

Ukraine: deepening crisis of the parliamentary majority

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On 13 January, Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada failed to confirm Denys Shmyhal as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy – only 210 deputies voted in favour of his appointment, falling short of the required 226. Just 153 of these votes came from the president's Servant of the People (SP) party, which holds 228 seats. Shmyhal – along with Mykhailo Fedorov as head of the Defence Ministry – was only appointed following a repeat vote the next day.

On 15 January, the Rada again failed to pass several legislative acts, including the ratification of an agreement with Poland concerning the operations of the Polish Development Bank (BGK) in Ukraine – only 217 deputies voted in favour, with no votes against or abstentions. Just 140 SP members participated in the vote, out of 182 [present](#) among the total of 398 active deputies. Moreover, the parliament failed to include on its agenda several bills related to Ukraine's commitments to the International Monetary Fund and the European Union.

These difficulties coincided with a raid carried out by Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) at the headquarters of Yulia Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna* party during the night of 13–14 January. As a result, the former prime minister was charged with bribing members of parliament. According to NABU's recordings, she allegedly offered US\$10,000 per month in exchange for voting against the aforementioned appointments and sought to break up the ruling parliamentary majority.

The failure to confirm new cabinet members at the first attempt represents a reputational setback for President Volodymyr Zelensky. The current situation stems from the ongoing disintegration of his party and declining discipline among its members. This has increased the influence and bargaining power of smaller factions that form part of an informal coalition with SP. The Tymoshenko affair has once again exposed the presidential party's vulnerability to corrupt inducements. Without corrective measures, Zelensky's ability to control parliament will continue to erode.

Commentary

- **Problems with discipline within SP have been evident for some time, but they have deepened since July 2025.** At that time, some deputies were outraged by attempts to shift blame onto them for passing legislation that undermined the independence of anti-corruption agencies (see [‘Ukraine: the independence of anti-corruption bodies is being dismantled amid scandals involving top politicians’](#)). Many SP members have become frustrated with the president's inner circle for disregarding their input and imposing top-

down decisions. Consequently, they have increasingly skipped meetings with the president or abstained from voting. The political crisis following the resignation of Andriy Yermak, head of the Presidential Office (see '[Hell has frozen over: Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak resigns](#)'), has also allowed various interest groups within the party to assert themselves more openly. These include a faction linked to the businessman Maksym Pavlyuk, which had previously blocked personnel changes (see '[Ukraine: a major government reshuffle](#)').

- **The crisis within the president's party has strengthened the role of smaller 'satellite' parties.** Indeed, Shmyhal's appointment was secured with the support of other parliamentary groups. Although this has become standard practice during the full-scale war (see '[Ukraine: judicial reform advances despite fraying parliamentary majority](#)'), Davyd Arakhamia, who heads the SP parliamentary faction, is finding it increasingly difficult to ensure deputies' attendance. This now requires constant bargaining and, in some cases, intervention by the head of state. Corrupt practices have also persisted. Last December, NABU charged five deputies from the ruling party with accepting cash in envelopes in exchange for votes, reflecting a long-standing and widespread practice in Ukraine. This has strengthened the bargaining position of smaller factions, which are now likely to demand a higher political price in return for their support. In NABU's recordings, Tymoshenko spoke openly about her intention to dismantle the formal parliamentary majority. According to media leaks, she may have calculated that, in the event of losing its majority, SP would be willing to form a coalition with *Batkivshchyna* in exchange for access to state-controlled financial resources. The failure to secure partners for passing legislation required by the IMF and the EU casts doubt on Ukraine's ability to obtain portions of funding from these institutions, which are conditional upon the implementation of reforms.
- **The significance of a formal majority goes beyond merely maintaining control over the Verkhovna Rada.** Formally, a coalition holds the authority to nominate candidates for government positions and to shape the parliamentary agenda. In peacetime, the absence of a majority provides grounds for the president to dissolve parliament. However, the instability of the ruling majority during martial law, when elections are suspended, allows sceptics and Russia to claim that there is little domestic support for Zelensky and his stance on the terms for ending the war.