DECENTRALISATION REFORM IN UKRAINE IN 2014-2019: FIRST ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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Abstract. The paper explores Ukraine’s decentralization during the presidency of Petro Poroshenko in 2014–2019, and points out some its key achievements and pitfalls of this distinct reform period. It argues that the post-Euromaidan reset of Ukrainian local self-governance has domestic origins and, at the same time, benefitted from considerable international technical support and advice. The article explains in detail some reasons for, and the implications of, the voluntary creation of self-sustaining ‘amalgamated territorial communities’ (ATCs) and identifies the limitation of functions of the central government and its (sub)regional administrations after the reform. Key responsibilities of the new bodies of local self-government in the ATCs include public service provision and promoting local development. Much of the respective funding comes from local budgets strengthened due to the ATCs’ additional tax collection prerogatives as well as from the central government that provides ATCs with subsidies and transfers, necessary to create new social infrastructure and implement local developmental projects. In 2014–2019, the reform aimed at devolving power mainly from the national to the municipal level. The article claims that this mode of a non-federalist decentralization reform improves Ukraine’s resilience against external threats to territorial unity and sovereignty. It also brings Ukraine closer to the EU by way of implementing subsidiarity principles and promoting local democracy. If the reform succeeds, it will constitute a useful case of a decentralized democracy outside the EU that has become more resilient vis-à-vis external and internal challenges. Ukraine’s decentralization might even become an example for post-Soviet countries and some EU member states that seek to secure their territorial integrity and devolve power to the local rather than regional level.

Keywords: decentralization, territorial reform, amalgamation, subsidiarity, local self-government, Ukraine

Entire version of the paper is available in Russian.
Bibliography:


