



INSTITUTE
FOR POLITICS
AND SOCIETY

The 2019 Presidential Election in Ukraine

POLICY PAPER / SEPTEMBER 2018

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Policy Paper – Nataliia Oliievska, September 2018

The Ukrainian revolution of 2013-2014 or so-called Revolution of Dignity gave Ukrainians the chance to choose the way in which their country should develop. People needed a new person who is not connected to the old system, a person who has not „dirty past“ in politics. Petro Poroshenko emerged on Ukrainian political scene at the right moment. He started his presidential campaign with promises of a fresh start, which Ukrainians were desperately in need of. People were waiting for someone who would end political chaos in the country. The year of 2018 is the last year of Petro Poroshenko's presidential term, and thus, Ukrainian political channel *NewsOne* has compiled a list of the top seven president's promises thanks to which he was elected to the office. In May 2015, during the presidential campaign, Petro Poroshenko used to say that he would:

- end so-called Anti-Terroristic operation (ATO)¹ in a matter of hours;
- stabilize dollar exchange rate to 10 hryvnias for one dollar;
- increase a salary of ATO soldiers to 1000 hryvnia per day;
- achieve energy independence of Ukraine within next 2 years;
- prohibit using of offshore schemes;

¹ ATO was the operation which target illegal activity of prorussian military units in Donbass. The term was used by media and the

- set up a system of visa-free regime with the EU till the 1st January of 2015;
- sell chocolate company *Roshen* and the entire business, except his TV Channel 5.

Moreover, in his official presidential campaign, Petro Poroshenko was talking about fighting with a corruption, creating of country's prosperity and wealth, and about ensuring conditions for innovations in economics and social justice. The main motto of his election campaign was „To Live in a New Way“. Now, his presidency is coming to its end and several questions come up. How was it for Ukrainians to live in the new way? How much has Ukraine changed during past years and which promises has Poroshenko managed to fulfill? Finally, does the current Ukrainian President have a chance to be re-elected for the second term?

Fulfilling of the President's promises

Analytical portal *Slovo i Dilo* stated that by June 2018 Petro Poroshenko has fulfilled 41 % of total amount of his promises during the presidential period. However, only one of 7 main above-mentioned promises were fulfilled by the President Poroshenko.

government for identifying the War in Donbass. It was replaced by United Forces Operation on 30 April 2018.

In his inaugural speech, almost four years ago, Petro Poroshenko devoted himself to the establishment of peace in Donbass. The entire presidential campaign was based on the promise of ending the war as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the conflict is still alive and causes casualties. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 34,766 conflict-related casualties in Ukraine from April 14, 2014 to August 15, 2017. This includes 10,225 people killed and 24,541 injured (UN 2017).

There is also malversation of public money, which were allocated for the rehabilitation of ATO soldiers, by state officials (Malyk 2016). Moreover, the dollar [exchange rate](#) has risen up to 28 hryvnias for 1 dollar.

What concerns energy independence, Ukraine has always been and remains a country dependent on external energy supplies. Everything is imported: natural gas, petroleum products, nuclear fuel, and even coal. Equipment for traditional and alternative energy is also purchased abroad. In 2018, after two years of break, Ukraine again would gain 4-5 billion cubic meters of Russia's gas (TSN 2018). The President's promise to prohibit using of offshore schemes was thus not fulfilled. A wide network of offshores of Ukrainian oligarchs still exists. Moreover, media blamed the Ukrainian President for having his own offshore bank account.

Regarding to his last promise, Poroshenko does not hide that he has not sold Roshen yet.

To sum it up, the visa-free regime can be considered as the only one promise, which was fulfilled, even though it happened with two year-long delay.

The role of the Ukrainian President in the system of government

Under the Ukrainian Constitution, the president does not have considerable powers. The head of the state ensures a state sovereignty, national security and the rule of law. Also, the president represents the country and government as a whole in international affairs.

Despite the president's clearly limited powers and responsibilities, Ukrainian people blamed Poroshenko for all problems in the country. However, there is a logical explanation for this. Most of the powerful persons in Ukraine are connected to Petro Poroshenko. For example, the Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Groysman is a member of Poroshenko's political party and he is publicly known as "Poroshenko's man." Groysman's family has been living in Vinnytsia for five generations, and Poroshenko has been developing his business in this town since the early 90's. Yuriy Lucenko, the General Prosecutor of Ukraine, is also a member of Poroshenko's party. Moreover, these two men are blaming for cronyism. Ukrainian media find out that Yuriy Lucenko, the chairman of Petro Poroshenko's Block, and Mrs. Poroshenko are godparents of a daughter of Ukrainian deputy Yuriy Stetc (Hyrak 2018). Stepan Kubiv, the Minister of Economic Development and

Trade, is also a member of Petro Poroshenko's Block.

To sum up, "Poroshenko's men" govern the country and that's why people are blaming the President for all problems. The fact that Groyisman was elected as a member of the Poroshenko's party confirmed the above statement.

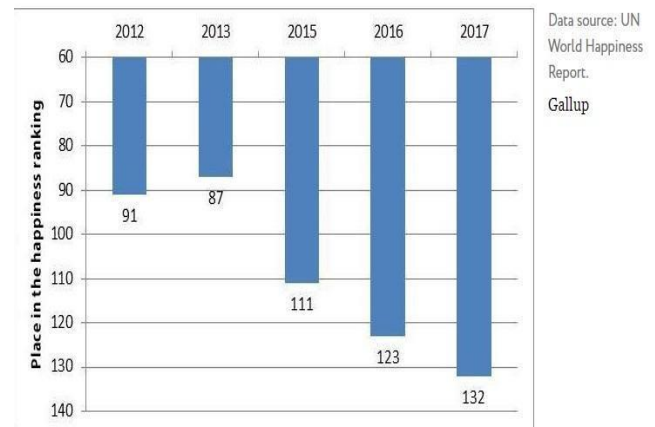
Economic development of Ukraine since 2014

Official statistics show that Ukrainian economy has met a certain progress from 2015. The level of corruption fell from 144th to 131st place in the Transparency International rating (Transparency International 2018). The average salary increased from 150 dollars to 320 according to Trading Economics. GDP raised from 90 billion to 119 billion dollars. Nevertheless, the economic situation of the country was better before the beginning of the conflict. In 2013, GDP was 179 billion dollars and the average salary was 400 dollars (Trading Economics 2018). Since 2014, products have doubled in its price, and some of them even tripled (Finance.ua 2018).

Alongside with presenting the numbers, we need to mention an opinion of ordinary Ukrainians about the development of their country who actually do not think that they are living better now than, for example, 4 years ago. The World Happiness Index² 2018 rate Ukraine in the list on the 138th

² The ranking includes objective indices – GDP per capita and healthy life years – as well as the results of an opinion survey in which the participants had to answer a number of questions about free choice, benevolence

place (in 2013, Ukraine was ranked on the 87th place).



Graph 1. Source: Gallup 2017.

Taking to account previous facts and present statistics, Ukrainian people most likely will not choose Poroshenko again. His popularity fell to 5-9 % (with small differences in public polls), which is a tremendous fall in comparison with the result of 2014 when Petro Poroshenko won the election with the gain of 54,7 % votes. Such a significant decline of public support is not a big surprise since Poroshenko did not fulfill promises, which were promoted in his presidential campaign. Moreover, the Ukrainian President used the post for his own business purposes, nominate his colleagues and old partners for the most influential posts in Ukraine.

It is necessary to mention that his popularity has fallen down also in consequence of some scandals, which have appeared during past years. Petro Poroshenko spotted in Ukrainian news for several times: anonymous vacation

(determined on the basis of readiness to make donations), social support (having someone to rely on in times of trouble), and confidence (presence or absence of corruption in government and business).

on the Maldives (when he did not inform the country about his absence), Saakashvili's blame of corruption, so-called cassettes of Onyshchenko (on which Petro Poroshenko and Mykola Zlochevskyi are recorded while discussing a closing of criminal cases of the second mentioned), a big reveal of a secret Poroshenko's offshore bank account etc.

Candidates of the 2019 Presidential Election

According to public surveys, there are four more people – Yulia Tymoshenko, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, Anatoliy Grytsenko, and Vadym Rabinovych – (potential rivals of Poroshenko) who have quite a chance to win the election in March 2019. Also, there are two other potential candidates who are not involved in Ukrainian politics yet – comedian Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and singer Sviatoslav Vokarchuk. Despite their huge popularity, they do not have ambitions for running presidency, as it was announced in news before.

Yulia Tymoshenko

This woman entered politics in 1996. She is famous for 2011 criminal case which was classified in European news as a political one. Tymoshenko was accused of the excess of authority because she made a deal due to which Ukraine agreed to pay a higher price for Russian gas. In 2009, Yulia Tymoshenko broke the Ukrainian law by allowing to sign a gas contract which was not good for Ukraine, without an agreement of the Cabinet of Ministers. According to the former Ukrainian law,

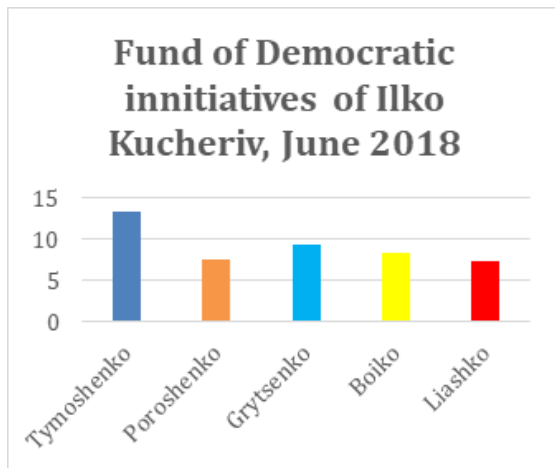
article 356 of the Criminal Code, Tymoshenko had abused her power. The case of ex-prime minister is legal in terms of Ukrainian law. This law was changed in 2014, and after Yulia was acquitted. But this criminal case was not the first one. Actually, Tymoshenko had been brought to the court before. In 1995, there was a criminal case for smuggling, which was closed after the new Penal Code entered into force in 2001. Consequently, Tymoshenko was considered to be innocent. For the second time, Yulia Tymoshenko was arrested on February 13, 2001 for an act of bribery and repeated bribery to Pavlo Lazarenko. Nevertheless, Tymoshenko left pre-trial detention centre (SIZO) on the evening of March 27, after 43 days in jail. In brief, the law was changed in her favour for twice.

Due to some Ukrainian scholars and journalists, Tymoshenko is a kind of populist politician. She is blaming present deputies of corruption, but if we examine her biography we can find out that Tymoshenko herself has a rich history of corruption.

Moreover, she promised very fast and easy solutions to Ukrainian problems, but past shows that she failed at her previous term on the post of the prime minister, especially what concerns corruption issues. VoxCheck project analysts named Tymoshenko the greatest liar in Ukrainian politics. For two months, the experts checked 46 Tymoshenko's factual quotes, of which only four of her statements were true – less than 10 %. As VoxCheck writes, she likes to distort the correct statistics until

they are unrecognizable (VoxCheck 2018).

Notwithstanding, most of the public opinion surveys show that Yulia Tymoshenko regularly achieves the best results in support among all candidates.



Graph 2. Source: dif.org.ua, 2018.

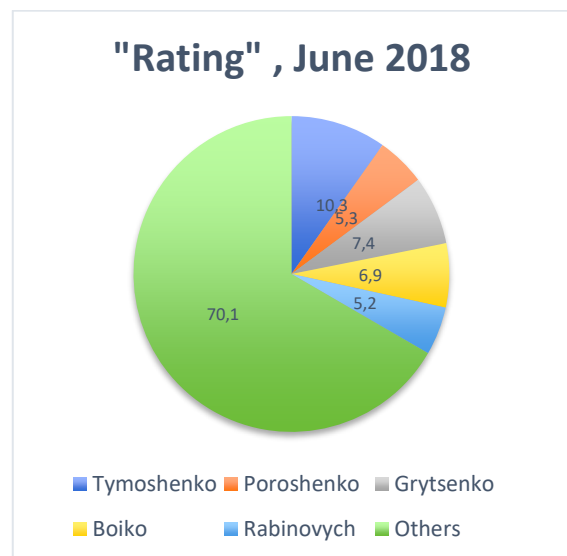
Valentyn Nalyvaichenko

Nalyvaichenko is the former head of the Security Service of Ukraine, or SBU, which is Ukraine's successor agency to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's branch of the KGB (the Soviet Union's main security agency). Today, Nalyvaichenko is the leader of two upstart anti-corruption political platforms: The Justice Civil-Political Movement, and the Nalyvaichenko Anti-Corruption Movement.

However, a police investigation have been instituted against him too. In September 2013, General Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine opened criminal proceedings against Nalyvaichenko on the application of three people's deputies from the Communist Party of Ukraine regarding the disclosure of a state secret by providing documents to

the CIA. He also was blamed by spying on behalf of Russian Federation.

Nalyvaichenko was the head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) for twice. He was appointed on February 22, 2014, on the day of the escape of former President Viktor Yanukovich. He had real powers to fight corruption for 479 days, but investigation of high-ranking officials from Yanukovich's associates was not completed.



Graph 3. Source: ratinggroup.ua, 2018.

Anatoliy Grytsenko

Anatoliy Grytsenko for twice tried to sit on the chair of the head of state, and in both cases unsuccessfully. At present, the socio-political situation in the country is in his favor. From 1993 to 1994, Grytsenko lived and studied in the USA, where he graduated from the United States Air Force University. After returning to Ukraine, he was appointed the head of the analytical service of the Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council. In 1999, he was demobilized from an army in the rank of a colonel of the reserve. In 2004, he was responsible for the media and

analytical support of Viktor Yushchenko's election campaign.

In 2005, Grytsenko became the Minister of Defense, staying in a ministerial armchair in the government of Yulia Tymoshenko, Yuriy Yekhanurov, and Viktor Yanukovich. In 2007, he was elected a deputy for the first time. At the time, he was charged with managing the National Security and Defense Committee.

In years of 2010 and 2014, Grytsenko ran for the presidency but received only 1,2 % in 2010 and 5,48 % in 2014 of voter's support (Kravets 2018).

In January 2014, the ex-minister left the Block of Yulia Tymoshenko with a scandal. Colleagues refused to hold a meeting of the faction in his presence because he sharply criticized the actions of the Self-defense of Maidan and Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

In general, the politician is known for his sharp radical expressions, which has often been subjected to harsh criticism. In particular, he has repeatedly called for the legalization of firearms in Ukraine. In 2014, the Security Service of Ukraine accused Grytsenko as a former Minister of Defense of theft of military property worth over 1.3 billion UAH. In addition, the Main Control and Revision Office stated that Grytsenko was involved in corruption schemes related to the constructing and selling of housing for military personnel (24tv.ua 2018). Despite the fact of long political career, Grytsenko is not very popular among Ukrainians.

Vadym Rabinovich

The biography of the last presidential candidate includes criminal history too. In 1980, Rabinovich was arrested for theft of building materials. After 9 months in SIZO, he was released and started to run his own business. He led (illegally) the workshops for the manufacture of crystal utensils, calendars, and wooden doors. During the second arrest in 1982, Rabinovich was charged with theft of state property on a large scale and sentenced to 14 years in prison in a maximum security penal camp with confiscation of the property.

After spending 9 years in jail, in 1991 he started to run his own business again. In 1997, Rabinovich began selling weapons, and in 1999, the Security Service of Ukraine banned him from the country for 5 years. In the same year, he came for an interrogation with the SBU, after which he was allowed to stay in Ukraine.

In 2014, he made a serious step in politics when he campaigned as a self-nominee for the post of the President of Ukraine, gaining 2,5 % of votes. After unsuccessful participation in the presidential election, Rabinovich was elected as a deputy from the Opposition Bloc, which broke up in 2016.

In July 2016, in cooperation with Yevhen Muraev, Vadym Rabinovich established a political party "For Life". The politician always underlines that he was not a member of the old political system. Nevertheless, Rabinovich's popularity among the society is not very high due to his criminal past.

Conclusion

To sum it up, there are three variants of possible result of the 2019 presidential election in Ukraine.

The first one – the second term of Petro Poroshenko. Now, the situation is not much in favor of this possibility. Both, ordinary people and other presidential candidates, blamed Poroshenko for an inefficient governance of the country. Therefore, all candidates are doing their best to prove that they would be a better leaders of the nation.

In June 2018, the possibility of winning of Poroshenko was quite low. His popularity has been dropping rapidly. In comparison, in January 2018 in pre-election survey of Sociological group «Rating» Poroshenko got 13% of people's support, but in June it was only 5% (as you can see on graph 3).

Nevertheless, the history tends to repeat itself. In 1999, Leonid Kuchma had also a very low rating in pre-election surveys. His rivals Vitrenko and Moroz had higher level of support, but Kuchma won the election at the end. Of course, situation is different now. In 1999, there was a serious threat of a communist victory. Thus, voters chose a „smaller evil“. However, this proves that Petro Poroshenko has still a chance to win, he just needs to show that his candidacy is „the best from the worst“.

The second possibility, which currently appears like the most probable, is a victory of Yulia Tymoshenko. As you can see on the graphs, Yulia Tymoshenko had the highest support among Ukrainian people in June 2018.

Thus, she seems to be a favorite of the upcoming presidential election.

Finally, the last option is the victory of so-called dark horse. The official presidential campaigns have not started yet. Therefore, there can emerge unpredictable candidates, who are not actors of Ukrainian political scene yet – like previously mentioned Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Sviatoslav Vokarchuk. Due to their popularity they would have high possibility of victory if they run smart campaign. On graph 3 one can see that Ukrainians want to see new people in politics and these two men are very well-known within the country. Nevertheless, now, according to words of these artists, they do not have intention to run for presidency in 2019.

Taking to the account facts listed above we can summarize that people are not in favor of the second term of Poroshenko's presidency. Yet, he has a chance to go to the second round of the presidential election as there are no strong rivals who would have a support of Ukrainian people. All five main rivals have nearly similar result in pre-election surveys, all candidates have been subjects of criminal cases in the past. Therefore, there is a possibility of a victory of an unpredictable “dark horse”, if such would emerge on the Ukrainian political scene.

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