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By Petro Poroshenko

## We're Making Steady Progress in Ukraine, Despite Putin

A crackdown on corruption is boosting investment and growth, even as we contend with Russian aggression.

*Ми на Україні неухильно просуваємося вперед, всупереч Путіну  
Боротьба з корупцією підвищує інвестиції і зростання, навіть в умовах  
боротьби з російською агресією*

*"Коли рік тому я став Президентом України, Крим був анексований, країна перебувала на межі війни, а наша економіка - після більш ніж 20 років керування в радянському стилі, ендемічної корупції, кумівства та неефективної політики - сповзала до занепаду", - пише в своїй статті для The Wall Street Journal Президент України Петро Порошенко. "Зараз повним ходом йде інша революція", - продовжує автор. На його думку, значний прогрес вже є. Українці хочуть зосередитися на будівництві вільної, демократичної та економічно розвиненої країни з відновленою територіальною цілісністю. "Але нам знадобиться підтримка міжнародного співтовариства, щоб воно допомогло нам оборонятися від агресора", - пише Порошенко.*

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/were-making-steady-progress-in-ukraine-despite-putin-1433978351>



*TAKING A STAND: A man marks the anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity on the Maidan earlier this year. Photo: Sergey Dolzhenko/European Pressphoto Agency*

When I became president of Ukraine a year ago this month, Crimea had been annexed, the country was standing on the brink of war and—after more than 20 years of Soviet-style governance, endemic corruption, cronyism and inefficient policy—our economy was sliding into decay.

Now, another revolution is under way. The struggle this time is just as vital as during the 2013-14 pro-democracy Revolution of Dignity on the Maidan in our capital city of Kiev. It has the potential to move Ukraine closer to the European future that the majority of its citizens want. We have already made great progress.

A year ago Ukraine was weak, with only 5,000 troops defending the country, making it an easy target of aggression. Today, more than 50,000 troops are fighting Russian-backed forces in Donbas, while the number of military servicemen has grown to 250,000.

We had a notorious traffic-police force, widely despised and ridiculed for corruption and abuse of power. At the beginning of next month, as a pilot program in reforming law-enforcement agencies, we will launch a new patrol police based on a similar force that has been effective in Georgia.

Before the revolution, we were almost fully dependent on gas imports from Russia. Today, by the diversification of supplies, we have reduced the consumption of Russian gas to 19.9 billion cubic meters from 28.1 billion cubic meters since 2014 and the Russian share of our gas imports to 37% from 90%. We have adopted legislation that establishes transparent rules on the industry.

Our citizens once had limited influence over public policies, often due to questionable election practices and the lack of democratic freedoms. Today, following free, fair and internationally praised elections, the Ukrainian leadership is transparent and accountable as never before. The newly formed National Reforms Council brings the president, government and coalition leaders to one table with leaders of civil society to discuss the most urgent reforms and ensure their implementation.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015-17 was developed in cooperation with the corruption watchdog Transparency International Ukraine. Most of the recruiting to public offices is now held openly. And we have implemented the ProZorro e-procurement system, which is based on transparency throughout the bidding and procurement process. It is designed to root out corrupt schemes and expected to save about 20% on procurement costs this year.

At the heart of this fight against corruption and inefficiency are hundreds of Ukrainians who would never have imagined working in a public sector that was once almost entirely made up of Soviet-era bureaucrats, many of whom were ineffective. Over the past year, 2,702 former officials have been convicted of corruption.

At the ministerial level, our current team includes many leading professionals, including Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko, a Harvard graduate and former investment banker. I suspect that in terms of efficiency our team would meet the standard of any European government. And with an average age of just 44, we have possibly the youngest government Europe has ever seen.

Alongside our ministers are many young people who have come to us from leading foreign and domestic companies and universities to join in our battle to overhaul our country. Many of these young reformers have found their place in the presidential administration, where 40% of our staff is made up of new faces. We have increased the efficiency of the state apparatus and are projected to cut expenses by around \$50 million in 2015.

Realizing the importance of a transparent and fair judiciary, we are working toward limiting immunity for judges, and considering the dismissal of 300 judges. Legislation has now been passed to set new rules for judicial nominations.

The latest International Monetary Fund mission to Ukraine has recognized our efforts. The IMF stated that we have achieved “good implementation” of our agreed-to reform program. There are signs now of economic stabilization, and the IMF expects our gross domestic product to grow by 2% and the unemployment rate to shrink by 0.5 percentage points in 2016. According to the BDO International Business Compass, Ukraine has increased its investment competitiveness for small- and medium-size companies by 20 percentage points during 2014, despite the crisis.

We have shown the world the true face of our nation, one that fights for European values and defends European security on its frontiers. We have been adhering to the obligations of the Minsk accords, and we will keep standing for a peaceful resolution in Donbas.

Now we want to focus on building the country of our dreams—free, democratic and economically developed, with our territorial integrity restored. But we will need the support of the international community to help defend against our aggressor. Just last week, rebels backed by Russian troops attacked Ukrainian positions in the city of Maryinka with tanks and other heavy weaponry in brutal violation of the Minsk agreements.

Regardless of the serious challenges ahead, I am certain my country will succeed. I am honored to work with a highly professional team of reformers who care deeply about this country. I am lucky to have people who would do anything for the good of Ukraine. And we are grateful we have true friends around the world to help us find the strength during these difficult times to make the best of our country.

*Mr. Poroshenko is the president of Ukraine.*