Internet programs; it's not just radio that nobody can receive. So we have been pretty – we and the Europeans have been pretty creative in this.

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike.)

Q: Serhiy Kudelia, Ukrainian service for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

You mentioned that official Washington doesn't really care about the color of the future coalition and that you are willing to work with the reformist element basically. But the leaders of the Orange Revolution put it in a much more dramatic fashion. They are saying that this election again presents a fateful choice for Ukrainians and that Ukraine will again be facing some of the crossroads. Is there any concern in the official Washington about the potential reversal of democratic gains over the last year, if, for example, Mr. Yanukovich becomes prime minister given his record and background, and so.

MR. FRIED: Look, I appreciate the question, okay. This is a very legitimate question. But I'll stand by what I said: We supported democracy in Ukraine and we supported the Orange Revolution, that is the Orange Revolution that called for free and fair elections – not because we were partisan. It is not our job to make a choice that the Ukrainian people should make. It is our job to support the right of the Ukrainian people to make that choice and then to work with the government that the Ukrainian people chooses. That is the point of what I said.

It is not for me or any other official from the United States to get up and say, well, this party or this party is better for Ukrainians. We have done what we have done so that

Ukrainians can make that choice. Then we will judge the party – the next government by its actions. As an analytic statement, we have had a lot of experience since 1989 in dealing with parties that win elections that are free and fair that themselves don't have very good records rooted in their past. I mean, the ex-communist parties.

The question that you posed initially came up with the Lithuanian and Polish elections of '92 and '93 and the Hungarian election a little while later. And there was a great deal written in the mid-'90s about the wave of democracy being reversed – the post-communists are back and it's the end. It turned out not to be the end. In fact, the post-communist parties generally governed as social democrats, we have worked with many of them, and we learned to work with governments on the basis of what they did, not the basis of who they once were.

But we were always mindful of governments past and we looked hard. Now, that is not – that may not be a fully satisfactory answer, but it's actually the best I can do and it is the truth. We all supported – all. We had a great deal invested in the Orange Revolution not because it represented particular parties but because it represented democracy. It was a Ukrainian identity crystallizing itself in a democratic form. Now it is up to the Ukrainian people; it is their choice.

MS. WALLANDER: Tar?

Q: Taras Kuzio, George Washington University.

Based on the polling results that you have also mentioned, it would seem that the largest faction in the Ukrainian parliament, which will now be for five years, not four, will be regions of Ukraine, currently regions of Ukraine as opposed to Ukraine's membership of NATO. So the largest faction of the Ukrainian parliament would be opposed to NATO membership. Will this fact and possibly the fact that maybe regions of Ukraine will be in the governing coalition have an impact on whether NATO will invite Ukraine into a membership action plan at its Riga summit?

MR. FRIED: Well, we support NATO's further enlargement, and our general rule in considering the particulars of NATO enlargement is whether a given country first wants to join NATO and, second, is it ready to join NATO. When countries want to join NATO and are ready to join NATO, well, the experience since this debate started in the mid-'90s is that they generally do join NATO. We will look at see what the next government of Ukraine wants. There is obviously a question as to whether NATO will offer a membership action plan to Ukraine later this year.

The issue is not so much for NATO and it has never really been so much a NATO choice as it has been a NATO response to the choice that nations make. NATO is not the Warsaw Pact. We don't want countries in that don't want to be in. Being in the alliance is hard work. NATO's soldiers are engaged in, for god's sakes, Afghanistan, and they are

increasing their numbers. We want countries in the alliance that have a commitment to NATO's purposes.

Ukraine has made outstanding contributions in Kosovo, in Iraq. NATO has provided lift – Ukraine has provided lift for NATO so I have no doubt Ukraine possesses the ability to be – to contribute to the alliance, but we have to see. So we will see what kind of a government that they get. I am aware of course of region's current position. We will see how they evolve or if they evolve.

MS. WALLANDER: If someone – yes, right next to you. Thank you.

Q: Hi. I am Morgan Williams with SigmaBleyzer Equity Investment Company. We invest in Ukraine.

In terms of Ukraine, there are a lot of observers that are being very – becoming very concerned about democracy in Ukraine not because of the election being free and fair but democracy as much more than just a free and fair election. You have very few electoral choices in Ukraine now under the new system. The people only get to vote for a party; they don't get to vote for any member of the parliament directly.

Most seats they say in Ukraine are now for sale. Anybody that has 5 or 10 million can easily get into the parliament, and they only want in the parliament for two reasons. One is they get immunity from the law and secondly to protect their own business interests. And then when you can be a member of the parliament and never show up and vote every time there is an election – I mean, every time that there is a bill that comes up before the floor, you are going to have 100 percent voting record and never be there. And then when the governors are all appointed, and now you have immunity down at the local level. They say there is 10 or 15,000 officials in Ukraine now who have total immunity.

So when you add all of that, it is not a very democratic system even though the elections are going to be free and fair, and most of the representation in the parliament will not come from across the land; it will only come from Kiev, Kharkiv, a few places where most of the wealthy businessmen live. So all and all, they are very concerned about what the new parliament is going to look like. It's going to be totally dominated by millionaires who never have to be there to vote, don't have to participate in a committee process.

And so it's a lot of very alarming things going on in the Ukraine in terms of the total democratic picture not related to a free and fair election. So your comment about the total democratic pictures in Ukraine, not just this election.

MR. FRIED: Well, I have no trouble stimulating that corruption is a major problem both in Ukraine and more generally in most post-communist countries. We have seen that the problem of corruption is one of the chief problems that arises in the period between the

collapse of the command Soviet-type economy and the rise of institutions relevant to a modern economy. Every post-communist country has faced this problem in one or another form. The records of post-communist countries dealing with it have been mixed: some better some worse.

I see no reason to claim that Ukraine is any different, although I would say – and I will stand by this – that if I had to judge the general overall level of democracy now as opposed to, say, the last year of President Kuchma rule, I would pick now. So that is a better trend line.

I don't want to comment on the particulars except to say that anti-corruption action is essential and anti-corruption platform will in Ukraine sooner or later be seen as effective, and I hope it is sooner, and I hope the next Ukrainian government takes care of problems of corruption, of transparency, and of business interests going beyond their proper sphere. If it does, it should do so in a way consistent with the rule of law, that is not by repressing business people, but by creating institutions appropriate to a modern economy to perform the proper regulatory functions.

This isn't – Ukraine isn't the first country to deal with these things. So I will take the point and just say that post-communist takes a while, and it requires leadership to overcome these problems, which are serious.

Q: Walter Stankievich, Belarusian Review.

You stated that long-term haul is the key element in the State Department's policy. The long-term haul sounds great, but unfortunately some of the implementing agencies that exist in other countries that help the civil society to grow have been thrown out, starting out with the open society by Soros, NDI, IRI, IRX, USAID – all of them operate from outside the country. So it would be interesting to know if there are any specifics as to how the long-term haul will operate.

One of the areas that is very much needed – was mentioned before, is the ability to provide alternative information to the information that is available in the country. And since that is one area where you don't need implementing agencies within the country, that should be the area that – lots of money is spent right now. And I know that the United States government has supported the European newly created venture, but what is needed, for example, here – Voice of America has never had a Belarusian service. The time for it is now, however small, however modern, however influential it should be, it should be done now, and this is something that we can do here. Thank you.

MR. FRIED: Well, I agree with you that media is critical. We have discussed this. The people in the States Department responsible for the media programs and for democracy assistance have come up with some creative ways to proceed. I will certainly discuss with them the possibility of VOA, but we look at the mix of what is available and what is effective.

Yes, you are right that many of the implementing agents, open society institutes, a lot of other NGOs have been tossed out of Minsk. I wouldn't be surprised if the pressure increases. This is not unknown and human rights groups and groups that support civil society have actually some experience working in conditions like this. It isn't new. It isn't new. There are people who know what they are doing even under tough conditions.

MS. WALLANDER: I have a question. I just – while we are waiting. I will observe that I know that there is a kind of movement among people who are kind of interested in this to study – Belarus may end up being a leading case in the study of alternative technologies and modern technologies for breaking information blockades. So there is a chance to be a leader in the world.

Q: Wojciech Piasecki, BPJ Holding Corporation.

I have a question about the EU enlargement. Would the United States, when the time comes, lobby in Brussels for the EU enlargement to the East like it does for Turkey now?

MR. FRIED: If I said something forward leading now, I would have a phone call – I would get a phone call within the hour from – in fact, phone calls within the hour from some of my Europeans friends politely urging me to say no more. (Laughter.)

Look, European Union is having its own debate about enlargement. This is all wrapped up with the constitution. It is wrapped up with a lot of other issues. Our European friends have urged us – they have said – (chuckles) – please – thank you for your conversations about Turkey but can you step aside. Seriously, what we say to our European friends is, look, we understand this is difficult, just don't shut the door.

Ukraine would not in the best of circumstances be ready for EU membership even if this were on active offer for many years. By the time it is ready, the European Union may have gone through this debate. So I think simply keeping the door open is what – in principle is what we want without raising this issue without too high a profile.

Q: Hi, Shannon Wendell, the Belarus country director for Office of the Secretary of Defense.

I just have a quick question. You spoke earlier about continuing engagement with the Belarusian civil society for the long time. I am curious, what is your view on possibly increasing engagement with low-level government and military officials to expose them to the West in the hope that we have contacts that we could possibly use in the future.

MR. FRIED: Well, how novel: An inter-agency meeting right here and on camera. (Laughter.)

MR. FRIED: Yes, and thank you so much.

The – this is a – it’s a serious question and a worthy one. After the elections, how much engagement with the Belarusian regime, how much discrimination among the elements of the regime, that is a fair question. It’s not – okay, analogies are always weak so forgive me in advance, but I do remember that during the worst period of Meciar’s rule in Slovakia, we maintained ties with the Slovak government and in retrospect we were glad we did. That is not to say the situation is the same. It is not the same in Belarus; frankly, it’s worse, but it was pretty bad in Slovakia for a time.

We will have to – we will have to think through the best way to proceed. Our European – some of our European friends have urged us not to isolate completely, Belarusian authorities and we will work through this question no doubt consulting with and hearing the views of my colleagues in the – in the Defense Department.

MS. WALLANDER: I am going to go onto my own version of progressive “Zhenski Den” and continuing opening the floor to some of our female colleagues. Did you still have a question? And Asta, that means you’re next.

Q: I’m Nancy Donaldson. I work at Dutko World Wide. And we have had the privilege of working with you and many colleagues on some of the elections this year. So we are observing the rather wild discussions about the administration’s pro-democracy effort and promotion.

And I just want to say that one of the things that we have learned is that in a world where anti-Americanism is very popular, the response of so many people and of the business sector and of opposition leaders to President Bush’s commitment to promoting democracy around the world is to have a large hope grow and to really believe, and unfortunately to have huge expectations about what that might mean. And I wonder if you – and including the private sector. That has been the most interesting thing for us, to see the engagement of private sector in elections.

So I wonder if you would comment on your earlier point that you are looking at conditions as much as countries when you are looking for democracy about that aspect of conditions and what, if you will, what you and everyone are learning about this pro-democracy drive. It is a general question but it is also very important in terms of the debate.

MR. FRIED: It is an important question. President Bush in his second inaugural outlined a very forward-leaning strategy of support for freedom, the so-called freedom agenda. In it – and these are my words, not his – he embraced America’s support for democracy and democratic movements. He did not accept the argument of so-called realists that democracy is something that we should give second-order attention to. And he is

someone – the president is someone who speaks clearly. He has been accused of many things, but lack of clarity is not one of them.

Now, we have to be clear about what we seek, we, the administration. We have to be clear about calling things the way we are, but we also have to be clear about what it – what it is possible to accomplish in any given country, in any given time. For example, if a country in the former Soviet Union is moving by fits and starts in generally a good direction but isn't a democracy, what should be our response? And I don't want to get into specifics but I want to talk about a principle.

Well, if a country is moving in the right direction, I think we will want to be more patient and more supportive. If a country is moving radically in the wrong direction, well, I am not going to be much interested in arguments that democracy must wait a generation or two generations because that is just what dictators say.

So the challenge the administration faces, and I'll admit this frankly, is how to operationalize a very bold vision with what it is possible to accomplish every day, and that poses a set of choices, and it generates questions like yours or tougher questions. But frankly, I would rather have to deal with those questions than deal with the problems generated by a cynical policy of pure real politic that didn't regard the internal arrangements of countries as any of our business.

This question often is posed with respect to the Middle East and usually and in terms rougher than you just posed it. It is usually posed in some form like this: What do you think you are doing supporting democracy when you get Hamas, something like that? And the answer is, well, what did we think we were doing all of those decades when we supported dictators? Did we not try that other route and nothing else for all of our years and what did it give us?

I would much rather deal with the problems of support for democracy, recognizing there are problems than the other – than the problems of the alternative.

MS. WALLANDER: Here.

Q: Okay, Asta Banionis with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Mr. Fried, could you tell us if the U.S. government has taken a position on Russia's government expanding its broadcasting into Europe. Specifically Voice of Russia two years ago signed an agreement with the German government has been using very powerful a.m. transmitters to broadcast in Russian, German, and English to countries in the entire region. They just reconfirmed that contract and are now expanding. They do 18 hours a day. Does the U.S. government welcome this addition to the broadcasting family?

MR. FRIED: Well, I can hardly complain about broadcasts into Europe. I will say that I assume that means we will always enjoy the understanding and support of the Russian government for American and European efforts to support broadcasting of information into places like Belarus or Uzbekistan. Therefore on that basis of presumed reciprocity and a mutual understanding with respect freedom of information, I have nothing bad to say about it.

MS. WALLANDER: A point of agreement. Ambassador?

Q: Thank you. Vygaudas Usackas – Embassy of Lithuania.

If I may compliment the candid interagency discussion with a transatlantic dialogue, I just want to assure you that when we make that call to lobby for Ukraine, you may be expecting calls for disagreement, but you will also be receiving calls of strong support for Ukraine's perspective. And I think – unfortunately from the national perspective, Lithuania – (inaudible) – at EU wasn't able to provide a prospective to date, which have been an empowering encouragement to the Ukrainian people. That is our national point of view.

But coming back to Belarus and having read many reports and articles on developments in Belarus, many authors suggest that the key of the regime change in Belarus lie in Moscow. How would you comment on that? And is there anything the United States and European Union could do in that respect? Thank you.

MR. FRIED: Well, first let me – Ambassador, let me thank you or thank the government of Lithuania for all of you have done to support democracy in Belarus. Your government, the Polish government, others, who have real deep – who have deep knowledge of that country are critical.

I hear it said from time to time that the key to change in Belarus – and you used the phrase, “regime change,” not me, just for the record – the key to democratic progress in Belarus is in Moscow. I am not sure I agree with that. I don't think that we can hold Moscow responsible for Lukashenka. I don't think that they – that Moscow created Lukashenka. And I don't think it is in Russia's interest to make Lukashenka and his regime their problem. They don't have to. That is, they didn't put him into power.

That said, I would – it is up to Russia to define its own interests. I would think that Russia – and would hope that Russia would find it in its interest to have a democratizing prospering Belarus on its West – to its West rather than a Belarus engaging in increasing repression. Stability, which is a legitimate and natural concern that Russia has about the countries of this region also comes through reform.

To choose at random an example, let's take Lithuania. You are a stable democracy, a prospering country, a member of the EU. I am not aware of any problems that you have at any – serious problems with any of your neighbors including Russia the moment – a perfectly

good neighbor. The alternative might have been a country which was not prospering, not democratic, problems with the neighbors – the business we saw between World Wars I and II.

Obviously it's better for Russia to have reformist neighbors to its west; therefore they ought to support reform in Belarus but that is me speaking and the Russians will decide what they want. I would welcome the chance to work with Russia for the sake of reform in Belarus.

Q: Julia Nanay, PFC Energy

I was wondering if you have thought at all about a Russian-Belarus union and how you think that might progress by 2008.

MR. FRIED: We would not recognize a decision – an undemocratic decision to join Belarus and Russia. That has been the policy of – that has been policy for some time. I don't know that this is a likely – I don't think that this is likely. I think it's talked about but I don't think it will happen, but in any event, these questions, if they are decided need to be decided on the basis of a free, democratic choice. That choice is not currently available to the Belarusian people.

Q: Thank you. Sarah Mendelson, CSIS.

I too would welcome the Russian government supporting democratic and human rights activists in Belarus but that would premise probably another administration in Russia that also supports its own democratic and human rights defenders.

How much of a – just thinking ahead – and we can pose this in all sorts of hypothetical – there is a large country in Eurasia that has a close relationship with a smaller country. To what extent do you and your European colleagues – is the U.S. and the EU are looking for March 20, for example.

Should there be some kind of violence in Belarus? How much do you see of a replay of what happened in Ukraine in the fall 2004 where there is a sort of wall? And it happened also in 2000 of course with Serbia, where the U.S. and the Europeans are on one side, Russia is on another side, in a year where – and in a few months where we are going to be meeting in Petersburg around the G8. I mean, what is the kind of thinking, kinds of signals are you sending -- and understanding that the EU is not always consistent.

Their response, their press release, for example, on the Chechen parliamentary elections in November 2005 was – it was odd. I mean, it was – (inaudible) – elections that the OSCE refused to observed. No Europeans were there, no Americans were there, and the EU is sort of saying we applaud this electoral process. I mean, is there a – there is not going to be any kind of message like that on the Belarusian election I assume either from the U.S. or the Europeans.

MR. FRIED: Well, the European Union has been quite staunch and European government have been quite strong. Milinkevich was in Europe. He was received by the French foreign minister; he was received well in Berlin. I sense a very strong consensus in Europe in support of democracy.

Now, the OSCE which has a mandate and expertise to make calls on elections is present in force in Belarus. They are going to make – they are going to make a call; we are going to pay attention to that call. I am fairly confident in predicting that the United States and the European Union will back the OSCE, that our statements will be similar, and that that problem will not exist.

I very much hope that Russia does not take an opposite point of view. I think it would be extremely odd if the OSCE, of which Russia is a member, and the OSCE election mission to which Russia has sent observers, were to take a radically different national position than the rest of the OSCE. That would be strange. I hope that that doesn't happen. I hope that that doesn't happen.

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike) – opportunity to have a long discussion –

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Center for Strategic & International Studies  
Washington, DC

# Who'll Vote for Freedom? Elections in Belarus and Ukraine

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*U.S. Department of State*

Chair

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## **TRANSCRIPT**

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CELESTE A. WALLANDER: Thank you for joining us today. We are honored to welcome Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried to CSIS for a discussion of two very important countries in the heart of Europe, Belarus and Ukraine.

The issues that these two countries pose for U.S. policy, especially in the context of elections in each country in the coming weeks encapsulate the range of challenges and opportunities for U.S. policy in Europe and more broadly throughout Eurasia. It's a privilege to be able to host Ambassador Fried for his views on the issue of who will vote for freedom elections in Belarus and Ukraine.

Daniel Fried took the oath of office as assistant secretary of state on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and serves as the head of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. He served as special assistant to the president and senior director for European and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council from 2001 until 2005 and was principle deputy special advisor to the secretary of state for the newly independent states from 2000 to 2001.

Ambassador Fried has a distinguished career of government service in the field beginning in 1977. He has held a number of positions with the State Department serving in

Washington as well as U.S. post in Leningrad, today St. Petersburg, and Belgrade. He served on the NSE staff during the crucial period of 1993 to 1997 and played a central role in designing and implementing U.S. policy for integrating newly independent countries of the Soviet bloc into Europe, and most importantly into NATO.

He was of course, as you all know, the ambassador of the United States to Poland from 1997 to 2000. Ambassador Fried, it's a great pleasure to welcome you to CSIS, and we look forward to hearing your perspective on the ongoing work of democratic transformation and integration.

DANIEL FRIED: Well, colleagues and friends, I am at a disadvantage here because I am in the presence of people who know the situation on the ground in Ukraine and Belarus better than I do. We have a former ambassador to Ukraine sitting with us, Steve Pifer. We have former ambassador to Russia, former ambassador to Turkey, former head of the Soviet desk back in the 1980s. So I am in the presence of expertise on these issues.

Let me review with you where I think we are, where the administration thinks we are with respect to the upcoming elections in two very different countries. We are here to discuss Belarus and Ukraine. In Belarus we have to deal with the last – what is called the last dictatorship in Europe, the last outpost of tyranny, as Secretary Rice has said, where we are seeing the kinds of abuses which are familiar to use from study and life in other repressive regimes.

In Ukraine, by dramatic contrast, we are seeing an election which promises to be free, fair, and open. It is an open election because we have – none of us have any idea who is going to win. In Ukraine we are dealing with a post-communist messy democratic transition. In Belarus we are dealing roughly with a pre-democratic set of tensions.

Now, to step back, to put this in a larger context, the question we are dealing with is how far in Europe will the Democratic wave that began in 1989 extend? How far will the frontiers of freedom move? And this – the question of whether and if so how far democracy can establish itself within Eurasia, the territory of what used to be the Soviet Union, is a question with profound implications for a continental-sized area.

The Bush administration in fact – frankly, the Clinton administration that preceded it in which I also worked, did not believe we do not believe that certain countries or certain peoples are pre-ordained to succeed or fail with democratic transformation. If we believe that, we would have accepted the views of most experts that democracy would probably not succeed in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary because that was, you recall, the prevailing view in 1989.

If democracy can succeed in those post-communist countries under conditions whose difficulty now is scarcely remembered, then it can in principle at least succeed anywhere in the

post-communist hemisphere. And if it can succeed anywhere, then the question is not whether one country or another is doomed to failure but what conditions make it possible for democracy to succeed.

So the question of Belarus and its democratic evolution and the question of democratic consolidation in Ukraine have a profound impact on us all. The question of democracy's consolidation in Georgia, democratic progress in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the possibility of reform and democracy even in Uzbekistan are also – will also be affected by the results in Belarus and in Ukraine as different as those countries are.

Now, let me turn to Belarus and review it. The news is obviously not good and you needed no one from the State Department to tell you that. We are witnessing increased detentions, seizures of persons as the election approaches. The Belarusian regime is attempting to create a climate of fear and intimidation. Opposition candidate Alyaksandr Kozulin was beaten and detained on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. He may face criminal charges. One of his assailants was the notorious Colonel Papachenko who is said to be connected with some of the disappearances in 1999 and 2000.

I note also that the regime's security forces roughed up the press that was covering Kozulin, which also tells us what kind of a regime they are dealing with. Today, today in Minsk, a court sentenced several members of opposition candidate Milinkevich's campaign team, including Mr. Verchorka (sp) who I know personally, to 15 days for supposedly taking part in an illegal demonstration. Activists from the civil society organization partnership have been detained under the rather fanciful and frankly absurd claims that they are engaged in a violent revolutionary plot led by Americans.

I note also that NDI has been accused of seeking to foment violent revolution and with all respect to my friends in NDI, I have trouble imagining Nelson Ledsky engaged in anything like that. He sends good e-mails about detention of activists. He doesn't do anything like the regime is charging him with. This is Soviet style in its absurdity.

So we must assume that there will be a deeply flawed election, in fact an election, which may not deserve the name. What can we do in the circumstance? Principally, what we the United States government and we the larger community of those in the United States, North America and Europe who support democracy is to shine a bright light on Belarus and the regime's record. We can help those activists who are struggling for democracy to promote democratic change in the longer run.

We can break the regime's strangle hold on information and most important, we can through our support of the – of an election process and our support for the opposition's efforts to open up that process, can create a sense that there is a different future for Belarus than perpetual rule by Lukashenka and an eventual dictatorial successor.

The Congress and the administration have worked together to this end. I must mention and must applaud the passage near unanimously in the House yesterday of House Resolution 673, which urged the government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair election and express the support of efforts of the Belarusian people to establish a full democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

For our part, the administration has invested \$12 million in Freedom Support Act assistance to implement programs to support Belarusian efforts to build democracy in that country. We plan to sustain that level of funding this year, and will try to do so, Congress willing, into the future.

The president of the United States has personally engaged in this effort. He met with widows of two disappeared opposition figures, and he has spoken out, including yesterday in remarks in International Women's Day, about the plight of those whose husbands have presumably been murdered by the regime.

Secretary Rice, Undersecretary Burns, my deputy, David Kramer and I have all met with leaders of Belarus' opposition and civil society. David Kramer was in Minsk two weeks ago to deliver a message to the authorities that we would watch them closely, and we would take steps appropriate to the level of election fraud that we found taking place. He also met obviously with representatives of the opposition, with civil society, students, and independent media to reassure them directly that the United States, with Europe, has not forgotten Belarus and will not forget it.

I myself met with opposition candidate Milinkevich in Warsaw briefly and again in Brussels. Now, the United States has not taken a position about which candidate we favor, but I must say that I am impressed by the courage of the opposition in Belarus. They know that they are in what is – can be accurately put, a farcical campaign, but they are nevertheless doing what they can to use this campaign to spread their message among the Belarusian people.

We are working also with the European Union. I had tried myself to go to Belarus on a joint mission with Robert Cooper, my European Union counterpart. We had intended to go together to deliver a message to the senior Belarus leadership about the need to react – to act responsibly in the elections.

The Belarusian authorities refused to receive us at the same time. They first said that my European colleague could go but I could not. Then they said that I could go but my European colleague could not. And in the end we decided that we would go together at not at all. And I regret that Belarus declined this opportunity for dialogue with the United States and Europe.

Well, that is the character of the Belarus regime. We know that it is engaging in a process that will lead to its increasing self-isolation. We know that the presidential

administration plays a large role in the economy, including a maintenance of separate reserve – presidential reserve fund, which is – which stands apart from the state budget. Lukashenka once himself admitted publicly that that fund possessed a billion dollars and noted that that fund was supported by secret arms sales from Belarus to countries around the world. We have reports that link Belarus to the transfer of weapons and other military equipment to Syria, the former Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein, and others. It is said in Belarus that Lukashenka is not only the richest man in Belarus, he is one of the richest men in the entire former Soviet Union, which is saying something.

What can we expect on March 19<sup>th</sup>, and what will we do afterwards? It is a fairly easy prediction to say that the elections will not be free and fair. It is also a fairly easy prediction to say that the opposition will emerge from those elections with a greater sense of itself, with an identity, with a self-consciousness.

We must, we, the supporters of freedom and democracy in Belarus must be prepared for a long game. We must be prepared to work for the years it will take to build on the united – the base that the United opposition has presented and to work with civil society in Belarus and to make our message clear. The United States will be engaged on behalf of the Belarusian people for the long haul.

Now, let me turn from this to a radically different situation, which is Ukraine. Two hours ago I had the pleasure of attending the meeting between Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Tarasyuk. And I must say it is a pleasure to be working with a government which is conducting an election, which is by all accounts going to be the freest and fairest of any election in that country.

Ukraine is in the midst of a post-democratic political turmoil. The Orange coalition has found that governing is the hard part and that the Orange Revolution turned out to be in retrospect easy though no one thought so at the time. This is not unique to Ukraine. Almost every democratic coalition that has come to power since 1989 has faced a period usually of some years of post-democratic political turbulence. Most of those countries – in fact, almost all of those countries have managed to get past this initial period and move forward, and we hope the same will be true of Ukraine.

Now, it was a pleasure that in this meeting between the foreign minister and the secretary, the two ministers were able to note the real progress in U.S.-Ukrainian bilateral relations recently, to note some of the achievements in the last two months. The United States has restored the generalized system of preferences, GSP trade benefits to Ukraine. The United States has accorded Ukraine market-economy status. We recently signed a bilateral WTO market access agreement, and just yesterday, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to graduate Ukraine from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which follows on similar Senate action earlier this year.

Each of these steps required prior actions by Ukraine. They were not unilateral American gifts to that country. They were the result of our response to Ukraine's reforms. So when I speak of a post-Orange-Revolution period of political turbulence, it is also important to keep in mind that the Ukrainian government did, when given the opportunity, manage to push through reforms, which made possible our positive response.

Now, it is true to say that Ukraine faces a very tough road ahead. We have watched the Orange Coalition develop fissures. We have seen turbulence at the top. Ukrainians themselves have admitted that they have missed some opportunities.

We are looking forward to dealing, however, with the next Ukrainian government, and we will judge that government – assuming, as I do assume, that the elections are free and fair, we will judge that government on its actions.

Many of us were enthusiastic and greeted – welcomed the Orange Revolution, but it is up to the Ukrainian people to give us the government of their choice, and up to us to work with a democratically elected government on the basis of its actions. Now, as an analytic statement, many believe that a reconstituted Orange coalition will be best for that country's reforms.

But as – again, there is a difference between analytic judgments and the administration's policy. What we want to work with is a reformist Ukrainian government that fights corruption at home, that pursues a policy of integration with the Euro-Atlantic community abroad, and which stands in its region for democracy, for good relations with its neighbors, for which Ukraine bears only half of the responsibility, and for cooperation with the EU and with NATO and our joined efforts around the world.

I am happy to report that by all accounts, there is no – we are not witnessing any kind of the systematic administrative – abuses of administrative resources that we dealt with in the previous elections. So we must now look past – start to look past those elections and think about our response afterwards when we get the next government.

We do look forward to partnership with Ukraine. WE do support its aspirations to move ever close to the institutions of Europe. We are going to think about our policy steps – what we do as we see the new government emerge.

Let me stop here and take questions, but one final thought: We don't know and should not seek to draw great conclusions from the current state of democracy or the current state of relations among the different states of the former Soviet Union and Eurasia. We don't know where history is going to land. We don't know that the current very mixed picture of democratic reform is the final picture.

We have to be very clear about what it is we seek, which is democracy spreading as far as it can and cooperation with NATO extending as far as it can. And then the work is the responsibility of the peoples and the countries of that region. We must be very clear about what we want, very patient about what we can achieve in any given year, in any given election. And we must remember that change is sometimes for the better, even though we deal with the problems of the moment.

And with that, thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

(Applause.)

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike.)

Q: Natalie Gawdiak from Brama online Ukrainian news service.

You spoke about International Women's Day and that the president had met with widows from Belarus' disappeared. You Ukraine, we have some very good women friends who are fighting against trafficking, who are law professors, and the more – I think the more – I think it's a generalization, but the more enlightened women in Ukraine despise the convention of International Women's Day because it is a Soviet-era thing, and it's as if – you know, this makes some men yawn, but it's like women have that one day and yes we will bring you flowers and so on, but there is a great deal of inequality in the way that women are treated in many of these countries, and Ukraine unfortunately is still one of them. And I would just like to hear your take on this, and is the – maybe the administration needs to think in those terms about that.

MR. FRIED: Well, certainly – (chuckles) – you know, I work for a secretary of state who has very strong views of issues of gender equality. There is no mistaking who runs the Department of State, and there is no mistaking President Bush's views. He has said many times that he lies – he enjoys working with the strong women in his administration.

With respect to gender inequality, post-communist societies generally – I won't disagree with you about your characterization of the way International Women's Day was usually conducted in the former Soviet Union. I know what you are talking about. The post-communist societies are modernizing very quickly. As part of that modernization process – and I say this as an observation rather than a policy prescription – gender equality and moves toward gender equality has become a – one of the facts on the ground.

There are various reasons for it. I had one Polish sociologist once explain to me that in his – in post-communist Poland, women in the economy perform the classic role of previously excluded outsiders, and usually that meant in practical terms they were less connected to the corrupt old boys, pre-1989 networks, and therefore if you wanted to appoint someone as head of an equity's fund, the odds were slightly better that a woman would be less – would be more

honest. Now this was a sociologist observation. I don't know whether that is true, but I do note that in the process of post-communist transformation, women did tend to advance rather rapidly.

Now, I don't dispute the way you characterize Ukraine. You have – the example of Yulia Timoshenko, but more broadly, I think that as Ukrainian society modernizes, the same phenomenon they hold true.

Q: Adam Garfinkle, *The American Interest*. Dan, that was a really good speech, and I'm something of a connoisseur. With such a good speech that you managed to speak about Ukraine for something like 15, 20 minutes, and never mentioned the 800-pound gorilla in the room, which is the gas deal – obviously I don't expect you to comment publicly on the dynamics of all of that, but what I'm really curious about is I have heard a different range of views about how important what happens in Ukraine will be to the future of Russia. And I am wondering if we and the Europeans, as we discuss this together have a similar assessment of that larger question.

MR. FRIED: Well, I am very happy to comment on the gas deal. In fact, I remember vividly how I spent New Year's Eve and New Year's morning. (Laughter.)

First, Secretary Rice was quite eloquent on the subject. She spoke of the problem of the evident use of gas as a political tool. She spoke about this almost immediately. She was, as she is always, very clear about her views. But let me be clear about the nature of the problem of that deal. It was not that anyone objects to Russia being a major source of gas for Europe, or Ukraine, or anywhere else; Russia is and will be a source of gas. That is fine. Under the best scenarios, Russia will be making buckets-full of money selling oil and gas. Nor is it necessarily a problem that Russia want to move gradually to market prices, although what market prices are in gas, is not quite the same as what they are in oil.

But that is not a problem. There ought to be no problem in principle with moving to – beyond subsidized Soviet-type prices. The problems that critics have raised with respect to the Ukrainian gas deal have to do with transparency with some of the terms and frankly with the role of the middleman firm, Rusukaninervo (ph) which is largely widely regarded to have rather dubious connections. Transparency is important. Openness of the industry is important.

The – as a government, we want to see openness and transparency characterizing the energy markets in that part of the world so that we don't find ourselves in similar situations. The Ukrainian government is obviously debating within itself the terms of this deal. It is a tough business and this issue will be with us for some time.

The impact of Ukraine on Russia: Well, many people, Dr. Bragenski (sp) for one, has said that if Ukraine success in consolidating its democracy and developing strong relations

with the West, it will have a beneficial impact on Russia. I would put it this way: That Ukraine success will demonstrate that any country in the former Soviet Union, not just the Baltic countries which we never regarded as being – as having been part of the Soviet Union can succeed in a post-communist democratic free market transformation.

If Ukraine can do it, so to speak, well, any country can, and that includes Russia. I do not believe – it is common in Washington now to say that Russia democracy is finished, that it's doomed, it's the return of the Soviet Union – all of that – I don't think so; I don't think so. I think we should take a longer view and recognize that Russia's own evolution hasn't ended, and we should – we should think about our own time horizons as we analyze it, and I think Ukraine's progress will be beneficial in this context.

Q: Stephen Olynyk, the Atlantic Council.

Different electoral systems – likely to produce different outcomes. The Ukraine changed its electoral system from mixed to wholly proportional. Do you believe that this is an appropriate system for Ukraine, and what can we expect in terms of the results in this election?

MR. FRIED: No American government official should really express an opinion – we are not very well equipped to express opinions on the details of electoral counting. We don't have proportional systems in this country; we have what the British call first-past-the post, so we really don't understand the different models. They have different effects, sometimes unintended. What we look for in the elections is basically – is a rough sense the level – that the playing field is level. It seems to be the case in Ukraine today.

The polling data – well, I think we all know that it generally shows regions – Yanukovich's party ahead. It shows Nasha Ukrayina in second place, Timoshenko's party in third, Lytvyn's (ph) party after that. The question is going to be what the numbers are and what this translates into in terms of seats. We will deal with the result, but I am certainly not going to comment on the details of the electoral process.

MS. WALLANDER: I was remiss in reminding you. Could everyone make sure that you have turned off the phones and pagers. I hear a little bit of ringing here and there, and please silence them or turn them off until after we are done with the conversation.

Q: (Off mike) – good to see you, Dan.

I have a very specific question about Belarus. You have mentioned that one of the future actions after the upcoming election, depending on the results, that U.S. administration envisions is the emphasis of information campaign bringing more information to people in Belarus. Intermedia's survey work for the past several years there – we have been doing public opinion – shows clear connection between the people that receive information from

international broadcasters. This group of population feels less closely to Lukashenka and they are also less optimistic about the future of Belarus. They are more concerned about it.

Yet, the 2007 budget that U.S. administration proposed has seized 13.5 percent increase in budget to the Middle East. There really is not a substantial budget increase to programming directly in Belarusian language that our – (inaudible) – and indeed, as you said, it's one of the last tyrannies in that part of the world. Is this just an omission or you think that the number of programming that is available or the venues by which it is still overt is sufficient?

MR. FRIED: We have increased our programs, our immediate programs with respect to Belarus and we have worked with Europe as it has increased its media programs for Belarus. I know that Poland, which is – has a very deep knowledge base about Ukraine is doing very much the same. If you are asking me whether I would be happy with additional funding for Belarus or any other democracy programs in my domain, well, I wouldn't complain.

But the – we think we have got – the budgets we have are sufficient to do a good job. Could we do a better job? Well, perfection is – sure. You can always do more with more. But the questions are we able to put together media programs, which have the potential to be effective? And I think the answer is yes. There are a number of them. Some of them are rather innovative; there are Internet programs; it's not just radio that nobody can receive. So we have been pretty – we and the Europeans have been pretty creative in this.

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike.)

Q: Serhiy Kudelia, Ukrainian service for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

You mentioned that official Washington doesn't really care about the color of the future coalition and that you are willing to work with the reformist element basically. But the leaders of the Orange Revolution put it in a much more dramatic fashion. They are saying that this election again presents a fateful choice for Ukrainians and that Ukraine will again be facing some of the crossroads. Is there any concern in the official Washington about the potential reversal of democratic gains over the last year, if, for example, Mr. Yanukovich becomes prime minister given his record and background, and so.

MR. FRIED: Look, I appreciate the question, okay. This is a very legitimate question. But I'll stand by what I said: We supported democracy in Ukraine and we supported the Orange Revolution, that is the Orange Revolution that called for free and fair elections – not because we were partisan. It is not our job to make a choice that the Ukrainian people should make. It is our job to support the right of the Ukrainian people to make that choice and then to work with the government that the Ukrainian people chooses. That is the point of what I said.

It is not for me or any other official from the United States to get up and say, well, this party or this party is better for Ukrainians. We have done what we have done so that

Ukrainians can make that choice. Then we will judge the party – the next government by its actions. As an analytic statement, we have had a lot of experience since 1989 in dealing with parties that win elections that are free and fair that themselves don't have very good records rooted in their past. I mean, the ex-communist parties.

The question that you posed initially came up with the Lithuanian and Polish elections of '92 and '93 and the Hungarian election a little while later. And there was a great deal written in the mid-'90s about the wave of democracy being reversed – the post-communists are back and it's the end. It turned out not to be the end. In fact, the post-communist parties generally governed as social democrats, we have worked with many of them, and we learned to work with governments on the basis of what they did, not the basis of who they once were.

But we were always mindful of governments past and we looked hard. Now, that is not – that may not be a fully satisfactory answer, but it's actually the best I can do and it is the truth. We all supported – all. We had a great deal invested in the Orange Revolution not because it represented particular parties but because it represented democracy. It was a Ukrainian identity crystallizing itself in a democratic form. Now it is up to the Ukrainian people; it is their choice.

MS. WALLANDER: Tar?

Q: Taras Kuzio, George Washington University.

Based on the polling results that you have also mentioned, it would seem that the largest faction in the Ukrainian parliament, which will now be for five years, not four, will be regions of Ukraine, currently regions of Ukraine as opposed to Ukraine's membership of NATO. So the largest faction of the Ukrainian parliament would be opposed to NATO membership. Will this fact and possibly the fact that maybe regions of Ukraine will be in the governing coalition have an impact on whether NATO will invite Ukraine into a membership action plan at its Riga summit?

MR. FRIED: Well, we support NATO's further enlargement, and our general rule in considering the particulars of NATO enlargement is whether a given country first wants to join NATO and, second, is it ready to join NATO. When countries want to join NATO and are ready to join NATO, well, the experience since this debate started in the mid-'90s is that they generally do join NATO. We will look at see what the next government of Ukraine wants. There is obviously a question as to whether NATO will offer a membership action plan to Ukraine later this year.

The issue is not so much for NATO and it has never really been so much a NATO choice as it has been a NATO response to the choice that nations make. NATO is not the Warsaw Pact. We don't want countries in that don't want to be in. Being in the alliance is hard work. NATO's soldiers are engaged in, for god's sakes, Afghanistan, and they are

increasing their numbers. We want countries in the alliance that have a commitment to NATO's purposes.

Ukraine has made outstanding contributions in Kosovo, in Iraq. NATO has provided lift – Ukraine has provided lift for NATO so I have no doubt Ukraine possesses the ability to be – to contribute to the alliance, but we have to see. So we will see what kind of a government that they get. I am aware of course of region's current position. We will see how they evolve or if they evolve.

MS. WALLANDER: If someone – yes, right next to you. Thank you.

Q: Hi. I am Morgan Williams with SigmaBleyzer Equity Investment Company. We invest in Ukraine.

In terms of Ukraine, there are a lot of observers that are being very – becoming very concerned about democracy in Ukraine not because of the election being free and fair but democracy as much more than just a free and fair election. You have very few electoral choices in Ukraine now under the new system. The people only get to vote for a party; they don't get to vote for any member of the parliament directly.

Most seats they say in Ukraine are now for sale. Anybody that has 5 or 10 million can easily get into the parliament, and they only want in the parliament for two reasons. One is they get immunity from the law and secondly to protect their own business interests. And then when you can be a member of the parliament and never show up and vote every time there is an election – I mean, every time that there is a bill that comes up before the floor, you are going to have 100 percent voting record and never be there. And then when the governors are all appointed, and now you have immunity down at the local level. They say there is 10 or 15,000 officials in Ukraine now who have total immunity.

So when you add all of that, it is not a very democratic system even though the elections are going to be free and fair, and most of the representation in the parliament will not come from across the land; it will only come from Kiev, Kharkiv, a few places where most of the wealthy businessmen live. So all and all, they are very concerned about what the new parliament is going to look like. It's going to be totally dominated by millionaires who never have to be there to vote, don't have to participate in a committee process.

And so it's a lot of very alarming things going on in the Ukraine in terms of the total democratic picture not related to a free and fair election. So your comment about the total democratic pictures in Ukraine, not just this election.

MR. FRIED: Well, I have no trouble stimulating that corruption is a major problem both in Ukraine and more generally in most post-communist countries. We have seen that the problem of corruption is one of the chief problems that arises in the period between the

collapse of the command Soviet-type economy and the rise of institutions relevant to a modern economy. Every post-communist country has faced this problem in one or another form. The records of post-communist countries dealing with it have been mixed: some better some worse.

I see no reason to claim that Ukraine is any different, although I would say – and I will stand by this – that if I had to judge the general overall level of democracy now as opposed to, say, the last year of President Kuchma rule, I would pick now. So that is a better trend line.

I don't want to comment on the particulars except to say that anti-corruption action is essential and anti-corruption platform will in Ukraine sooner or later be seen as effective, and I hope it is sooner, and I hope the next Ukrainian government takes care of problems of corruption, of transparency, and of business interests going beyond their proper sphere. If it does, it should do so in a way consistent with the rule of law, that is not by repressing business people, but by creating institutions appropriate to a modern economy to perform the proper regulatory functions.

This isn't – Ukraine isn't the first country to deal with these things. So I will take the point and just say that post-communist takes a while, and it requires leadership to overcome these problems, which are serious.

Q: Walter Stankievich, Belarusian Review.

You stated that long-term haul is the key element in the State Department's policy. The long-term haul sounds great, but unfortunately some of the implementing agencies that exist in other countries that help the civil society to grow have been thrown out, starting out with the open society by Soros, NDI, IRI, IRX, USAID – all of them operate from outside the country. So it would be interesting to know if there are any specifics as to how the long-term haul will operate.

One of the areas that is very much needed – was mentioned before, is the ability to provide alternative information to the information that is available in the country. And since that is one area where you don't need implementing agencies within the country, that should be the area that – lots of money is spent right now. And I know that the United States government has supported the European newly created venture, but what is needed, for example, here – Voice of America has never had a Belarusian service. The time for it is now, however small, however modern, however influential it should be, it should be done now, and this is something that we can do here. Thank you.

MR. FRIED: Well, I agree with you that media is critical. We have discussed this. The people in the States Department responsible for the media programs and for democracy assistance have come up with some creative ways to proceed. I will certainly discuss with them the possibility of VOA, but we look at the mix of what is available and what is effective.

Yes, you are right that many of the implementing agents, open society institutes, a lot of other NGOs have been tossed out of Minsk. I wouldn't be surprised if the pressure increases. This is not unknown and human rights groups and groups that support civil society have actually some experience working in conditions like this. It isn't new. It isn't new. There are people who know what they are doing even under tough conditions.

MS. WALLANDER: I have a question. I just – while we are waiting. I will observe that I know that there is a kind of movement among people who are kind of interested in this to study – Belarus may end up being a leading case in the study of alternative technologies and modern technologies for breaking information blockades. So there is a chance to be a leader in the world.

Q: Wojciech Piasecki, BPJ Holding Corporation.

I have a question about the EU enlargement. Would the United States, when the time comes, lobby in Brussels for the EU enlargement to the East like it does for Turkey now?

MR. FRIED: If I said something forward leading now, I would have a phone call – I would get a phone call within the hour from – in fact, phone calls within the hour from some of my Europeans friends politely urging me to say no more. (Laughter.)

Look, European Union is having its own debate about enlargement. This is all wrapped up with the constitution. It is wrapped up with a lot of other issues. Our European friends have urged us – they have said – (chuckles) – please – thank you for your conversations about Turkey but can you step aside. Seriously, what we say to our European friends is, look, we understand this is difficult, just don't shut the door.

Ukraine would not in the best of circumstances be ready for EU membership even if this were on active offer for many years. By the time it is ready, the European Union may have gone through this debate. So I think simply keeping the door open is what – in principle is what we want without raising this issue without too high a profile.

Q: Hi, Shannon Wendell, the Belarus country director for Office of the Secretary of Defense.

I just have a quick question. You spoke earlier about continuing engagement with the Belarusian civil society for the long time. I am curious, what is your view on possibly increasing engagement with low-level government and military officials to expose them to the West in the hope that we have contacts that we could possibly use in the future.

MR. FRIED: Well, how novel: An inter-agency meeting right here and on camera. (Laughter.)

MR. FRIED: Yes, and thank you so much.

The – this is a – it’s a serious question and a worthy one. After the elections, how much engagement with the Belarusian regime, how much discrimination among the elements of the regime, that is a fair question. It’s not – okay, analogies are always weak so forgive me in advance, but I do remember that during the worst period of Meciar’s rule in Slovakia, we maintained ties with the Slovak government and in retrospect we were glad we did. That is not to say the situation is the same. It is not the same in Belarus; frankly, it’s worse, but it was pretty bad in Slovakia for a time.

We will have to – we will have to think through the best way to proceed. Our European – some of our European friends have urged us not to isolate completely, Belarusian authorities and we will work through this question no doubt consulting with and hearing the views of my colleagues in the – in the Defense Department.

MS. WALLANDER: I am going to go onto my own version of progressive “Zhenski Den” and continuing opening the floor to some of our female colleagues. Did you still have a question? And Asta, that means you’re next.

Q: I’m Nancy Donaldson. I work at Dutko World Wide. And we have had the privilege of working with you and many colleagues on some of the elections this year. So we are observing the rather wild discussions about the administration’s pro-democracy effort and promotion.

And I just want to say that one of the things that we have learned is that in a world where anti-Americanism is very popular, the response of so many people and of the business sector and of opposition leaders to President Bush’s commitment to promoting democracy around the world is to have a large hope grow and to really believe, and unfortunately to have huge expectations about what that might mean. And I wonder if you – and including the private sector. That has been the most interesting thing for us, to see the engagement of private sector in elections.

So I wonder if you would comment on your earlier point that you are looking at conditions as much as countries when you are looking for democracy about that aspect of conditions and what, if you will, what you and everyone are learning about this pro-democracy drive. It is a general question but it is also very important in terms of the debate.

MR. FRIED: It is an important question. President Bush in his second inaugural outlined a very forward-leaning strategy of support for freedom, the so-called freedom agenda. In it – and these are my words, not his – he embraced America’s support for democracy and democratic movements. He did not accept the argument of so-called realists that democracy is something that we should give second-order attention to. And he is

someone – the president is someone who speaks clearly. He has been accused of many things, but lack of clarity is not one of them.

Now, we have to be clear about what we seek, we, the administration. We have to be clear about calling things the way we are, but we also have to be clear about what it – what it is possible to accomplish in any given country, in any given time. For example, if a country in the former Soviet Union is moving by fits and starts in generally a good direction but isn't a democracy, what should be our response? And I don't want to get into specifics but I want to talk about a principle.

Well, if a country is moving in the right direction, I think we will want to be more patient and more supportive. If a country is moving radically in the wrong direction, well, I am not going to be much interested in arguments that democracy must wait a generation or two generations because that is just what dictators say.

So the challenge the administration faces, and I'll admit this frankly, is how to operationalize a very bold vision with what it is possible to accomplish every day, and that poses a set of choices, and it generates questions like yours or tougher questions. But frankly, I would rather have to deal with those questions than deal with the problems generated by a cynical policy of pure real politic that didn't regard the internal arrangements of countries as any of our business.

This question often is posed with respect to the Middle East and usually and in terms rougher than you just posed it. It is usually posed in some form like this: What do you think you are doing supporting democracy when you get Hamas, something like that? And the answer is, well, what did we think we were doing all of those decades when we supported dictators? Did we not try that other route and nothing else for all of our years and what did it give us?

I would much rather deal with the problems of support for democracy, recognizing there are problems than the other – than the problems of the alternative.

MS. WALLANDER: Here.

Q: Okay, Asta Banionis with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Mr. Fried, could you tell us if the U.S. government has taken a position on Russia's government expanding its broadcasting into Europe. Specifically Voice of Russia two years ago signed an agreement with the German government has been using very powerful a.m. transmitters to broadcast in Russian, German, and English to countries in the entire region. They just reconfirmed that contract and are now expanding. They do 18 hours a day. Does the U.S. government welcome this addition to the broadcasting family?

MR. FRIED: Well, I can hardly complain about broadcasts into Europe. I will say that I assume that means we will always enjoy the understanding and support of the Russian government for American and European efforts to support broadcasting of information into places like Belarus or Uzbekistan. Therefore on that basis of presumed reciprocity and a mutual understanding with respect freedom of information, I have nothing bad to say about it.

MS. WALLANDER: A point of agreement. Ambassador?

Q: Thank you. Vygaudas Usackas – Embassy of Lithuania.

If I may compliment the candid interagency discussion with a transatlantic dialogue, I just want to assure you that when we make that call to lobby for Ukraine, you may be expecting calls for disagreement, but you will also be receiving calls of strong support for Ukraine's perspective. And I think – unfortunately from the national perspective, Lithuania – (inaudible) – at EU wasn't able to provide a prospective to date, which have been an empowering encouragement to the Ukrainian people. That is our national point of view.

But coming back to Belarus and having read many reports and articles on developments in Belarus, many authors suggest that the key of the regime change in Belarus lie in Moscow. How would you comment on that? And is there anything the United States and European Union could do in that respect? Thank you.

MR. FRIED: Well, first let me – Ambassador, let me thank you or thank the government of Lithuania for all of you have done to support democracy in Belarus. Your government, the Polish government, others, who have real deep – who have deep knowledge of that country are critical.

I hear it said from time to time that the key to change in Belarus – and you used the phrase, “regime change,” not me, just for the record – the key to democratic progress in Belarus is in Moscow. I am not sure I agree with that. I don't think that we can hold Moscow responsible for Lukashenka. I don't think that they – that Moscow created Lukashenka. And I don't think it is in Russia's interest to make Lukashenka and his regime their problem. They don't have to. That is, they didn't put him into power.

That said, I would – it is up to Russia to define its own interests. I would think that Russia – and would hope that Russia would find it in its interest to have a democratizing prospering Belarus on its West – to its West rather than a Belarus engaging in increasing repression. Stability, which is a legitimate and natural concern that Russia has about the countries of this region also comes through reform.

To choose at random an example, let's take Lithuania. You are a stable democracy, a prospering country, a member of the EU. I am not aware of any problems that you have at any – serious problems with any of your neighbors including Russia the moment – a perfectly

good neighbor. The alternative might have been a country which was not prospering, not democratic, problems with the neighbors – the business we saw between World Wars I and II.

Obviously it's better for Russia to have reformist neighbors to its west; therefore they ought to support reform in Belarus but that is me speaking and the Russians will decide what they want. I would welcome the chance to work with Russia for the sake of reform in Belarus.

Q: Julia Nanay, PFC Energy

I was wondering if you have thought at all about a Russian-Belarus union and how you think that might progress by 2008.

MR. FRIED: We would not recognize a decision – an undemocratic decision to join Belarus and Russia. That has been the policy of – that has been policy for some time. I don't know that this is a likely – I don't think that this is likely. I think it's talked about but I don't think it will happen, but in any event, these questions, if they are decided need to be decided on the basis of a free, democratic choice. That choice is not currently available to the Belarusian people.

Q: Thank you. Sarah Mendelson, CSIS.

I too would welcome the Russian government supporting democratic and human rights activists in Belarus but that would premise probably another administration in Russia that also supports its own democratic and human rights defenders.

How much of a – just thinking ahead – and we can pose this in all sorts of hypothetical – there is a large country in Eurasia that has a close relationship with a smaller country. To what extent do you and your European colleagues – is the U.S. and the EU are looking for March 20, for example.

Should there be some kind of violence in Belarus? How much do you see of a replay of what happened in Ukraine in the fall 2004 where there is a sort of wall? And it happened also in 2000 of course with Serbia, where the U.S. and the Europeans are on one side, Russia is on another side, in a year where – and in a few months where we are going to be meeting in Petersburg around the G8. I mean, what is the kind of thinking, kinds of signals are you sending -- and understanding that the EU is not always consistent.

Their response, their press release, for example, on the Chechen parliamentary elections in November 2005 was – it was odd. I mean, it was – (inaudible) – elections that the OSCE refused to observed. No Europeans were there, no Americans were there, and the EU is sort of saying we applaud this electoral process. I mean, is there a – there is not going to be any kind of message like that on the Belarusian election I assume either from the U.S. or the Europeans.

MR. FRIED: Well, the European Union has been quite staunch and European government have been quite strong. Milinkevich was in Europe. He was received by the French foreign minister; he was received well in Berlin. I sense a very strong consensus in Europe in support of democracy.

Now, the OSCE which has a mandate and expertise to make calls on elections is present in force in Belarus. They are going to make – they are going to make a call; we are going to pay attention to that call. I am fairly confident in predicting that the United States and the European Union will back the OSCE, that our statements will be similar, and that that problem will not exist.

I very much hope that Russia does not take an opposite point of view. I think it would be extremely odd if the OSCE, of which Russia is a member, and the OSCE election mission to which Russia has sent observers, were to take a radically different national position than the rest of the OSCE. That would be strange. I hope that that doesn't happen. I hope that that doesn't happen.

MS. WALLANDER: (Off mike) – opportunity to have a long discussion –

(End of available audio.)