



ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Published on *Atlantic Council* (<http://www.acus.org>)

Ukraine's Future in Ten Stages

By *Taras Kuzio*

Created 10/27/2011 - 06:41

More than two weeks after Yulia Tymoshenko widely-condemned conviction on political charges, no price has been paid. The fact that European and American governments are discussing the possibility of visa black lists behind closed doors does not mean they will appear soon. As EU Ambassador Jose Manuel Pinto Teixeira said, "although closing the door the European Union wants to leave Yanukovich an open window.'



[1]

The US and EU will leave "the window open" until the October 2012 elections. The Danes who take over the European Council presidency in January will adopt a tougher stance toward Ukraine than the Poles who hoped to crown their presidency with the signing of the Association Agreement in December.

The signing of the Association Agreement is unlikely as Tymoshenko will not be released, judging by statements made by Yanukovich to the Western and Ukrainian media. New criminal charges against her were introduced a day after she was sentenced--a clear slap in the face to the EU and US following their staunch condemnation of the sentence.

We are likely to see this unfold in ten stages.

First, Tymoshenko and other political prisoners will not be released from prison. Her sentence (7 years jail plus 3 years banned from government work) precludes her from participating in the next **four** elections (2012 and 2017 parliamentary, 2015 and 2020 presidential). The sentence aims to ensure Yanukovich will not be challenged by Tymoshenko throughout his planned two terms in office and possibly beyond.

Second, the signing of the Association Agreement (and within it the Visa Free Regime and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement) will continue to be frozen. Yanukovich could take Ukraine into the CIS Customs Union where issues of democracy and human rights are not obstacles.

Third, the Yanukovich administration will use the new mixed law for the 2012 elections during which the authorities are likely to practice widespread fraud. The Party of Regions plans to receive 55-65% of parliamentary seats and in this eventuality parliament will become a rubber stamp, Putinesque-style institution. A constitutional majority of the Party of Regions (having swallowed Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Tigipko's Strong Ukraine party) and the Communist Party will enable Yanukovich to change the constitution to make Russian a state language and transform Ukraine from a semi-presidential into a Eurasian super presidential system.

Fourth, the OSCE, Council of Europe, EU, US, and Canada will not recognize the 2012 elections as having been held in accordance with democratic standards. The EU has already stated that it would not recognize the election results if opposition leaders will be in jail.

Fifth, there are two unknowns. The first is whether the opposition will support Front for Change leader Arseniy Yatseniuk's call for the opposition to boycott the elections if a new mixed election law is used and if Tymoshenko remains jailed. The second unknown is whether there will be mass protests against election fraud. Only 3,000 protested at Tymoshenko's sentence, far fewer than the number of Berkut (Eagle) riot police on the streets of Kyiv. Large numbers of Ukrainians are likely to vote negatively against the Party of Regions and Yanukovich in elections but are unlikely to go out on the streets for Tymoshenko who is seen as 'spoilt goods' from the Viktor Yushchenko presidency. The absence of a leader for whom Ukrainians will protest on the streets, as well as a very divided opposition, is very different to the late Leonid Kuchma era when Yushchenko was viewed as a moral leader who was worth putting one's life at risk and the opposition was united.

Sixth, the EU "window" will no longer remain open and will close because Ukraine will be viewed by the West as "Belarus-2" and Yanukovich will be viewed as "Lukashenka-2".

Seventh, the EU and US will begin drawing up a visa black list in late 2012 that will go into effect in 2013. Sanctions targeting Ukrainian companies are more difficult to introduce, as seen in the case of Belarus, but might be introduced later.

Eighth, in January 2013 Freedom House will issue its new world rankings where Ukraine will be downgraded for a second time under Yanukovich to "Not Free." This would be the first time in Ukrainian history that Ukraine has received such a ranking. In January 2011 Ukraine was downgraded from "Free" to "Not Free."

Nine, between Ukraine's 2012 and 2015 elections the country will either become an authoritarian state, because of public passivity, or there will be widespread instability and civil conflict.

Tenth, if Yanukovich remains in power there will be a great deal of election fraud in the 2015 presidential elections as the Yanukovich team have shown they intend to stay in power indefinitely. 2015 will be different to 2004 because of two factors. First, in 2004 Kuchma was leaving office after two terms and presidents in this situation have no incentive to use force to remain in power. In 2015 Yanukovich still will have one more term he could serve as president, something he believes is worth fighting for. Second, in 2004 Prime Minister Yanukovich called upon Kuchma to use force to disperse protestors but refused as he had no interest in having blood on his hands when he left office. In 2015 Yanukovich will have full control of the security forces that he will use to ensure he is not removed from power. The *Donetski* live in a neo-Soviet Machiavellian world where the end justifies the means.

Taras Kuzio is an Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Visiting Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, in Washington D.C. He edits Ukraine Analyst. Photo credit: [AP Photo](#) [2].

Related Content:

[Yulia Tymoshenko jailed after 'political trial' that risks making Ukraine a pariah](#) [3]

[Letter From a Kiev Jail](#) [4]

[European mercenaries fighting for Gaddafi, expert says](#) [5]

Trackback URL for this post:

<http://www.acus.org/trackback/51482>

[Belarus](#) [EU](#) [Ukraine](#) [Viktor Yanukovich](#) [Yulia Tymoshenko](#)

Source URL: http://www.acus.org/new_atlanticist/ukraines-future-ten-stages

Links:

[1] <http://www.acus.org/content/tymoshenko-supporters>

[2] http://news.daylife.com/photo/04dyfE353xahI?__site=daylife&q=Yulia+Tymoshenko

[3] <http://www.acus.org/natosource/yulia-tymoshenko-jailed-after-political-trial-risks-making-ukraine-pariah>

[4] <http://www.acus.org/natosource/letter-kiev-jail>

[5] <http://www.acus.org/natosource/european-mercenaries-fighting-gaddafi-expert-says>