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UKRAINE'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 2019

THE MAIN CANDIDATES

Tadeusz Iwański, Krzysztof Nieczydor

WARSAW
SEPTEMBER 2018

UKRAINE'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 2019

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CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES
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- **For the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, seven months before the presidential election, it is difficult to determine not only which candidate is most likely to win, but also which candidates will make it to the second round. It now seems impossible that any politician will win in the first round (to be held on 31 March 2019),** as according to the opinion polls all the contenders have relatively low public support (see Appendix). In addition, apart from Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Prime Minister who is currently leading the polls, and Anatoly Tyahnybok, the former defence minister and second most popular candidate, the differences in support for the other serious candidates – including incumbent President Petro Poroshenko, the populist Oleh Lyashko and the pro-Russian candidate Yuriy Boyko – are negligible, often at the level of statistical error.
- All the opinion polls clearly show that Yulia Tymoshenko has the most support. The other important candidates change positions depending on the time and place of the poll, but their support is running on average at less than half of that for the former premier. More than 20% of the voters do not know, or do not want to reveal who they will vote for; more than 10% would choose someone who is not mentioned in the polls, and almost half would look for alternatives among new candidates. In addition, the electoral campaign, the active phase of which will begin in September, has been taking place in an atmosphere of considerable distrust on the part of Ukrainian society towards public institutions, the government and the political class. Although this is not a new phenomenon in Ukraine, the ‘revolution of dignity’ also aroused expectations that the politicians were unable to meet.
- **In Ukraine there is a great demand for new faces and people who have not been compromised by participating in politics.** Currently, there is speculation about a clash in the elections between two candidates not associated with current politics: Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, the leader of the cult rock band *Okean Elzy*, who represents the pro-reform and pro-Western option; and the satirist Volodymyr Zelensky, who hosts a popular programme on the 1+1 TV station owned by the oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. Neither of them has announced a run in the election, but some of their public activities could be read as expressing a desire to participate. Both have the support of around 15 to 17% of the voters. If they ultimately decide not to start in the elections, their choice of favourites from among the registered candidates will be of considerable importance to undecided voters.

- **The main contenders, apart from the pro-Russian candidates, basically do not differ in their declared views concerning the country's strategic development.** Each of them has declared their support for Ukraine's integration with the EU and NATO, for continuing the reforms and modernising Ukraine's political-economic model along Western lines, and for the reintegration of occupied Crimea and parts of the Donbas. It is worth emphasising that since 2014, as a result of the conflict with Russia and the *de facto* loss of these territories, **the pro-Russian option, while still strong in southern and eastern regions, has been substantially weakened on the national level, and can only rely on about 15-20% of the vote.**
- The low support for the current major contenders for the presidency, the high proportion of voters who have declared their readiness to vote but have not yet decided who to vote for, and the lack of any clearly defined electoral strategies at this early stage of the campaign, all **make it difficult to predict the possible result of the election.** As a result, the final composition of the presidential election's second round may be decided by unexpected events (scandals, disasters, increased activity in the military operations in the Donbas, etc.) that could occur in the run-up to the election.
- All the major candidates for President, including the poll leaders, have their strengths and weaknesses. The leader **Yulia Tymoshenko** benefits from the fact that her political party *Batkivshchyna* (Homeland) has the most extensive network of local structures. This party is one of the oldest and most active in Ukraine, has high recognition, and is well rooted in the voters' consciousness, so the former Prime Minister can appeal to her core electorate, mainly in small towns. These are mostly older people, who turn out for elections in a disciplined manner. Tymoshenko has been effectively criticising the current government for raising municipal fees; she is not ostentatious in displaying her personal wealth, and has not become entangled in corruption scandals. She is the beneficiary of the errors, omissions and painful changes made by the government since the revolution. If there is a low turnout and a large, uniform dispersal of votes among the other candidates, Tymoshenko could gain an advantage which will make her entry into the second round more probable.
- At the same time, **Tymoshenko has many limitations that may prevent her from winning.** First, she is one of the longest-standing politicians on the Ukrainian political scene, and the current public sentiment does not

favour such candidates. Secondly, although it has been difficult to prove her participation in corruption scandals, it has been equally difficult to estimate the size or establish the origin of her undoubtedly large assets. Tymoshenko is also the subject of many allegations of corruption and reaping the benefits of obscure financial schemes from as far back as the late 1990s, when she became the head of the United Energy System of Ukraine (YESU). Thirdly, the former Prime Minister has a huge negative rating of nearly 30 percent of voters who would not vote for her under any circumstances, effectively making it difficult to broaden her electoral base beyond her core electorate. To counteract this, Tymoshenko has already officially begun her campaign, making speeches targeted at the middle and urban classes while still full of populism, in which she has unsuccessfully sought to promote herself as a modern technocrat. Fourthly, Tymoshenko also suffers from the odium of her obscure relationship with Vladimir Putin, both from the election campaign in 2009-10, and from behind the scenes of the gas agreement she concluded which proved unfavourable for Ukraine, not to mention her long-time collaboration with Viktor Medvedchuk, a close associate of Putin. **Although at present Tymoshenko may be considered the strongest contender in the presidential race, one should also bear her limitations in mind, as well as the fact that the presidential camp and its state & propaganda machine has not yet started its campaign to discredit the former Prime Minister.**

- The second most popular candidate is **Anatoliy Hrytsenko**, a reserve colonel, a former deputy, a former defence minister (2005-7), and chairman and head of the Civic Position party. Hrytsenko's high ratings derive from the fact that he combines the features of a strong personality and a military man (which will be relevant in case of war with Russia), and at the same time that of an experienced politician, albeit one who is not yet of the first rank, and who has not become entangled in corruption scandals. In urban circles, his popularity is also boosted by the fact that he is married to Yulia Mostova, a well-known and esteemed intellectual and journalist, and head of the influential *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* weekly. Hrytsenko's advantage include his low negative rating (less than 9%), and in simulations of the second-round runoff, he would beat all the other candidates. At the same time, Hrytsenko's financial resources are both unclear and insignificant, as evidenced by his lack of activity in the public space. Hrytsenko, unlike Tymoshenko or Poroshenko, is not a man of means, so he will be forced to find a 'sponsor' or 'group of sponsors', without which he will not be able to run an effective campaign. It seems at present that **support for Hrytsenko is**

based mainly on the fact that he has poor name recognition (although that recognition is positively associated), as well as his military experience, and his lack of a corrupt past or any connections to oligarchs. His image has been positively influenced by his attempts to gather around himself the most important pro-reform forces from both inside and outside parliament. At the same time, however, this perception may change when – as seems inevitable – his agreements with his ‘sponsors’ come to light, and when the presidential camp’s campaign begins its active phase.

- Although the incumbent President **Petro Poroshenko** comes only fourth or fifth in the polls, **his real power also lies in the formal and informal influences arising from the office he holds.** The head of state, at least at this stage, **has the support of the most powerful Ukrainian oligarchs and the media they control** (mainly television stations, which are the primary source of information for 90% of the population). During the active phase of the campaign, his result may also be influenced by local government at the provincial and district levels, as well as by some of the mayors of the largest cities, and parliamentary deputies from single-mandate constituencies, to whom Poroshenko will propose beneficial cooperation for the post-electoral period. The current low public support for the president derives partly from overly inflated social expectations after the ‘revolution of dignity’, and partly from unrealised promises and the corruption scandals in which his closest business partners are implicated. For these reasons, **unless he achieves some new, undeniable successes, the President’s chances of re-election will be small.** Poroshenko has invested his hopes in the merger of the three Orthodox churches existing in Ukraine into a single, canonical structure, which seems likely later this year. If that happens, he will present this as a success, although it is far from certain that this will provide him with the increased support needed to guarantee his victory in the elections.
- Poroshenko’s signs of weakness have not gone unnoticed by his political partners or the oligarchs, whose support for him is not unconditional, and who could choose to support the campaign of a more promising candidate. Another challenge for the President is retaining the support of the West, which has been an important source of his legitimacy since the revolution. Although Poroshenko has been trying to convince the US and the EU that he is the best guarantor of the pro-reform course, his credibility is evaporating, and the Western partners’ tone towards Kiev is becoming tougher. Finally, another problem for the President is his high negative rating (over

50% at its highest), and if he were to reach the second round of the elections, he would lose to any other opponent apart from those who are explicitly pro-Russian. At the present stage, Poroshenko seems determined to win re-election, but the situation may change if the level of support for him has fallen to the level of statistical error by the end of the year. Hence, while this is unlikely at the moment, it cannot be ruled out that he will abandon his candidacy at the turn of 2019.

- There is a certain probability that, in favourable circumstances, a **candidate from the pro-Russian camp** could play an active part in the battle to reach the second round. There are currently two such politicians contending for the highest office in the country. The first is Yuriy Boyko, the leader of the Opposition Bloc, a parliamentary party which is made up of the 'leftovers' of the Party of Regions. The party still has its regional structures, mainly in the east and south of the country, as well as considerable financial and informational resources (the popular Ukraina and Inter TV channels). The second pro-Russian politician is Vadym Rabinovych, the leader of For Life, an extreme populist party which has no political structures, and whose only real resources are the NewsOne television station and the extrovert personality of Rabinovych himself. Both politicians together have almost 16% support in the polls, and in recent weeks they have taken action to combine forces. In addition, the Rabinovych project has the support of the Kremlin, which explains the access to the party enjoyed by Putin's old associate, the abovementioned Viktor Medvedchuk. Boyko and Rabinovych have a lot of support in the east of the country, and quite a significant amount in the south. **If they can team up effectively and put forward a single candidate (most likely Boyko), his chances of making it to the second round are not negligible**, especially as the patriotic and pro-Western electorate is undergoing fragmentation. In addition, if the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople gives his consent to the creation in Ukraine of a canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, that could further mobilise followers of the Russian Orthodox Church, that is, supporters of the Opposition Bloc and For Life. Such a solution may even be favoured and supported by Poroshenko's administration, as the current President could more easily beat a pro-Russian candidate than Yulia Tymoshenko in the second round (assuming he makes it that far).
- **It is still too early to say which candidate has the best chance of becoming President in spring 2019. The decisive phase of the campaign will begin in the autumn, and the major contenders will emerge by**

the end of the year. The importance of March's presidential election is so important that the political party associated with the winner will have the best chance of getting a good – and perhaps the best – result in the general elections scheduled for October 2019.

I. BIOGRAPHIES OF THE MAJOR CANDIDATES

1. YULIA TYMOSHENKO

Yulia Tymoshenko was born in 1960 in Dnipropetrovsk. Her mother Mariya Hryhjan (Grigian), née Nielepova, was a Ukrainian or Russian woman; her father Volodymyr Hryhjan (Grigian), was a Latvian of Jewish origin (he took the surname of his mother, an Armenian), who rapidly abandoned his family. In 1978, Yulia started studies in the Dnipropetrovsk Mining Institute (specialising in automation & telemechanics), and two years later she transferred to the Faculty of Economics of the University of Dnipropetrovsk, from where she graduated in 1984. In 1999 she received a doctorate from the Kiev National University of Economics. In 1979 she married Oleksandr Tymoshenko, and a year later gave birth to a daughter, Yevheniya. She has been separated from her husband for over twenty years.

1.1. Business career

After graduating Tymoshenko worked as an economist in the Dnieper Lenin Machine-Building Plant (weapons manufacture). In 1988 she and her husband opened a video rental store, which marked the beginning of her business career. Then she began to invest in trading petroleum products on the Russian commodity and raw materials stock market. From 1991 to 1995 she was the director of the *Ukrayinska Benzyna* corporation, providing fuel to the agricultural sector in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast, initially in collaboration with Viktor Pinchuk, and later with Pavlo Lazarenko, who was responsible for agriculture in the oblast government. At the same time, together with her father-in-law, and under Lazarenko's patronage, she created the United Energy Systems of Ukraine (YESU) corporation. Thanks to the support of Lazarenko, who became deputy prime minister and then Prime Minister (1995-7), YESU won a dominant position as a distributor of Russian natural gas to Ukraine. Tymoshenko assumed a prominent place among Ukraine's leading oligarchs.

1.2. Political career

In 1997 Tymoshenko won a mandate in the Ukrainian parliament and joined the then-marginal *Hromada* party, which was Lazarenko's parliamentary base, and turned it into a formidable political force. After Lazarenko's arrest in January 1999, Tymoshenko distanced herself from her business and political patron by bringing about a split within *Hromada* and creating the *Batkivshchyna* party. During the presidential campaign in 1999 she joined the camp of Leonid Kuchma.

Towards the end of 1999 she became part of the government of Viktor Yushchenko as deputy prime minister for the fuel-energy sector. She was sacked in February 2001, and then arrested on charges of arranging the illegal import of Russian gas via YESU. After a few months she was released, and from then on was a sworn enemy of President Kuchma.

In 2004 she was one of the leaders of the 'Orange Revolution', declaring to the end her refusal to compromise with Yanukovych or Kuchma, a stance which brought her enormous popularity. In February 2005 she became the head of the government, but soon came into conflict with President Yushchenko's team, especially with Petro Poroshenko, with whom she competed for the position of prime minister. In November 2007 she again became head of the government. At the beginning of 2009 there was a gas crisis as a result of the interruption of gas supplies by Russia to Ukraine. The formal cause of this dispute was the accusation that Kiev had defaulted on its repayments. A new gas contract was only signed after several days, and the conditions of this new contract were extremely unfavourable for Kiev.

In February 2010 Tymoshenko lost the presidential election to Yanukovych, when she won 45.5% of the vote in the second round. A month after the elections, the parliament passed a vote of no confidence in her government. After a few weeks, law enforcement authorities initiated a number of criminal proceedings accusing Tymoshenko of abuses both during her premiership and in her business activity (the main allegations concerned her signing of the gas contract). In August 2011 she was temporarily arrested, and in October sentenced to 7 years in prison. After the 'revolution of dignity' she was released on the basis of a special law.

After leaving prison, Tymoshenko was received rather coolly by the public and her former colleagues, who had now gained independent political positions (Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Oleksandr Turchynov). While remaining in the shadow of current political events, Tymoshenko has avoided expressing clear statements and opinions (for example, on how to resolve the conflict in the east of the country, or on the development of relations with Russia). She has begun to rebuild her party, and thanks to her ambivalent attitude to the most important issues in the country, she has become the beneficiary of both the mistakes & omissions and the painful social reforms introduced by Poroshenko and his team.

When launching her election campaign, Tymoshenko avoided making specific proposals, and has focused on promoting her new image and announcing

'a new course for Ukraine', but she has not specified the details of her vision for the development of the country.

1.3. Further information

Tymoshenko grew up in a Russian-speaking environment, lacking any national consciousness, and she only started to learn the Ukrainian language after starting her political career. She has great political and oratory talent, and is a good organiser, but she is also inclined to retaliate. She is decisive, ambitious, headstrong and ready to suffer. She has twice agreed to be imprisoned, even though she could have escaped abroad. An analysis of her activities over the past two decades indicates that she has no declared, constant political positions and, if necessary, she would be able to change them diametrically.

2. ANATOLIY HRYTSENKO

Anatoliy Hrytsenko was born in 1957 in the village of Bohachivka (Cherkasy oblast). His father Stepan Hrytsenko fought in World War II. It was probably his father's example which lay behind Anatoliy's decision to start a military career. He has been married twice, and has four children: with his first wife Ludmila, a son Aleksey (born 1979) and a daughter Svitlana (born 1982); and with his second wife Yulia Mostova, a well-known and influential journalist, and editor in chief of the weekly *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, a daughter Anna (born 2004) and a son Hlib (born 1998, from Mostova's previous marriage to Oleksandr Razumkov, and adopted by Hrytsenko).

2.1. Military career

He is a military engineer, graduating as a doctor of technical sciences. In 1974 he graduated from the Suvorov Military School in Kiev (now the Ivan Bohun Military High School in Kiev), and in 1979 from the Kyiv Higher Military Aviation Engineering School (with honours); he was a lecturer there from 1984 to 1992. His defective vision prevented him from making a career as a pilot, and determined the analytical track of his later professional career. From 1992 to 1994, he was deputy head of the analytical directorate of the Science and Research Centre of the Armed Forces of Ukraine's General Staff. At the same time he was sent for training to the United States, where in 1993 he graduated from the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Department of Defense, and a year later he became the first citizen of Ukraine to graduate from the elite Air

War College. In 1995, he graduated from the Academy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In 1999 he retired from military service with the rank of colonel.

2.2. Political career

An important element in Hrytsenko's life was his friendship with Oleksandr Razumkov, an adviser to President Kuchma, as well as the husband of his future wife. In 1997 Hrytsenko took over leadership of the analytical service of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, in which Razumkov served as deputy secretary. After the latter's death of his superior in 1999, Hrytsenko became the head of the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Research founded by Razumkov (which since 2000 has been known as the Razumkov Centre).

In 2004 he joined Viktor Yushchenko's electoral team, in which he directed the analytical team, and as such was responsible for the preparation of the electoral programme and the reform plan. For his services during the Orange Revolution, Yushchenko appointed him defence minister in the Tymoshenko government in February 2005. He retained this post in the Yekhanurov and Yanukovych cabinets until December 2007.

In the early general elections in 2007 he ran on the list of the pro-presidential Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defence block. In parliament he became chairman of the committee for security and defence. As he himself explained, the reason for his sacking as defence minister was his alleged refusal to sell land belonging to the ministry to President Yushchenko's son at knock-down prices. Thereafter, the relationship between the politicians cooled off considerably. In 2008 he headed the Civic Position party, and two years later ran in the presidential elections, in which he received 1.2% of the vote. Hrytsenko's group took part in the 2012 parliamentary elections as part of the United Opposition *Batkivshchyna* coalition led by Tymoshenko, who at that time was still in prison.

In January 2014 Hrytsenko criticised the organisation of the protests on the Maidan, urging the organisers to take down the 'tent city' as support for the demonstrations started falling. Just a few days later, however, he called on people who legally owned arms to protect the Maidan, and announced that if attempts were made to break up the protests, he would be ready to stand in the front line and offer active resistance to the government.

In May 2014 he stood again in the presidential elections, receiving 5% support, which gave him fourth place; in the same year his Civic Position party failed to

pass the 5% electoral threshold in the parliamentary elections. Since 2015 he has been a lecturer at the Kiev-Mohyla Academy.

As he announced that he would run in the presidential elections in 2019, he promised to defend Ukraine against aggression from the east, adopted a hard stance towards Russia and the self-proclaimed republics, and said he would deal with corruption and the oligarchic system of power in the country. However, he lacks the personnel and financial backing to carry out this latter promise in particular.

2.3. Additional information

He is a radical supporter of Ukraine's current pro-Western course; he supports membership in the EU and NATO. His personality is characterised by its indecisiveness, while at the same time his opinions are pronounced very categorically. His position during the Euromaidan remains unclear; he called for the protests to be dissolved, then for the formation of armed patrols, and then for terrorist acts to be carried out in Russia (an investigation against him in Russia is ongoing with regard to this latter statement). Although the allegations that he weakened the Ukrainian army's military potential as a result of his actions while head of the defence ministry are poorly argued and inconclusive, many politicians have accused him of supporting and participating in the evacuation of the special 'Berkut' troops from government buildings after President Yanukovich fled the country.

3. PETRO POROSHENKO

Petro Poroshenko was born in 1965 in Bolgrad (Odessa oblast), the son of Oleksiy and Yevheniya Poroshenko. The future President's father was born in 1936 in Safyany (a village near Izmail) as a citizen of Romania. From 1982 to 1989 Petro Poroshenko studied at the Faculty of International Relations and International Law at the University of Kiev. From 1989 to 1992 he was an assistant at that university's Department of International Economic Relations. In 2002 he obtained his doctorate from the Odessa National Law Academy. During his studies (1982-4) he did his military service at an air defence unit in Aktöbe/Aktyubinsk (Kazakhstan), and later at the Military Aero-Technical School in Vasylykiv near Kiev.

He is married to Maryna Poroshenko (née Perevedentseva, born 1962), who graduated from the Kiev Medical Institute and is the daughter of a Soviet

former deputy minister of health. They have four children: Oleksiy (1985), Yevheniya & Oleksandra (2000) and Mykhailo (2001). Viktor Yushchenko is godfather to their twin daughters.

3.1. Business career

In 1993 Poroshenko and his partners (including Ihor Kononenko, a friend from the army, and now one of his closest collaborators), as well as his father (and presumably his brother Mykhailo), created the UkrPromInvest holding company, which from the outset has specialised in confectionery (and later other agricultural processing industries) and the automotive industry. Poroshenko was its director-general until 1998, when upon becoming a parliamentary deputy he handed the position on to his father, while retaining the title of honorary president, and also (as it seems) a decisive influence on the company's business decisions.

Between 1996 and 1998, the company took over the main Ukrainian confectionery factories and quickly set them back on their feet. In 1996 the UkrPromInvest-Konditer confectionery holding company was created, and renamed Roshen in 2002; this is Poroshenko's flagship company, which has factories in Vinnitsa, Kiev, Mariupol, Kremenchuk, Lipetsk (Russia), Klaipeda (Lithuania) and Hungary. When he started his political activity, Poroshenko made over his shares in the company to a trust fund, Prime Assets Capital. Forbes magazine has estimated his assets' value at US\$1 billion.

3.2. Political career

Poroshenko started his political career in 1997 in the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United), which was the political base for President Leonid Kuchma. In 2000 he lost the race to lead the party to Viktor Medvedchuk and Hryhoriy Surkis, left the party and created his own, the Ukraine Solidarity Party. In the same year, he brought his party into the new Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine (later known simply as the Party of Regions). He was one of the party's co-founders and leaders. In 2001 he left the Party of Regions and created his own Solidarity party, which however remained a marginal structure. The reasons for Poroshenko's turnaround are unclear; most likely it was a result of his removal from the leadership of the Party of Regions. At the end of 2001 Poroshenko brought his party into the Viktor Yushchenko Electoral Bloc/Our Ukraine, becoming one of Yushchenko's closest collaborators. In 2004, he was deputy chief of staff in Yushchenko's election team and one of the sponsors of his campaign.

In 2007-9 he was the chairman of the board of the National Bank of Ukraine. In 2009-10 he was foreign minister in the Yanukovych government, and from March to December 2012 he served as minister for economic development and trade in the government of Mykola Azarov.

During the Euromaidan, he supported the protests financially, while at the same time trying to keep his distance from other opposition politicians. During the demonstrations he spoke independently, and his attitude won him great popularity. When a poll in March 2014 gave him a significant advantage over other potential candidates for the first time, he decided to take part in the presidential elections in May, which he won in the first round (with 54.7% of the votes).

Just before the parliamentary elections in October 2014 Poroshenko revived his previous party under the name of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc (BPP), which won 21.8% of the votes. After the resignation of Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Poroshenko's party formed a government with the National Front party led by Volodymyr Hroysman.

3.3. Additional information

In his youth Poroshenko practiced judo and sambo. He is a member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (which acknowledges the authority of the Patriarch of Moscow); the media agrees that he is a sincere believer, regularly attending religious ceremonies. He has had a magnificent liturgical chapel constructed at his residence in Kozin, near Kiev.

Poroshenko is an experienced politician and entrepreneur; the basis of his position is his financial independence. He is cautious and charismatic, but as a politician is more of an administrator by nature. He is a good speaker, but tends to be impulsive and temperamental (some say downright hysterical). He is a strong supporter of the pro-European option (although his interests mostly tie him to markets in the CIS).

He speaks English fluently. He plays tennis. He is interested in painting, especially Impressionism.

4. YURIY BOYKO

Yuriy Boyko was born in 1958 in Horlivka (Donetsk oblast), the only son in a family whose privacy he closely guards, avoiding making public statements

about them (nothing is known about his parents). In 1981 he graduated from the Mendeleev Chemical-Technological University in Moscow. In 2001 he also graduated from the Volodymyr Dal Eastern Ukrainian National University in Lugansk, obtaining the title of engineer-economist. While studying in Moscow he married his classmate Vera, a sports champion in gymnastics, with whom he has three sons, Anatoliy, Yuri and Mykola, and three daughters, Yaroslava, Ulyana and Maria.

4.1. Business career

After completing his studies, he returned to Ukraine and started working in the Zarya chemical plant in Rubizhne (Lugansk oblast) producing military industrial explosives. During his employment there in 1981-1999 he rose through the ranks and became director of the plant. From 2001 he worked in management positions in oil businesses. In 2002, he became president of the Naftohaz state company; however, three years later he was dismissed by a decision of Prime Minister Tymoshenko, who accused Boyko of having ties to RusUkrEnerg, a company which profited from importing gas from Turkmenistan and Russia. The company, which was owned by Gazprom and the businessman Dmytro Firtash, posed a direct threat to Tymoshenko's interests. One important provision of the Russian-Ukrainian gas contract of 2009 was the removal of agents trading in natural gas. In the course of an investigation by the US Department of Justice in 2005, it came to light that Boyko, along with his business partner Dmytro Firtash, had participated in creating RusUkrEnerg, which was accused of collaborating with Semyon Mogilevich, one of the leaders of the Russian mafia.

4.2. Political career

In 2001 Boyko went into politics as part of Serhiy Tyhipko's oligarchic party *Trudova Ukraina* [Labour Ukraine]. From 2003 to 2005, he was deputy minister of fuel and energy in the Yanukovych government (and served at the same time as president of Naftohaz). Tymoshenko dismissed him in 2005, but a year later he became the head of the Ministry of Fuel and Energy in the Yanukovych cabinet. In 2007 he joined the Party of Regions and was elected as a deputy on its list. In 2010 he again became energy minister in the Azarov government, and from 2012 to 2014 he was Deputy Prime Minister. In 2014 he ran for President of Ukraine, receiving 0.19% of the vote. In October of the same year he became head of the Opposition Bloc, a grouping largely made up of former politicians from the Party of Regions.

Although Boyko was a prominent member of the Yanukovych regime, he was not, unlike many of his colleagues, accused of treason or corruption. Boyko was not on the list of persons covered by sanctions, and the investigations into him (concerning the embezzlement of state resources to purchase drilling rigs in 2011) have been discontinued. The Ukrainian special services' lack of interest in the Opposition Bloc's leader is most likely the result of a political calculation by Poroshenko's team. In accordance with these assumptions, if Boyko makes it to the second round of the presidential election he will be a convenient rival for Poroshenko, who would stand a much greater chance of winning against him.

4.3. Additional information

In politics, Boyko positions himself as a cool and rational technocrat, as well as being a strong and decisive politician. During a session of parliament, he responded to a suggestion by the populist Oleh Lyashko that he had betrayed the Ukrainian state to Russia in an unusual fashion: he knocked his adversary out, and calmly returned to his seat with a straight face.

Boyko is generally considered to be a representative of Russian interests in Ukraine. He favours establishing cooperation and normalising diplomatic relations with Russia as fast as possible. He publicly presents himself as a pragmatic politician interested in stabilising the situation in the country and improving the living conditions of ordinary people. He is an avid ice hockey player.

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Three further candidates also enjoy relatively high support in the polls. Although their chances of becoming President are not too great, their support of other candidates may have a significant impact on the course of next year's elections.

5. OLEH LYASHKO

He was born in Chernihiv in 1972. The leader of the Radical Party has gained popularity by his use of nationalist and populist slogans, appealing mainly to the rural and poorly educated electorate. He favours authoritarian, strong-arm governments and a no-holds-barred fight against corruption. He is funded and supported by media oligarchs close to the former President Yanukovych (primarily Rinat Akhmetov).

6. VADYM RABINOVYCH

He was born in Kharkov in 1953. He is President of the All-Ukrainian Congress of Jews and a founder of the European Jewish Parliament. He is the founder and leader of the For Life party. He is the editor in chief of the 112 news channel (and hosts his own programme on it), which is most likely controlled by the pro-Russian politician Viktor Medvedchuk. In the past he has been convicted of arms trafficking and money laundering.

7. SVYATOSLAV VAKARCHUK

He was born in Mukachevo in 1975. He is the leader of the popular rock band Okean Elzy. He is the son of Ivan Vakarchuk, a scientist, rector of the Ivan Franko University and a former minister of education and science. In 2004 he became involved in Yushchenko's electoral campaign, and took part in the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. He has been publicly active for several years, holding meetings and commenting on current political events. He is a supporter of the current pro-Western course of Ukraine and its membership in Western structures. He has not officially confirmed his participation in the elections.

8. VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY

He was born in Kryvyi Rih in 1978. A popular comedian and actor, co-creator of the Kvartal-95 cabaret, and the sitcom *Sluga Narodu* [Servant of the People] on the 1+1 TV channel owned by the oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. His public activity includes organising collections and assistance for soldiers involved in the conflict in the east of the country. Little is known about his real political opinions. From time to time, he both confirms and denies his participation in the presidential election, which probably means the decision on his participation in the elections has not yet been taken.

APPENDIX. Support for candidates in the presidential election (August 2018)

	All, %	Percentage of those who intend to vote, %	Percentage of those who intend to vote and have made their choice, %
Yulia Tymoshenko	11.1	14.4	17.7
Anatoliy Hrytsenko	6.7	8.7	10.7
Yuriy Boyko	6.4	7.2	8.9
Oleh Lyashko	5.9	6.9	8.5
Petro Poroshenko	5.3	6.8	8.3
Volodymyr Zelenskiy	6.2	6.5	8.0
Svyatoslav Vakarchuk	5.7	6.5	8.0
Vadym Rabinovych	3.7	4.8	5.9
Andriy Sadovyi	1.6	1.9	2.3
Oleh Tiahnybok	1.3	1.7	2.1
Valentyn Nalyvaichenko	1.2	1.5	1.9
Roman Bezsmertnyi	1.1	1.4	1.7
Serhiy Taruta	0.7	0.8	0.9
Arseniy Yatsenyuk	0.8	0.8	0.9
Vitaliy Skotsyk	0.3	0.3	0.3
Another candidate	9.6	11.2	13.8
Hard to say	17.4	18.8	
I would not vote	15.2		

Source: Rating Group