

Good king, bad nobles: despite scandals, Zelenskiy still #1

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Industry falls 1.8% in 2019, with only modest growth expected in 2020

Retail trade grew 11.6% y/y in 2019, double 2018's 5.8%

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Calendar of events

The year was off to a bumpy start. January began with the shocking news of the Ukrainian passenger plane crash in Iran. Ukrainian officials seemed unsure of how to react to this tragedy, which killed 176 people. As world leaders began blaming Iran, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was still making vague statements. Though Ukrainian authorities knew from the very beginning that Iran had shot down the plane, Zelenskiy avoided making strong statements.

A new scandal broke soon afterward. Someone recorded a working meeting with Premier Oleksiy Honcharuk, in which the PM made a disparaging comment about Zelenskiy's economic competence. Everyone knows that Zelenskiy's background is as a television personality and producer. But he's also known to be touchy about criticism. He personally vets all the jokes his former 95 Kvartal colleagues prepare about him and his family -- and indeed, he found Honcharuk's comment 100% offensive. The Honcharuk cabinet survived this hiccup; possibly Zelenskiy was reluctant to show he could be manipulated so easily.

Then Zelenskiy replaced Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan with one of his advisors, Andriy Yermak. Bohdan's dismissal was positively received, as many in Ukraine saw Bohdan as Ihor Kolomoyskiy's man >>>