

Залучення Сходу Європи: український виклик

Проект здійснювався з грудня 2010 по липень 2011 року за підтримки German Marshall Fund. Його основною метою було визначення шляхів допомоги інтеграції України до європейських інституцій.

Випуск № 1

Local Elections

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Elections to the bodies of the local self-government held on October 31 2010 have turned out to be probably the most significant and definitely the most watched out elections of this level in modern Ukrainian history. They were expected to give the answers to the following principal questions: (1) will Ukraine's undeniable achievements in democratic organization of the electoral process be sustained; (2) will President Yanukovich and Party of the Regions manage to further enlarge their electoral field and practically finalize the process of the concentration of power in their hands; (3) will opposition parties be able to recover from the latest electoral, legislative and institutional defeats and provide a meaningful counterbalance to the Party of the Regions and its allies.

Situation seems to be relatively clear only regarding the character and conduct of the electoral process. In spite of a number of positive assessments, given largely by the observers representing CIS countries and left and center-left members of the European institutions, majority of domestic and international monitors have concluded that October 31 elections were seriously flawed. Numerous facts of the poor organization of voting on the polling stations, irregularities in the work of the election commissions and use of dirty tricks were reported on the election day. However, the bulk of the so called administrative resource was deployed during the pre-election period, starting with custom made election law favoring the leading political force, and including lack of impartiality in formation and activities of the election commissions, allegations of political pressure against opposition candidates, creation of the "clones" of the well-established political parties. It is quite telling that President of Ukraine had to acknowledge that local elections "had technical drawbacks and were difficult". Even more important is his declaration as to the "start of the work on the changes in the election legislation" to make it efficient and transparent, and readiness to cooperate with the international community to this end. Yet, it is to be seen to which extent these efforts – notwithstanding personal intentions of the President - are going to be productive.

Impact of the elections on the Ukrainian political landscape and its repercussions are less clear and allow for different interpretations. (a) Though Party of the Regions quite expectedly emerged as an uncontested winner of the elections on the national scale, its results fell short of the party leadership expectations. The Regions succeeded in obtaining representation in all regional councils and is likely to augment its factions through recruiting winners in the majority (non-party lists) districts, scoring important gains in the Centre of the country, but it faces certain erosion of its standing in the base regions of the East and South due to the advance of the communists, "Strong Ukraine", "Front of Change" and "Fatherland" parties. It has been also noted that the ruling party has enjoyed increase in support in the rural areas, whereas it had major problems in the urban centers, some of which it has lost to competitors. (b) Election brought about noticeable changes in the camp of the opposition: Yulia Tymoshenko's "Fatherland" retained the status of the major opposition force and even slightly strengthened its position in the East, but it suffered serious overall losses, especially in the West. Considerable part of the party's electorate has shifted its support to "Front of Change" of Arsenii Yatsenyuk (third result nationwide -7%) and "Liberty" of Oleh Tiahnybok (5%): those parties can also be regarded as winners of the last election. Centrist, liberal "Front" and rightist, radical "Liberty" positioned themselves as the "third force", some kind of anti-thesis of the traditional political elites. They've ridden the wave of dissatisfaction of population with the ways of the official Kyiv, potently manifested by the record low voter turnout and number of voters (7%) who rejected all candidates. The tendency to watch: basing on the anti-establishment rhetoric, "Liberty" noticeably improved its results not only in the West, but also in the East and South of

Ukraine. (c) Voter sent “black marks” to the host of smaller parties that risk progressing marginalization, unless they form stable alliances or join ranks with traditional or emerging political heavyweights.

Completion of the present election cycle has moved to the fore of public discussion the issue of the date of the next parliamentary election: will it be 2012 or 2011. The Constitutional Court is currently considering this problem, generated by the reinstatement of the 1996 Constitution. Its decision on this issue, according to some sources, is expected November 18-19. Opinions differ on the substance of the ruling, but most of politicians and experts agree that it would be up to the Party of the Regions to decide whether it tries to capitalize on the recent electoral gains and call the elections or it decides not to risk weakening comfortable parliamentary majority. Of course, the process of decision making will be affected by diverging interests of the parties who want to obtain or enlarge representation in the Rada versus those to whom early election may become beginning of the end (like People’s Party of the Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn).