

Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

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Presidential elections were held in Ukraine on 25 May; they were won, in accordance with expectations, in the first round by Petro Poroshenko. He won 54.7% of the vote, ahead of Yulia Tymoshenko, who won barely a quarter as many votes. However the elections were not held throughout the country; in addition to occupied Crimea, where they were not even planned, they were not held in most of the Donbas (including the major cities), where the separatist insurgency is continuing. Despite this, the total national turnout was 60.3%, and the elections were legally valid according to Ukrainian law. International observers made no serious objections to the conduct of the vote.

Poroshenko received a very strong mandate, although he is now facing dramatic challenges: he must bring about the end of the Russian-inspired rebellion in the Donbas, calm the political situation, introduce constitutional reform, stabilise the economy, and regulate relations with Moscow, while not giving up moving closer to the EU. The new president does not have a stable political base or a team to work with, and his high public support may drop off quickly, especially when the fighting in the east of the country ends.

Election results

According to data from 98.7% of the precincts, Petro Poroshenko won 54.7%, or 9.8 million votes. His main rival, Yulia Tymoshenko, won 12.8% (2.3 million) of the votes; third place was unexpectedly won by Oleh Lashko (8.3%, 1.5 million votes), the leader of the populist, marginal Radical Party. Poroshenko topped the polls in all regions of Ukraine, winning an absolute majority in 16 of the 25 districts. He won the highest support in the Vinnytsia region (67.3%), and the lowest in the Lugansk region (33.2%); see the Appendix for full details. The remaining candidates came in as follows: Anatoliy Hrytsenko 5.4%, Serhiy Tihipko 5.2%, Mikhail Dobkin 3%, Vadym Rabinovych 2.25%, Olha Bohomolets 1.9%, Petro Symonenko 1.5%, Oleh Tiahnybok 1.2%, and Dmytro Yarosh 0.7%.

No serious incidents were reported during the elections. The evaluation of national and international observers has been positive, although they have highlighted numerous shortcomings and bad organisational practices. The Central Election Commission will announce the official results within ten days of the elections (4 June).

The presidential elections were not held on the Russian-occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol city, or in most of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, where the separatist militants prevented the poll from being conducted. In Donetsk, elections were conducted in 5 of the 22 constituencies, and in 4 out of 12 in the

Lugansk region. The elections were not held in the regions' major urban centres (apart from Mariupol). Everything indicates that Kyiv deliberately gave up on organising the elections in places where they could have met with armed resistance from the separatists.

According to the CEC, the national turnout was 60.3% and was fairly balanced throughout the country, with the highest turnout being recorded in the Lviv region (78.2%) and the lowest in Odessa (46%): see the Appendix for full details. The turnout figure throughout the country, however, is overstated, because in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts it was based on the number of people entitled to vote in those constituencies where elections took place, and not the total figure in all the regions (668,000 for Donetsk and 216,000 for Lugansk, compared to the totals of 3.3m and 1.8m respectively eligible to vote in those regions). Thus, the published turnout data (15.4% for Donetsk and 38.9% for Lugansk) do not reflect the actual turnout: probably around 3% of those entitled to vote did so in Donetsk and around 10% in Lugansk. In all the other districts the turnout was very high, which was primarily the result of a mass civil mobilisation in the face of the national crisis.

The new president

Petro Poroshenko has won a strong mandate to govern the country. However, he will have to govern within the framework of the constitution, which does not give him very great authority (since the end of February Ukraine has returned to being a parliamentary-presidential republic); and he must also cooperate with the government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk and the parliament, in which he does not have strong support, and which in recent months has become unable to act. Nor does Poroshenko have the support of a party of his own; and the extent to which he can make such a support base out of Vitaliy Klitschko's *UDAR* party remains an open question. He also lacks a strong group of political supporters, and has still not managed to create a consistent, unanimous team.

Meanwhile, after he takes office Poroshenko will face an extremely difficult task. In the first place he will have to put an end to the fighting in the Donbas, where the situation has become considerably tenser since the elections. At the same time he needs to achieve a temporary agreement with Russia that will allow serious talks on a new shape for bilateral relations (as it is impossible to return to the *status quo ante* the annexation of Crimea) while maintaining Ukraine's pro-European course. His next task will be to introduce constitutional reform, on the necessity of which there is general agreement, but which will be effectively impossible with the current composition of parliament. Poroshenko will therefore have to call early parliamentary elections, which for constitutional reasons will be very difficult. We do not yet know how Poroshenko intends to respond to the challenges facing him (and Ukraine), and his announcements so far have been quite enigmatic.

The winner and the losers

Poroshenko's decisive victory is primarily due to the fact that he is, in the opinion of the electorate, the only leader who is able to deal with the political and economic crisis. This belief is a legacy of Poroshenko's prudent but courageous attitude during the Maidan protests, as well as his relative restraint during the course of the campaign (he did not use parliamentary rostrum for electoral purposes), and was not necessarily the result of a well-

run election campaign. The success of Poroshenko, especially his victory in the first round, was contributed to by the failure to hold elections in Crimea, and in most of the Donbass – that is, in those regions where he could not count on serious support.

Yulia Tymoshenko failed, although she remains one of Ukraine's leading politicians. She now awaits a tough fight to regain the control she has lost over the *Batkyvshchina* party and prepare it for the expected early parliamentary elections. However, in these elections *Batkyvshchina* will have to face a new challenge: the parties of Lashko and Hrytsenko. Another problem is the possibility that some *Batkyvshchina* politicians may move over to a new political force constructed around Poroshenko, probably on the basis of UDAR.

The surprising success of Lashko and Hrytsenko, who had hitherto been outsiders, demonstrates above all the need for 'new faces', parties and programmes. It is also the fruit of the 'post-Maidan' radicalisation of society. Lashko, the leader of the 'Oleh Lashko Radical Party of Ukraine', is a demagogue and populist, a former member of *Batkivshchyna*, later an unrelenting critic of all the 'mainstream' parties, and latterly a supporter of radical action against the separatists. His success is primarily due to his permanent presence on the parliamentary rostrum in recent months. His support has been fairly evenly distributed, yet is clearly higher in districts with a predominantly rural electorate. His party, which has so far been poorly organised, could yet deprive *Batkivshchyna* of some of its more radically oriented electorate.

Hrytsenko, a former defence minister, also a former member of *Batkivshchyna*, and now leader of the Civic Position party, appeals mainly to the more radically-minded intellectual and urban electorate (he came third in Kyiv). In the previous presidential elections, he won 1.2% of the votes; his success now is due in large part to his criticism of the new government's hesitant attitude and his relentless attacks on Yulia Tymoshenko.

The poor election results for Tihipko and especially for Dobkin, the official candidate of the Party of Regions (he only made it into double figures in his native district of Kharkov, and even there still came second), effectively mean the end of the Party of Regions as a substantial political force. Nevertheless it must be borne in mind that support for these candidates would have been much higher if the elections had been held throughout the Donbas. Tihipko, who enjoyed some support in the east of the country, is likely to form his own party and will try to focus on the moderate part of the Party of Regions' electorate, and may even aspire to become the main representative of the country's east and south.

Petro Symonenko, who has been leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine since 1993, barely bothered to conduct an election campaign, used the parliamentary rostrum to openly defend the separatists, and withdrew his candidacy three days before the election (the appropriate stamp appeared on the ballot next to his name). In view of this, the quarter million votes he received can be considered a good result, but it shows that it is mainly the least educated voters who are most likely to support the CPU. The twilight of the party now seems to be irreversible, which could create opportunities for a new party of the radical left, and another new pro-Russian grouping.

The big losers are the leaders of the radical nationalists: Oleh Tiahnybok, the leader of *Svoboda*, and Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the 'Right Sector Maidan', who had hitherto not participated in political life. Support for Tiahnybok was indeed higher than for Yarosh, but both together won barely 300,000 votes – fewer than Rabinovych, who openly justified his

participation in the elections by the need to show that Ukraine is not an anti-Semitic country. This result demonstrates the actual levels of support for radical nationalism in Ukraine, and refutes the view that the popularity of this ideology and movement has significantly increased due to the Maidan (in the 2010 presidential election Tiahnybok won 1.4%, i.e. 352,000 votes). This will probably lead to another 'organisational rearrangement' within Ukrainian nationalist circles.

The first reactions from Russia

For the new President of Ukraine, relations with Russia will be a key issue. Moscow has so far made only vague comments on the elections. Russia's position can be interpreted as an initial recognition of the new president of Ukraine. Both Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitri Peskov and the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on 26 May that Moscow expresses its respect for the will of the Ukrainian people as expressed in their votes. At the same time, the Russian media and Russian politicians' statements have displayed a number of reservations about the conduct of the elections in Ukraine and the legitimacy of a president elected while anti-terrorist operations are being conducted in the east, and while no voting was held in that part of the country. Peskov also stated that it is too early to speak about a meeting between Vladimir Putin and Petro Poroshenko. Russia long sought to postpone the presidential elections to a later date; however, in the immediate pre-election period Moscow came to terms with the fact that they would be held on 25 May, and signalled that Poroshenko was in fact the candidate with whom it would be most willing to cooperate after the elections. However, Russia has made political dialogue and economic cooperation with Ukraine conditional on Kyiv's implementation of the so-called roadmap to resolve the Ukrainian crisis presented by the OSCE, which contains the main elements of the Geneva declaration and the so-called Lavrov memorandum, including the cessation of anti-terrorist operations, dialogue with the representatives of the regions, the disarmament of informal groups, and constitutional reform in Ukraine. In talks on 27 May with Matteo Renzi, the Prime Minister of Italy, Vladimir Putin stressed the need to implement the first two conditions without delay. In addition Lavrov has stressed that, contrary to the declarations of the Ukrainian side, which wants the US and the EU to be included in Ukrainian-Russian dialogue, Moscow wants to talk to Kyiv without intermediaries. The role of the US and the EU should be limited to supporting the implementation of the road map.

By conditionally acknowledging the Ukrainian election results, Russia has demonstrated a conciliatory attitude to the participations of international mediators. At the same time, the conditions which it has set on the opportunity to establish a full-fledged relationship demonstrate that Russia has not abandoned the strategic objectives of its policy towards Ukraine. Russia's current demand is for the cessation of anti-terrorist operations, which indicates *de facto* political support for the separatists, as well as the desire to destabilise the Ukrainian state by maintaining a state of anarchy in the eastern regions as an instrument for putting pressure on Kyiv. Russia's declaration that dialogue must be held with the representatives of the regions is intended to achieve its fundamental objective of constitutional reform in Ukraine, guaranteeing that Kyiv can be influenced by the pro-Russian regions with a high degree of autonomy. The position Moscow has taken towards Poroshenko, who has gained legitimacy through elections, is stronger than that of the

previous government in Kyiv. Nevertheless, relations with Russia, which seeks to subjugate Ukraine, will pose a fundamental challenge to the new president.

Appendix 1

Turnout figures and percentages of support for Petro Poroshenko (*larger size*)



Appendix 2

Petro Poroshenko

Petro Poroshenko was born on 26 June 1965 in Bolgrad (Odessa region), and spent his childhood and youth in Bendery (Moldavian SSR). In 1982-1989 he studied international relations and international law at the University of Kyiv; in 1989-1992 he was an assistant at the university's international economic relations department. In 2002 he obtained his doctorate at the Odessa National Legal Academy.

In 1984, he married a medical student, Maryna Perevedentseva (b. 1962). They have four children: Oleksiy (1985), Yevheniya and Oleksandra (twins, 2000) and Mykhailo (2001). Viktor Yushchenko is godfather to his two daughters. Maryna Poroshenko is a cardiologist, who does not take part in public life, apart from her participation in the activities of the Petro Poroshenko Charity Foundation.

In his youth Poroshenko practiced judo and sambo, and was Candidate for Master of Sport of the USSR (an official Soviet title). He is a member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

(which recognises the sovereignty of the Patriarch of Moscow), and in the unanimous opinion of the media is genuinely religious. He speaks English, plays tennis, and is interested in painting, especially the Impressionists (he particularly appreciates the work of Monet).

While still a student, he founded a legal advisory firm mediating the negotiation of contracts in foreign trade, and then he undertook the negotiations himself, starting to supply cocoa beans to the Soviet chocolate industry in 1991. At the same time, he was deputy director of the 'Republic' Union of Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs, and the CEO "Exchange House Ukraine".

In 1993, Poroshenko, together with his father Oleksiy and colleagues from the Road Traffic Institute in Kyiv, created the UkrPromInvest Ukrainian Industry and Investment Company, which from the beginning has 'specialised' in two areas: confectionery (and later other agricultural processing industries) and the automotive industry. Poroshenko was director-general of the company from its founding until 1998, when in connection with his entry into parliament he handed the title over to his father, while retaining the title of honorary president, and also - it seems - a decisive influence on the company's business decisions.

In 1996-1998, the Poroshenkos' company took over Ukraine's main confectionery plants and quickly put them back on their feet. In 1996, he created the Roshen holding, his flagship company. Around the year 2012, the non-confectionery part of Roshen was transformed into *PK Podillia*. UkrPromInvest absorbed also the Lutsk Automobile Plant, the Cherkassy Bus Factory and other companies involved in importing and assembling cars (in 2005, the automotive companies were incorporated into the Bohdan company), as well as the Lenin's Forge shipyard in Kyiv. In 2009 Poroshenko sold his share of the Bohdan corporation (in connection with the collapse of its production after the 2008 crisis). In 2012, UkrPromInvest was dissolved, and its individual constituent companies have operated independently since then.

Poroshenko says that upon beginning his political activity he passed on his holdings in the management to a trust fund; his fortune is estimated at between US\$1.5 billion and 2 billion. After the announcement of the election results he announced the sale of the assets he still holds, with the exception of the Channel 5 television station.

Poroshenko began his political career in the ranks of the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United), which at that time was the political power base of President Leonid Kuchma. In 2000 he left, forming his own party called the Solidarity Party of Ukraine, which had a centre-left programme. In the same year he brought the entire party into the emerging Party for the Regional Renaissance Solidarity of Labour Ukraine (later called the Party of Regions). He was one of the founders of the party, became its co-chairman, and then deputy chairman. During this time he worked closely with Mykola Azarov, who in 2001 tried to absorb the party into Our Ukraine. At the same time, Poroshenko also developed his political base in the Vinnytsia region. In 2001 he left the Party of Regions and recreated his previous party, which in late 2013 was de-registered by the Ministry of Justice because of its failure to present financial reporting.

At the end of 2001 Poroshenko was chief of staff for the Viktor Yushchenko Electoral Bloc Our Ukraine, and the main sponsor of the campaign. He won a seat on the Our Ukraine list in 2002 and 2006. As a consequence the tax inspectors launched an attack on his business.

Despite great difficulties, UkrPromInvest managed to survive until Yushchenko came to power.

Poroshenko became one of Yushchenko's closest associates, counteracting the influence of nationalist right-wing politicians in his inner circle. In 2004, he was the deputy chief of staff for Yushchenko's election team and one of the main sponsors of the campaign. A special role was played by the Channel 5 TV station which Poroshenko has owned since 2003. During the Orange Revolution he was one of the main proponents of the so-called political reform (constitutional amendments), as well as a major sponsor and organiser of the protests, but he did not try to attain greater public prominence.

In 2005 he aspired to the position of prime minister, but had to give way to Yulia Tymoshenko. In February 2005 he was appointed Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, and was supposed – both in Yushchenko's mind and his own – to be a 'parallel Prime Minister', which led to inevitable conflict. He was dismissed in September 2005 on corruption charges which were never explained. After the 2006 election he ran for the position of parliamentary speaker, which probably provoked the Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz (who was applying for the same position) to break the coalition with Our Ukraine and *Batkivshchyna*, a move which resulted in Viktor Yanukovych becoming Prime Minister.

Poroshenko did not stand in the parliamentary elections of 2007. Between 1999 and 2012 he was a board member of the National Bank of Ukraine, which he chaired from 2012. During 2009-2010 he was foreign minister in the Yanukovych government, and from March to December 2012 he was economic development and trade minister in the government of Mykola Azarov, then again a member of parliament (elected in a majority district). In the current parliament he was not affiliated with any faction.

During the Euromaidan he appeared at the side of Vitaliy Klitschko, as well as on his own, and his attitude earned him great popularity. He also supported the Maidan financially. He did not participate in the opposition leaders' negotiations with President Yanukovych, although he most likely did participate in the confidential negotiations preceding these negotiations. He refused to join the government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk (although he introduced his colleague Volodymyr Hroisman, the mayor of Vinnitsa, into it), and nor did he join any of the newly created parliamentary factions.