

## **Залучення Сходу Європи: український виклик**

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**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 № 3**

## **One Year After Elections**

## ONE YEAR AFTER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2010: UKRAINE'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

February 25, 2011 President Yanukovich feted the first anniversary of his election. As it might have been expected pro-presidential and opposition commentators produced starkly different appreciations of his first balance sheet practically on all the points – from economic situation to the state of human rights and democratic development. However, there was one issue where they have demonstrated conspicuous unanimity – rapid and consistent restitution of the executive chain of command, or as it is often called in the post-Soviet space – the “vertical of power”. To reinforce this trend the President of Ukraine has recently introduced in the Parliament two bills aimed at new curtailment of the prerogatives of the Cabinet of Ministers. The latter will be stripped of the right to initiate dismissal of the ministers or create, reorganize, abolish or regulate activities of the state bodies subordinate to the Government, including the key agencies such as the Anti-monopoly Committee, State Property Fund or State Committee on Radio and Television. This might lead to further subordination of the Cabinet of Ministers that is *de jure* the highest organ of the executive power to the impulses and direct orders emanating from the presidential administration. At least, new legislation envisages that the ministries and other central bodies of power will abide not only by the Constitution and the laws, but also by the President’s directives.

Another development that may have even greater political implications concerns the principles of conduct of the future (2012) parliamentary election. In view of the steady erosion of the popularity of the President and the Party of the Regions, the current ruling class is looking for the tools that would make it possible for him to retain the dominance in the new Verkhovna Rada under all circumstances. Judging by the pronouncement made by President Yanukovich during his “Chat with the Nation” broadcast by major networks on February 25 he and his team are more and more heavily tilting towards organizing 2012 election on the basis of the mixed (party lists and majority vote) or straight majority vote.

This stratagem worked well for the powers that were until 2004 and it served well the Party of the Regions during 2010 local election. The main advantage of any electoral system involving majority vote lies in the fact that under the present Ukrainian conditions members of Parliament victorious in the majority districts will constitute a “pool” from which they most likely will be co-opted in the coalition led by the party of the power. This model also slows down again the process of badly needed structural transformation of the Ukrainian political system by preventing adding stronger and more coherent ideology and organizational principles to the party building mix.

February 25 celebrations provided Ukrainian analysts with another chance to reflect upon the juxtaposition of the most influential political forces. Opinion polls conducted in February by four major sociological services revealed the following trends:

- Progressing deterioration of the standing of the Party of the Region that can be also interpreted as a sign of diminishing popularity of the President’s team as a whole. Popular support of the Party of the Regions decreased two times compared to March 2010: it can count now on the support of 24.3% to 16.8% of the voters. The party of the power should be especially troubled by steep decline of its popularity in its base – the East of Ukraine (by 23%, more than in any other region).
- Other parties of the ruling coalition fare even worse, losing support and being consumed by the Party of the Regions. First of all this concerns Lytvyn’s “People’s Party” that fell under 3%. “Strong Ukraine” of the vice-Prime Minister Tyhypko, according to some estimates, lost half of its electorate

(3.3% of public support). Communists hold the ground (over 3%), but their future doesn't look certain either in view of emergence of an alternative Communist Party.

- Paradoxically, main opposition force – “Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc”- has not improved its standing either: it is being supported by 10.4% to 12.5% of the voters compared to over 13% last year.

- Big winners, as we have predicted earlier, are “The Front of Change” of Arseniy Yatseniuk (nearly double growth, up to 9.7%, or at least, 7.5%) and “Liberty” of Oleh Tyahnybok (similar increase, around 4% of support).

Quite tellingly, 17% of the voters would vote against any party. This figure exceeds the rating of any opposition force, showing deficit of public trust in politics and current political figures in general. This should be a matter of special concern for the opposition as their relatively weak showing contrasts to the overall negative attitude of the population towards the actual state of affairs in the country: overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (70.7%) think that country goes in the wrong direction. This seems to be an inter-regional verdict (still rare in the country): same negative opinion is shared by 75.7% of the population in the West, 78.5% - in the Centre, 67.2% - in the South and 59.2% - in the East. Summing up: no matter how disappointed and disillusioned with the present Government Ukrainian citizens may be, they still do not believe that opposition could produce viable alternative program or defend their vital interests.