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Before the parliamentary elections in Ukraine

Tadeusz A. Olszański

The parliamentary elections to be held in Ukraine on 26 October will bring about deep changes in the political composition of the *Verkhovna Rada*, Ukraine's parliament. It is very probable that after the elections only one or two of the five parties which are represented in the parliament today will remain, and the leading positions will be taken by groupings who were still considered marginal a year ago. The Petro Poroshenko Bloc, a party which according to polls can count on victory, did not exist a year ago and today still remains in the construction phase. It is likely that around two-thirds of the newly elected deputies will be people with no parliamentary or even no political experience. On the one hand, this may be a strong impetus to revival; but on the other the lack of experience of most of the parliamentarians may be a problem. Another source of potential problems may be the process of consolidating the internally unstable political parties which have emerged during the electoral campaign.

All of the parties which will count in the upcoming elections have a pro-European programme. It is probable that the numerous supporters of an anti-Western orientation (although not necessarily a pro-Russian orientation, as recent events have shown) will be represented by very few deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies. On the one hand, this homogeneity within the *Rada* will facilitate the country's reforms, including work on the new constitution, while on the other it might be a subject of permanent criticism by Moscow and its Ukrainian representatives. The elections will take place in the conditions of a growing wave of social disappointment and ongoing military actions in the eastern part of the country. Nevertheless, it can be expected that the vote will be held without any major disturbances, and its course will be transparent and fair.

Preparations for the elections

The elections will be held according to the mixed ordination which has been in force since 2011: half the deputies will be chosen proportionally to the national lists, and the other half in single-member constituencies (this ballot is determined by relative majority). More than 50 political parties will run in the elections, out of which 29 will contest mandates in a national constituency (in proportional ballot); the rest have candidates nominated in single-member constituencies only. Only 12 parties have nomi-

nated more than 100 candidates in the national constituency, and 7 in single-member constituencies. In total, 6627 candidates have been registered, including 3120 on party lists (detailed information is contained in Appendix 1, and basic information on the major parties in Appendix 2).

The Central Electoral Committee has registered candidates in all constituencies in the Lugansk and Donetsk oblasts, irrespective of the fact that the elections will certainly not be held in 14 of them, nor very probably in another six. The authorities have introduced special facilita-

tive measures for residents of these constituencies (and also Crimea) who are away from their permanent place of residence and wish to add their names to the electoral lists.

The electoral campaign

Unlike in previous elections, this year's contest involves two main groups: the "patriotic-revolutionary" one, whose major feature is its support for President Poroshenko and the country's territorial integrity, and the "old regime-pro-Russian" one, whose main feature is its strong opposition towards the revolutionary change in power which took place in February 2014. These are isolated groups of voters, and the parties appealing to either of them do not intend to extend their influence any further than the limits of the given group. This division is the result of the 'Revolution of Dignity' (as the social protests organised between November 2013 and February 2014 are called in Ukraine) and the subsequent war. These two factors have contributed not only to this degree of polarisation, but also to an increase in the number of people identifying themselves with the first group and a weakening of the second group of voters.

Most of the parties which count in the upcoming elections draw on patriotic and revolutionary slogans (i.e. mainly those calling for lustration and anti-corruption measures). The rivalry is between the Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front on one side, and *Batkivshchyna* and the Radical Party on the other. Also important is the rivalry between *Batkivshchyna* and the Radical Party. The Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front have not criticised one another, and have announced the signing of a coalition agreement even before the elections. Apparently, the stricter and more outspoken attitude of the People's Front's politicians over the Donbas issue could be an element of common tactics agreed with the Poroshenko Bloc. The People's Front and *Batkivshchyna* are fighting not only over the electorate, but also over party structures, while the Radical Party

seems to be appealing to the poorly educated residents of villages and small towns, who are a part of *Batkivshchyna's* traditional electorate. The main element of the campaign organised by the Petro Poroshenko Bloc has been the actions of President Poroshenko himself, including his support in parliament for the lustration act and a package of anti-corruption laws (finally enacted on 14 October). At the same time Poroshenko's patriotic rhetoric is supposed to hide the fact that

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Ukraine has lost the war (although the fighting continues, even if on a limited scale), and has to adjust its policy to this circumstance. The voluntary battalions which are fighting in Donbas have become an important element of the domestic policy, and their retreat for rest and recuperation in October has increased the influence of their members on voters in many regions.

In some single-mandate constituencies, the 'patriotic camp' forces have jointly agreed on a group of candidates, so that no representatives of the 'old regime' will have a chance to win the elections. The Poroshenko Bloc has not put forward candidates in some constituencies, thereby assuring several members of the *Svoboda* party and the long-term chairman of the *Verkhovna Rada* Volodymyr Lytvyn of mandates. In the final weeks before the elections, the Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front and even *Batkivshchyna* have withdrawn their candidates in some oblasts, so that there remains only one candidate of the broadly understood 'patriotic camp' to compete with candidates from the former Party of Regions.

The electoral campaign has been progressing with no major procedural violations, the exception being the reports from some of the majority constituencies suggesting attempts at

bribing the voters by several candidates associated with the previous regime. It seems that the number of paid press materials and the scale of black PR has been less significant than in the previous campaigns.

Recent weeks have seen a renewed increase in social tensions in Ukraine, resulting to a large extent from the dissatisfaction with the speed of the ongoing reforms, especially in the area of combating corruption. These reforms were among the demands voiced during the winter protests. Recently there have been cases of the monuments to Lenin being pulled down again,

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corrupt officials being illegally dismissed from their posts etc. The first symptoms of a loss of patience within the army have appeared, and tension between the voluntary formations and the armed forces led Poroshenko to change the minister of defence. Several demonstrations in front of the parliament building have been organised with the aim of forcing the passing of certain laws much awaited by society; during the recent demonstration on 14 October, a provocation with the use of firearms was organised.

In this situation, attempts at violating the election procedures in some locations cannot be excluded, especially in the Kyiv-controlled parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts. Otherwise, a peaceful course of the ballot and a fair and transparent process of determining its results can be expected. The elections will be supervised by 510 international observers, 750 representatives of Ukrainian non-governmental organizations and around 600 representatives of the candidates and the political parties.

The election lists

The new parliament will be thoroughly renewed and rejuvenated. Of the five parties currently represented in the parliament only three are running in the elections, and out of these three only *Batkivshchyna* can be sure of crossing the 5% electoral threshold. To a great extent the lists of all the parties which have a chance of being elected to the parliament contain the names of individuals who have not hitherto been involved in politics. They include activists of the 'Revolution of Dignity' (from Kyiv and other oblasts), voluntary officers, journalists (including a group of top investigative journalists headed by Serhiy Leshchenko and Mustafa Nayem), social activists, etc. There are also many new faces from among representatives of the business circles. A sharp sectoral shift has been observed: there are fewer representatives of heavy industry and the mining industry, and more candidates from the agricultural sector and the food industry; they will form a strong lobby in the new parliament for the first time since the 1990s.

The oligarchs' representation will be significantly reduced, especially in the case of tycoons associated with former President Yanukovich. The so-called 'Family' headed by Yanukovich's son has disappeared from the political stage, and the few candidates associated with Rinat Akhmetov have almost exclusively joined the lists of the Opposition Bloc and Strong Ukraine. There are slightly more representatives of the Firtash-Lovochkin group (associated with the chemical industry); most of them have joined the Poroshenko Bloc lists (as candidates associated with the *UDAR* party), and some are on the Radical Party's lists. It is not always clear whether the politicians and economic activists who were still associated with oligarchs last year have now changed their sponsors. There is a large group of candidates associated with Ihor Kolomoyski; they have been given top positions on the lists of both the Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front, as well as Strong Ukraine. Kolomoyski has tacitly supported other politi-

cal forces as well (*Svoboda* in particular) and openly criticized Oleh Lashko's Radical Party. The composition of the electoral lists reflects the changes which have taken place in Ukraine over the last year. The group associated with Yanukovich has been eliminated from political and economic life; the Akhmetov group has almost disintegrated (mainly as a result of mistakes made during the initial phase of the Donbas conflict); and the Firtash group has been

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significantly weakened by internal conflicts and the money-laundering charges brought against Firtash in the USA (Firtash himself has been under house arrest in Vienna for several months now). Kolomoyski, on the other hand, has not hesitated to support the new authorities and expressed his active support as governor of the Dnipropetrovsk oblast. Today he is the 'number one' among Ukrainian oligarchs, and plans to assure himself of significant political representation.

According to initial assessments, at least two-thirds of the deputies in the new parliamentary term may be people with no experience in parliamentary work. This may hamper the legislative process exactly at the time when the *Verkhovna Rada* needs to efficiently pass the necessary laws to enable deep political and economic reforms in Ukraine. A more or less formal lobby of Donbas war veterans who might have significant political ambitions will be formed in the parliament. It is already evident that the clubs of the major political parties (especially the Poroshenko Bloc, a party which began to organise in August) and the Radical Party will be internally incoherent and threatened by divisions.

The pre-election forecast

The available polls suggest that the unquestioned leader is the Poroshenko Bloc, which can count on over 30% of the votes. Support for this party, or rather the candidates of President Poroshenko, has been growing in recent weeks. It seems probable that the Bloc will have an absolute majority in the *Verkhovna Rada* along with the candidates elected in the majority constituencies. If not, it will try to form a coalition with the People's Front; if this is the case Arseniy Yatsenyuk will remain in office as Prime Minister. Ranked second in the polls is Oleh Lashko's Radical Party, which was supported by 20% of the respondents in early September but has now lost almost half of this support. This rapid fall in the support figures, which has not been motivated by any major scandal or other type of embarrassment caused by the party leader, may bring the credibility of the published figures into question.

The next positions are occupied by *Batkivshchyna*, the Civic Position and the People's Front, which all have support figures well above the 5% electoral threshold. Support for *Svoboda*, Strong Ukraine, and according to some polls also the Opposition Bloc, is around 5%. The remaining parties have no chance of being elected in the proportional ballot, although representatives of some of them may be elected to the parliament in single-member constituencies. However, it should be added that the differences between the polls published by prestigious public opinion research companies are greater than during the previous election campaigns.

It is likely that the "old regime-pro-Russian" electorate will have a very weak representation in the new *Verkhovna Rada*, or possibly no representation at all. On the one hand this will hamper the achievement of a lasting solution of the Donbas conflict, and on the other, it will give Moscow a pretext to criticise the new composition of the Ukrainian parliament as one with no proper representation.

APPENDIX 1

Political parties which have nominated at least 10 candidates in the national constituency (proportional ballot) or at least 50 members of regional electoral committees
(according to the number of candidates, as of 7 October 2014)

Apart from the candidates, the Central Electoral Committee has registered party representatives in the electoral committees in 213 constituencies (the total number of constituencies is 225, although the elections will not be held in 12 constituencies in Crimea). In total, 3507 such representatives have been registered. They can be nominated in two possible procedures: by the parties which nominate candidates, and by the parties which are represented in the parliament no matter if they run in the elections. This is how the representatives of the Party of Regions and *UDAR* made their way onto the lists, and how *Svoboda* and *Batkivshchyna* achieved double representation. Some minor parties which have submitted just a few candidates (or no candidate at all, as in the case of the Ukrainian Pensioners' Party) have at the same time nominated large groups of committee members; this trick is supposed to assure the major parties of increased representation in the committees, and in this way influence the committees' work.

Political party	candidates		committee representatives
	proportional	majority	
People's Front	221	138	0
Oleh Lashko's Radical Party	220	177	150
<i>Batkivshchyna</i>	213	179	145 + 213
<i>Svoboda</i>	206	26	154 + 212
Communist Party of Ukraine	205	105	146
Strong Ukraine	201	126	0
Opposition Bloc	194	114	0
Petro Poroshenko Bloc	193	151	0
Agrarian Federation <i>Zastup</i>	183	37	0
'5.10' Party	173	3	0
Civic Position	146	10	0
Left-wing Forces Bloc	109	42	0
Green Planet	98	18	141
<i>Ukrayina – Yedina Krayina</i>	92	0	0
Rebirth	89	0	0
Liberal Party of Ukraine	81	39	157
Power and Honour (<i>Sich</i>)	72	0	0
Solidarity of Ukrainian Women	61	7	0
Self-Support Party	60	12	0
Green Party of Ukraine	52	2	141
Ukraine of the Future	51	0	152
People's Power Party	37	16	0

Political party	candidates		committee representatives
	proportional	majority	
New Politics	36	7	158
Civic Movement of Ukraine	34	0	0
Right Sector	31	35	59
<i>Yedina Krayina</i>	27	0	0
Internet Party of Ukraine	17	6	0
National-Democratic Party of Ukraine	14	10	0
Ukrainian Platform <i>Sobor</i>	0	6	145
The Greens	0	2	149
Ukrainian Pensioners' Party	0	0	109
Parties which are not running in the elections			
UDAR			210
Party of Regions			213

APPENDIX 2

Major parties running in the elections

(in alphabetical order)

The names of the top five candidates of the individual parties are printed on the ballot paper and are considered each party's symbols, and so their selection is one of the most important elements of electoral canvassing.

Batkivshchyna

The party's top five candidates are: **Nadia Savchenko** (Ukrainian military aviation officer, captured by separatists and turned over to Russia, where she is still imprisoned), **Yulia Tymoshenko** (party leader), **Ihor Lutsenko** (journalists and social activist, one of the leaders of the Maidan, Kyiv city councillor; unrelated to Yuriy Lutsenko), **Serhiy Sobolev** (deputy leader of the party and head of its parliamentary faction) and **Alona Shkrum** (lawyer and social activist, graduate of the University of Cambridge and the *Université Panthéon Sorbonne*).

Until the recent split, *Batkivshchyna* had been one of Ukraine's largest political parties with over half a million members and well-developed structures across the country. The number of party members who left the party with the Yatsenyuk and Turchynov group is unclear. The party's main asset is the popularity of Yulia Tymoshenko among part of society.

The Civic Position

The party's top five candidates are: **Anatoliy Hrytsenko** (former minister of defence), **Vasyl Hat'ko** (Kyiv city councillor), **Maryna Solovyova** (Hrytsenko's adviser, lawyer), **Oleh Derevyanko** (businessman and social activist) and **Vitaliy Shabunin** (social activist).

The party has very limited organisational and human potential; its asset is Hrytsenko's popularity as one of the major supporters of the idea of reconstructing the army and suppressing the rebellion in Donetsk by force.

The Communist Party of Ukraine

The party's top five candidates are: **Petro Symonenko** (the party's leader since 1991), **Adam Martynyuk** (long-term deputy chairman of the *Verkhovna Rada*), **Kateryna Samoylik** (teacher, parliamentarian since 1994), **Vasyl Sirenko** (lawyer, university lecturer, former parliamentarian, aged 73) and **Petro Tsybenko** (a former functionary in the structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, parliamentarian since 1994).

Public support for the CPU has been systematically decreasing, and the annexation of Crimea has deprived it of a large part of both its members and voters. The party has proved unable to inject new blood into its ranks (all of the top five candidates are aged over 60), and its leaders have openly supported the annexation of Crimea and the Donbas rebellion. In July 2014 a procedure was initiated to remove the CPU from the register of political parties.

The Oleh Lashko Radical Party

The party's top five candidates are: **Oleh Lashko**, **Andriy Lozovy** (the party's vice-leader, Kyiv city councillor), **Serhiy Melnychuk** (former professional soldier, commander of the Aydar voluntary battalion), **Inna Bordyuh** (popular singer known as Zlata Oknevych) and **Yuriy-Bohdan Shukhevych** (aged 81, son of the commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a symbolic figure rather than a political activist).

The Radical Party is a formation centred on its leader, with no clear structure. It is popular especially in the centre and the south of the country. The party's asset is its extremely radical rhetoric targeted at less educated voters. Its position as number one on the ballot paper, allocated to this party as a result of a draw, is another asset.

The Opposition Bloc

The party's top five candidates are: **Yuriy Boyko** (former deputy prime minister, previously minister of energy, associated with the Lovochkin–Firtash group), **Oleksandr Vilkul** (former deputy prime minister, associated with the Akhmetov group), **Mykhaylo Dobkin** (former head of administration of the Kharkiv oblast), **Vadym Rabinovych** (oligarch and Jewish community activist, one of the Bloc's few candidates not associated with the Party of Regions) and **Oleksiy Bilyi** (former director of the Azovstal enterprise in Mariupol). The other positions on the lists are occupied mainly by activists of the Party of Regions (except for those directly associated with Viktor Yanukovich).

The People's Front

The party's top five candidates are: **Arseniy Yatsenyuk** (prime minister), **Tetyana Chornovol** (well-known investigative journalist, appointed head of the anti-corruption office in February 2014), **Oleksandr Turchynov** (chairman of the Verkhovna Rada), **Andriy Parubiy** (secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine between February and August 2014, previously a commandant of the Maidan Self-Defence) and **Andriy Teteruk** (former professional soldier, commander of the Peacekeeper [*Myrotvorets*] voluntary battalion).

The People's Front is being formed during the election campaign, mainly by taking over the structures and the activists of *Batkivshchyna*, in particular the former members of the Front for Changes (a party led by Yatsenyuk, dissolved in 2013). In the election campaign the party has operated mainly on the recognisability and authority of Yatsenyuk and Turchynov.

The Petro Poroshenko Bloc

The party's top five candidates are **Vitaliy Klichko** (leader of the *UDAR* party, mayor of Kyiv, has openly stated that he will not be a member of the parliament), **Yuri Lutsenko** (the party's leader, one of the organisers of the Maidan), **Olha Bohomolets** (well-known doctor and social activist, who organised the Maidan's medical service), **Volodymyr Hroysman** (first deputy prime minister, former mayor of Vinnitsa, a potential prime minister in the new government) and **Mustafa Jemilev** (the unquestioned leader of the Crimean Tatars, long-term head of the Mejlis).

Solidarity, a party re-created in 2014 and renamed the Petro Poroshenko Bloc during the election campaign, has never been an important grouping; in the election campaign it has based its actions on the organisational structures and the active supporters of *UDAR*. The Bloc's main asset is the popularity of Petro Poroshenko, and its main post-election challenge is to transform itself into a regular political party.

Strong Ukraine

The party's top five candidates are: **Serhiy Tihipko**, **Valeriy Khoroshkovski** (former state official as head of Ukraine's Security Service, businessman, associated with the Lovochkin group), **Svitlana Fabrykant** (journalist and parliamentarian), **Andriy Hamov** (vice-governor of the Zaporozhe oblast) and **Ihor Mazepa** (manager in the banking sector with no political experience).

The party is being formed during the election campaign mainly by taking over the structures and the activists of the Party of Regions, and enjoys the support of some of the oligarchic business circles; however its programme is too vague to attract voters dissatisfied with the current authorities' geo-political orientation and ongoing political actions

Svoboda

The party's top five candidates are: **Oleh Tyahnybok** (the party's leader), **Ruslan Koshulinski** (deputy chairman of the Verkhovna Rada), **Oleksandr Sych** (deputy leader of the party for ideological affairs), **Bohdan Benyuk** (deputy leader of the party, well-known theatre actor) and **Oleksiy Myrhorodski** (a Kharkiv businessman, currently in active military service).

In the 2010 elections Svoboda gained 10.4% of the votes, although its support figures have recently fallen due to both the party's inconsistent attitude during the Maidan, and the negative assessment of its members' work in western Ukraine's local government structures.

EDITORS: Olaf Osica, Wojciech Konończuk

Anna Łabuszewska, Katarzyna Kazimierska

TRANSLATION: Magdalena Klimowicz

CO-OPERATION: Jim Todd

DTP: Bohdan Wędrychowski

Centre for Eastern Studies

Koszykowa 6a, 00-564 Warsaw

phone: +48 | 22 | 525 80 00

e-mail: info@osw.waw.pl

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