



# Agenda of the main challenges for Ukraine in 2018 - Political aspects

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## Introduction

Despite the tiny steps taken in the respect of reforms process, the essential condition Kiev has pledged to adopt in the margins of Association Agreement with EU, Ukraine has achieved two major objectives in its relation to European Union: on the one hand, the Economic Partnership Agreement was ratified, on the other hand, Ukrainian citizens has enjoyed a free visa regime in EU.

But the second half of 2017, due to some controversial political decisions or due to the lack of reforms, on the Kiev administration agenda has been added certain challenges that political decision-makers will have to manage in order to facilitate the process of Ukraine Europeanization.

## Research problem

This article aims to carry out a research on the process of Europeanization of the post-Soviet states, materialized by a case study on Ukraine, in the context of increasing Russia's assertiveness (starting in 2014).

## Research context

The context of our research consists of the following aspects:

### • Process of reforms

#### I. General aspects

Despite some progress made so far, the reform process has been in many cases with "ups and downs". The parties composing Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine find hardly a consensus on adoption of reforms recommended by the EU's fora and other international bodies. For this reason, many reforms, such as privatization, decentralization, reform on the possibility for landowners to sell their land and much more are still in the process of debates or temporarily suspended.

#### II. The fight against corruption + attempts against the independence of the anticorruption bodies and their activities

At the end of 2017, the Ukrainian MP's tried to pass a draft bill that would put anticorruption institutions and bodies under the control of Parliament. Additionally, General Prosecutor's Office together with Secret Service of Ukraine intervened in an undercover activity of a NABU's agent who was trying to expose the way how high-level official takes bribe for different services.

### • Diplomatic conflict with its neighbors

With Poland - an older affairs seemingly unfinished – Disputes on historical issues.

Back in 2016, Sejm adopted a resolution through which 11 July marks *National Day of Remembrance of Victims of Genocide by Ukrainian nationalists against Poles during World War II*.

Soon after, Ukrainian Parliament adopted a similar resolution through which 24 March marks *National Day of Remembrance of Victims of Genocide perpetrated by Ukrainian nationalists against Poles*

Monuments illustrating Ukrainian heroes who fought for Ukraine's independence, located on the Poland's territory, were vandalized.

Then, another series of controversial decision were taken by Polish Parliament which attracted the criticism of Ukrainian official, fostering the political tension between the two capitals.

With Hungary – Hungarian officials reacted promptly to the promulgation of "new education law"; more precisely, article 7 of it.

Tension in Zakarpathia - the building of "Hungarian Union" was attacked twice.

Although the diplomatic conflict between Hungary and Ukraine has not had such an old intrigue as in the case of Poland, the repercussions of this diplomatic conflict seem to be far more negative for Ukraine, at the moment of speaking.

## Research objective

Our research objective is to investigate the way in which the evolution of the Europeanization process of Ukraine, what is clearly configurated by the EU's conditionalities and where EU has become the main actor Poroshenko regime is reorientating to. Our research questions will be formulated on the basis of the political discourse of the main Ukrainian leaders in relation to the following issues: the low pace of reforms and diplomatic conflicts with its neighbors. In the respect of some questions that we raise, we find the following: Which of the following issues could influence the most the Europeanization process of Ukraine and in what extent? Is the process of European integration a real or a simulated one?

## Argument

- Throughout our preliminary research we observed that the main challenges for Kiev administration appeared due to some political mistakes, during the second half of 2017, and because of these Kiev may risk the losing of Western partners' support for Ukraine Europeanization. Also the measures taken by Kiev have given rise to controversy and disputes especially with two of its neighbors, Hungary and Poland.
- It seems quite certain that these political mistakes and disputes with neighbors affect the relation with the EU first. As a result, our argument is that the political behavior of Kiev, analyzed at the level of political discourse, is influenced by the need of the Poroshenko regime to remain within the conditions of the European Union, an essential part of the process of Europeanization of Ukraine.
- But, in the same time, the discursive ambiguity of the Poroshenko regime is visible in relation to some issues: new education law; engaging in a contest of provocative decisions with Warsaw on historical issues; slow pace of reforms; the attempt to put under parliamentarian control the anticorruption bodies; etc.

## Methodological framework

We use mainly a **qualitative approach** based on **discourse analysis**. In this respect, we consider political discourses of ukrainian official and their counterparts

Our case study starts from two possible research directions, most relevant to Ukraine's political behavior in relation to our argument. Subsequently, we will refer to these issues that may affect the pro-European course of Ukraine in order to analyze the related narrative theme.

### (SLOW) PROCESS OF REFORMS

1. Political animosities among parties => Lack of consensus in Ukrainian Rada on implementing the package of reforms assumed on the margins of bilateral agreement with EU.
2. **Attempt to put under parliamentarian control** national bodies designed to fight against high-level corruption
3. **Repeated postponement of Anticorruption Court foundation**

=>THE ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSES OF THE MAIN UKRAINIAN POLITICAL ACTORS REGARDING THE CRITICS AND RECOMANDATIONS OF WESTERN PARTNERS, MAINLY EU.

### DIPLOMATIC CONFLICT

1. **ARTICLE 7** –national minorities would gradually be deprived of the right to study in their mother tongue –vehement critics of Hungary from the first moment of new law education promulgation => first consequence: Budapest blocked NATO-Ukraine Commission scheduled for February.
2. **Tensions in Zakarpathia** –the building of "Hungarian Union" was attacked twice. At the second attempt unknow people managed to partly fire the building using "Molotov cocktails" => Budapest demands OSCE mission in this region to prevent escalation of tension.
3. Recommendation of the Venice Commission on Article 7 of the education Act strengthened the posture of **Hungarian officials, who strongly reject Kiev's decision, invoking the violation of fundamental rights of minorities.**

=> THE ANALYSIS OF UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS' POSITION ON HOW THE TENSIONS BETWEEN KIEV AND BUDAPEST COULD AFFECT THE PRO-EUROPEAN COURSE OF UKRAINE AND THEIR STEPS IN THIS RESPECT.

1. Ukraine suspended temporarily the activities of Polish experts group who dealing with exhumation of Poles buried on Ukraine's territory.
2. Polish official temporarily draw up a list of **non-grata** Ukrainian official who cannot enter in Poland.
3. Polish Sejm adopted a controversial resolution that **ban the propaganda of "Bandera ideology"**.
- 4.

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