



Analytical approaches to the Ukraine crisis and the recent Ukrainian parliamentary elections

The Ukrainian parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2014 are, for many reasons, an important milestone in the crisis that has been going on for almost a year now. First, the elections ended a period of almost eight months, during which many have accused Ukrainian leaders of the illegitimate use of power, given that they came to power at the end of February as a result of an uprising, rather than having been elected via a constitutional process. Second, the election results fundamentally changed the Ukrainian legislation and the composition of the Ukrainian political elite, allowing representatives of several new political groups into the Supreme Council that have been all but unknown to the public even a few months ago. Third, the elections ended an extraordinary period during which the political leaders of the country could stay in power without having to implement far-reaching reforms. These changes now offer us the opportunity to review the main turning points of the Ukrainian crisis, framing various analytical approaches to foster a better understanding of the ongoing processes and map up the main challenges that lay ahead of the newly elected leaders following the elections.

The stages of the Ukrainian crisis

In a previous study in March 2014 I have already offered an overview of the main events of the Ukrainian crisis.¹ Now, with almost a year since its inception has passed, it is possible to review events in the crisis within a longer timeframe. Our primary emphasis will be on how the international community and public opinion perceived and interpreted the events of the crisis. Given that this is our primary approach, the first phase of the crisis is identified as *the agony of the Yanukovich regime* beginning with the November 2013 protest wave and ending with the flight of Victor Yanukovich in February 2014. While we can certainly identify further decisive points within this timeframe which affected the dynamics of the crisis,² the main attribute of this first phase of events was that Victor Yanukovich and his administration – although having the appropriate political, financial and internal security resources at their disposal – were unable to effectively handle the internal protests that led to the change of leadership. Those who have a critical view on this phase of the crisis often stress the involvement of the West and the advance of the Ukrainian radical far-right. These views are somewhat exaggerated as the Maidan movement was primarily financed and supported by Ukrainian oligarchs left outside the circles of power, while the results of the presidential elections show no evidence that the far-right has made significant advances.³ We also have to argue that the Yanukovich administration was in no way constrained to forcefully and repeatedly quench social protests. We must also mention that in this period the international community and the international public opinion considered the Ukrainian crisis as a domestic struggle for political power and did not assign Moscow a role of major player in it.

Based on its specificities, the second major phase of the crisis is the period beginning with *the Russian aggression that started on February 27-28 up to the shooting down of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH-17 Boeing 777 on July 17*. This was also the period during which Russia occupied and later annexed Crimea (February 28 to March 18), stoking armed sepa-

¹ Tálás Péter: [A jelenlegi ukrán válságról](#). SVKK Elemzések 2014/3; Tálás Péter: [A jelenlegi ukrán válságról 2.0](#) SVKK Elemzések 2014/8.

² The brutal attacks against the protestors on November 30, the December 17 Yanukovich – Putin agreement, the laws passed on January 16, 2014 that radically curtailed freedom rights and the clashes between the protestors and the ruling power resulting in many casualties on January 19-23 and February 18-21.

³ The two candidates of the far-right only got 2% of the votes. See Olszański, Tadeusz A. – Wierzbowska-Miazga, Agata: [Poroszenko prezydentem Ukrainy](#). Analizy OSW, May 28, 2014.

ratism in Eastern and Southern Ukraine (beginning in early April), and the proclamation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (April 7 and 8, respectively). Metaphorically speaking, this was an attempt to organize and initiate a 'Russian Spring' in Ukraine. During this period of the crisis, Petro Poroshenko was elected president on May 25, thus ending the illegitimacy of presidential power. Also during this period, Ukrainian forces in June and early July reclaimed some of the territories occupied by the armed separatists supported by Russia. This latter achievement was possible because the separatists in Eastern Ukraine lacked wide-ranging social support.⁴ By this time, the annexation of Crimea and later the support of the armed separatists in Eastern Ukraine triggered the first wave of U.S. and European Union sanctions against Russia (the U.S. sanctions were introduced on March 19 and 20, April 28 and July 16, while the EU's on March 17, 23, April 29 and May 12).⁵ Despite these sanctions, the majority of international and particularly European public opinion continued to regard the Ukrainian crisis as an internal Russian-Ukrainian conflict in which the Russian Federation was nothing more than an external player supporting the pro-Russian separatists. Already during this stage of the conflict it became evident that the West did not intend to challenge Putin, nor did it wish to trigger a new Cold War. The reluctant and cautious adhering of the West to introduce sanctions was another clear signal that it did not wish to be militarily involved and formally side with Ukraine.

The third period of the Ukraine crisis began with *the shooting down of the Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17 Boeing 777 on July 17 and was concluded by the suspension of the economic provisions of the EU – Ukraine Partnership Agreement on September 12*. This was the first time that the Ukrainian events acquired first a European, then a global dimension (mainly due to the change of the EU's stance in the wake of the shooting down of Flight MH-17). This was also the time when the majority of the European public opinion finally realized that Moscow is a direct, pertinent and essential player in the crisis. This realization came due to the fact that on August 27 – in order to prevent the fall of the 'breakaway republics' – new frontlines have been opened in Southern Ukrainian territories that previously had shown no signs of separatism. Beyond this point Moscow became more and more considered as a key player who supports and defends Eastern Ukrainian separatists – who obviously lacked popular support –, thereby openly admitting its violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity, in order to retain its political influence over Kiev. For this, Russia was even willing to accept prolonged tensions with the West.

The main events in this period of the crisis were the following: the opening of the Russian border by Ukrainian separatists (July 25), the offensive of Russian troops against Southern Ukraine (August 27), Putin's peace plan between the Ukrainian government and the separatists (September 3) and the ceasefire agreement reached on September 5. As for the international dimensions of the crisis, the milestones were the EU sanctions (of June 25, July 30 and September 12), the U.S. sanctions (of September 12)⁶, the August 6 counter-sanctions by Russia⁷, NATO's Wales Summit (September 3-4)⁸, and the suspension of the

⁴ Sadowski, Rafał – Wierzbowska-Miazga, Agata: [Separatyści oddają inicjatywę Kijowowi](#). *Analizy OSW*, July 9, 2014.

⁵ [U.S. Imposes Second Wave of Sanctions on Russia](#). *jmnjournal.com*, March 20, 2014; [Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the European Union on the Alignment of Certain Third Countries with the Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP Concerning Restrictive Measures in Respect of Actions Undermining or Threatening the Territorial Integrity, Sovereignty and Independence of Ukraine](#). Council of the European Union, April 11, 2014; [U.S. Levels New Sanctions Against Russian Officials, Companies](#). *Haaretz.com*, April 28, 2014; [EU Restrictive Measures](#). Council of the European Union, April 29, 2014; [Third Wave of Sanctions Slams Russian Stocks](#). *The Moscow Times*, July 17, 2014.

⁶ [EU Sanctions Against Russia Over Ukraine Crisis](#). *European Union Newsroom*, September 2014; [Ukraine Crisis: Russia and Sanctions](#). *BBC*, September 12, 2014; [European Sanctions Blog: Russia](#), *europeansanctions.com*, October 01, 2014.

⁷ MacFarquhar, Neil – Smale, Alison: [Russia Responds to Western Sanctions With Import Bans of Its Own](#). *The New York Times*, August 07, 2014.

⁸ Csiki Tamás – Tálás Péter – Varga Gergely: The agenda and assessment of the Wales NATO summit. *Nemzet és Biztonság*, 2014/4. pp. 112-128

economic provisions of the EU – Ukraine Partnership Agreement – under Russian pressure⁹ – on September 12. It is important to note that even by this time the Western stance had remained unchanged: the West still did not want to challenge Vladimir Putin and the Russian leadership, nor did it want a new Cold War, but at the same time, it could not and still currently cannot leave unsanctioned the Russian steps that contravened international law and standards. Although a part of the international and particularly of the European public opinion tends to interpret Western restraint as a weakness, it is important to see that major Western powers considered other issues (such as the Islamic State and the prevailing effects of the economic crisis) as more pressing than the Ukrainian crisis. Also, some perceive Moscow's stance as a display of weakness rather than of strength. Finally, economic interests also dictate that Europe should not increase and further aggravate Western-Russian tensions.

Possible levels of analysis for the Ukraine crisis

Analysts agree that the Ukraine crisis is a complex one, with three overlapping levels: a *geopolitical* level, a *regional* level and a domestic *Ukrainian* level that have manifested in various parts of Ukraine. Most analysts – and consequently, the majority of the international public opinion – agree that, *on the geopolitical level, the crisis is a fight over spheres of interest*, primarily between the United States and the Russian Federation, respectively the European Union and the Russian Federation.¹⁰ In this geopolitical game Ukraine is rather the object than the subject of the struggle. This struggle originally began in 1989-1991 with the break-up of the Soviet Union and Ukraine gaining independence, but the current crisis is different from the previous stages of the struggle in that it is evolving among different power relations. The most pertinent aspect of these new power relations is that as the United States' supremacy and indeed, international level of ambitions have decreased, this has opened up the field for regional major powers – such as Russia or China – to better assert their interests in their immediate environment.¹¹ Some analysts and commentators consider that current events and those that have happened since 2008 (since the Russo-Georgian War) are but the delayed answer of a currently stronger Russia to geopolitical advance of the West.¹² NATO's 1999, 2004 and 2009 enlargements, EU enlargement in 2004 and 2013, Western support of the Color Revolutions (Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan in 2005) and the European Union's Eastern Partnership policy since 2008. These analysts argue that Russia has become affluent due to its oil and gas revenues, becoming a major energy player and is likely to feature among the world's 8 largest economies for the coming 15 years. As a consequence, Russia did not reduce its military spending despite the 2008 financial and economic crisis, but has rather implemented a sizeable armed forces reform and military technology modernization.

Other analysts, however, suggest that everything that has been happening since 2008 is not indicative of a stronger Russia, but were the responses of a gradually weakening Russia to the West's past and planned geopolitical steps.¹³ According to this approach, Russia suf-

⁹ Sadowski, Rafał – Wierzbowska-Miazga, Agata: [Russia is Blocking a Free Trade Area Between the EU and Ukraine](#). *OSW Analyses*, September 17, 2014.

¹⁰ Trenin, Dmitri: [The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry](#). Carnegie Moscow Center, 2014. p 38.; Mearsheimer, John J.: [Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin](#). *Foreign Affairs*, 2014 September/October.

¹¹ Richarson, Bill: [A New Realism](#). *Foreign Affairs*, 2008 January/February; Magyarics Tamás: [Vissza a kezdetekhez](#). *Nemzet és Biztonság*, 2008/2, pp 3–12.

¹² Michael Auslin: [Why Did Russia Invade Ukraine? Because The West Is Weak](#). *Forbes*, March 3, 2014.; [Why Russia is Strong and The West is Weak?](#) *dobrisratings.com*, March 22, 2014.; Bump, Philip: [Obama: No, Romney Was Wrong. Russia Is Weak, Not Strong](#). *The Wire*, March 25, 2014.; Champion, Marc: [Weak or Strong, Obama Can't Save Ukraine](#). *Bloomberg View*, May 13, 2014; Morici, Peter: [Exposing the Weakness of the U.S. and Europe](#). *realclearworld.com*, July 23, 2014; Grygel, Jakub: [The Weak Attack the Strong](#). *The American Interest*, October 05, 2014.

¹³ [The Real Weakness of Russia](#). *abovetopsecret.com*, May 10, 2014; Miller, Chris: [War in Ukraine Exposes Russia's Weakness](#). *Yale Global Online*, September 16, 2014; Removska, Olena: [Russia Is Weaker than It Seems — James Sherr](#). *Euromaidan Press*, September 25, 2014.

fers from a slowing economic growth and faces serious modernization challenges. These are, as argued, the responses of a regional major power that has been facing a certain kind of strategic solitude: the 'Reset' policy announced by Obama in 2009 has failed, Europe did not become a significant partner in modernization due to the 2008 economic and financial crisis, while China is as much a strategic partner for Moscow as it is a competitor.¹⁴ They do not contest that Russia has become more affluent, but they definitely state that it has not become more modern either. These analysts argue that Russia has chosen the means of war – or, in the case of the Ukraine, a proxy war – because the non-military means (economic, financial, political, cultural, etc.) of asserting Russian interests have either been exhausted or have proven insufficient. This aspect is worth mentioning mainly because the majority of the Western public opinion was probably not so much shocked by the mere fact of Russia asserting its interests, but rather by the means of doing it.¹⁵ Very few would question whether Russia can have legitimate interests vested in Ukraine, and that Russia could even assert them, but not through a proxy war, annexation or the destabilization of the Ukrainian state.

Yet other analysts are even more lenient. They accept the fact that Russia has annexed Crimea and even consider Moscow's attempts for creating a geopolitical buffer zone in Ukraine legitimate in the geopolitical sense given that Russia does not have natural borders with Europe (and the former Soviet Union did the same with Eastern and Central Europe).¹⁶ This, however, opens up for the question: What is the strategic value for Russia of carving out a portion of Ukraine, or creating a Ukraine which could well become anti-Russian – and thus pro-Western – for the time to come? The latter question is even more pertinent given that on a geopolitical level, the Ukrainian crisis is also a fight for the position of lead integrator in the Ukrainian theatre of the post-Soviet region.¹⁷ The key question in this respect is: Who is better suited to support the modernization of Ukraine in the long term?

On a regional level, the Ukrainian crisis is a strategic rivalry between Ukraine and the Russian Federation over the foreign and wider security policy orientation of Ukraine. (This includes the relations European Union vs. Eurasian Customs Union and NATO vs. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)?).¹⁸ In this particular rivalry, some analysts on the one hand portray Kiev as the party fighting for the stabilization of the Ukrainian state, and Moscow as the party attempting to destabilize the Ukrainian state. Accordingly, they criticize Russia for supporting the armed separatists in Eastern Ukraine, stoking the constructed Novorossiia identity and annexing Crimea.¹⁹ On the other hand – primarily the Russians themselves – some blame Ukrainian nationalism as the chief motivation beyond the revolution, while at the same time considering the Russian stance as fundamentally justified in protecting the Russian minority living in Ukraine.²⁰ While it is hard to contest that radical nationalism can seriously harm the Ukrainian case on the international stage, this cannot be a reason for a wholesale condemnation of Ukraine's striving to build a nation and nation-state in a region (i.e. Eastern and Central Europe) in which the creation of new nation-states was one of the

¹⁴ Sz. Bíró Zoltán: *Russia and the Post-Soviet Region*. In: Háda Béla – N. Rózsa Erzsébet (ed.): *Regional Security Challenges – Europe-Asia*. National University of Public Service, Institute of International Studies, Budapest, 2014. p. 63.

¹⁵ Regarding the changes in Russia's international image, see: [Russia's Global Image Negative Amid Crisis in Ukraine](#). Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 09, 2014.

¹⁶ On this topic, see Friedman, George: [Ukraine: On the Edge of Empires](#). *Stratfor Geopolitical Weekly*, December 17, 2013; [Geopolitics of Ukraine](#). *diploweb.com*, March 19, 2014; Menkiszak, Marek – Sadowski, Rafał – Żochowski, Piotr: [Rosyjska interwencja zbrojna we wschodniej Ukrainie](#). *Analizy OSW*, September 03, 2014.

¹⁷ Inozemtsev, Vladislav L. – Barbashin, Anton: [Eurasian Integration: Putin's Futureless Project](#). Aspen Institute, Prague, 2014; Trenin, Dmitri: [The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry](#). Carnegie Moscow Center, 2014. p. 38.; Mearsheimer, John J.: [Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin](#). *Foreign Affairs*, 2014 September/October

¹⁸ Regarding the changes in Ukrainian opinion versus NATO and the European Union, see [Как изменилась Украина накануне парламентских выборов](#). *belaruspartisan.org*, October 23, 2014.

¹⁹ Menkiszak, Marek – Sadowski, Rafał – Żochowski, Piotr: [Rosyjska interwencja zbrojna we wschodniej Ukrainie](#). *Analizy OSW*, September 03, 2014.

²⁰ Menkiszak, Marek: [Doktryna Putina: Tworzenie koncepcyjnych podstaw rosyjskiej dominacji na obszarze postradzieckim](#). *Komentarze OSW*, March 27, 2014.

most important processes in the past 25 years.²¹ In addition, history teaches us that losing a portion of national territory will stoke nationalism and promote the cause of the nationalists in every nation.

In this struggle for orientation the European Union is not exempt of the responsibility of misjudged steps either. Past experience shows that the EU is prone to overestimate the opportunities it presents and to paint a much brighter picture than the reality, creating the illusion that adhering to and joining the Union will solve every problem of proposing members. The EU has repeatedly made this mistake in case of Ukraine too, by failing to warn that despite the Partnership Agreement Ukraine is still a long way from effectively joining the European Union, while a distant membership is but an opportunity for modernization and by no means a guarantee for it.

The struggle for Ukraine's foreign and security policy orientation should primarily be approached from the perspectives for the modernization of Ukrainian society, for the simple reason that for the East-Central European region a modern and stable Ukraine is a desirable outcome. The question – as we have previously indicated – is whether Russia or the European Union would offer a more viable modernization perspective for Ukraine. It is safe to assume that in case of Ukraine and countries similar to it – that is, countries who are forced into modernization by lack of energy resources or raw material reserves, and where creating wealth and welfare is not a simple question of choice (i.e. achieving it through modernization or through oil and gas revenues) – a Russian-led integration does not offer a substantial strategic perspective. It is highly questionable whether Ukrainian modernization can indeed be achieved by following the lead of another country which is itself struggling with a serious and structural modernization deficit. On the other hand, we cannot be certain that the modernization blueprint of the EU can guarantee success in Ukraine. Thus, the choice in socio-economic orientation should be left for Ukrainians.

International discourse regarding the Ukrainian crisis almost never refers to *the domestic level of the crisis: conflicts and clashes*, nor do they usually mention the fact that that Ukrainians themselves have been instrumental in creating the current situation.²² They have contributed to it through the structural crisis of the Ukrainian state, by failing to create a solid state in the past 22 years. They have also contributed to it through establishing private armies, through the fact that the Ukrainian state and society are dominated by oligarchs with their own pet members of parliament. Within this system, state institutions (the armed forces, police and law enforcement as well as the judiciary) had been weakened and the state has lost its monopoly over violence and its ability of governance.

The current crisis is also a struggle among Ukrainian oligarchs, and – even worse – a struggle between groups of oligarchs who have all been tainted in the past 22 years. The most outstanding example is that of those supporting the Orange revolution between 2005 and 2010 and those who sided with Yanukovich between 2010 and 2014.²³ These oligarchs have now been reduced to financing the anti-Yanukovich Maidan movement (those who fell out of favor after 2010), respectively to financing the armed separatists (those who were ousted from power in February 2014). There is little doubt that the crisis also has an Eastern versus Western Ukraine component (which, to some extent, is also a struggle between various political identities)²⁴, but most analysts believe these struggles should not be assigned excessive importance.²⁵

In an order of importance, the society versus political elite aspect of the Ukrainian crisis should have precedence over all other aspects. I am referring to a social dissatisfaction that

²¹ Tálás Péter: [Kelet-Közép-Európa az integrációk szorításában](#). *Nemzet és Biztonság*, 2008/3. pp. 65–76.

²² Grennes, Thomas – Strazds, Andris: [Ukraine, Russia and the West](#). *economonitor.com*, October 20, 2014.

²³ Regarding the Ukrainian oligarch groups, see: Matuszak, Sławomir: [Demokracja oligarchiczna. Wpływ grup biznesowych na ukraińską politykę](#). *Prace OSW*, October 16, 2012, p. 113.

²⁴ These are so complex, that taking into account only the language, ethnic and political aspects, we can enumerate the following identities: Ukrainian-language ethnic Ukrainian, with a Ukrainian political identity; Russian-language ethnic Ukrainian, with a Ukrainian political identity; Russian-language ethnic Russian, with a Ukrainian political identity; Russian-language ethnic Russian, with a Russian political identity.

²⁵ Regarding the inner divisions and fault lines in the Ukraine, see Olszanski, Tadeusz A.: [Więcej jedności niż podziałów. Zróznicowania wewnętrzne Ukrainy](#). *Punktwidzenia OSW*, March 07, 2014, p. 35.

has both been caused and perpetuated by the fact that for 22 years, the Ukrainian elite was unable to come up with an acceptable development blueprint or perspective for the country (even if the protests themselves don't always exhibit this expressly). Neither did it stabilize and consolidate the Ukrainian state politically or economically. In fact, they perpetuated the crisis and left the overwhelming majority of the population in a vegetative state both in an economic (poverty) and political sense (lack of change, despite elections).

The parliamentary elections of October 26

President Petro Poroshenko called for early parliamentary elections to be held on October 26, 2014. Fifty parties or political groups ran at the elections, 29 of which could field national lists,²⁶ while the remaining ones only had candidates in individual constituencies. Out of the 29 parties with a national list, only 12 were able to field more than 100 candidates nationwide, while another seven had candidates in individual constituencies. The number of registered candidates was 6,627 of which 3,120 featured on party lists. The Central Electoral Commission registered every candidate from the Donetsk and Lugansk districts as well, despite that it had already been certain before the election date that no elections will be held in 13 or 14 local constituencies and conducting elections in further six constituencies was doubtful. (The separatists announced that they would hold elections in the occupied territories on November 2.)²⁷ Elections were not held in the Crimean peninsula, previously de facto annexed to the Russian Federation.

The Ukrainian election campaign was short – barely six weeks – but very aggressive and dynamic. The contest took place between two sides – called at times *'patriotic-revolutionary'* vs. *'old regime-pro-Russian'* or *'European-oriented'* vs. *'Russophile'*. The dominant topics were war and peace, the economic crisis and issues of political renewal. Preliminary opinion polls showed that the parties and groupings which could give relevant answers to those questions and those that fielded new faces among their candidates had a distinct advantage among the people. Before the elections, analysts unanimously predicted that the October 26 election's dominant feature will be the appearance of new political groups or ones that were all but unknown half a year earlier and that six to nine parties will make it into the legislation. 'New' being a relative term in this context: some of them are indeed entirely new, while others were comprised of the second or third line of people from parties that managed to retain some of their appeal following the February revolution. The elections were expected to be special also because forecasts showed that for the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, the pro-European parties could garner as much as 75-80% of the votes, even so that a majority that could rewrite the constitution.

Preliminary opinion polls predicted the victory of Petro Poroshenko's Bloc (BPP), widely regarded by analysts as pro-European, expecting it to score between one fifth to one third of the votes. At the same time, it was evident that BPP would not be able to govern on its own, thus the relative strength of other parties on this side was also an important issue. Polls predicted that either the People's Front headed by Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and former interim President Oleksandr Turchinov,²⁸ or populist, national-liberal Radical Party led by Oleg Lyashko could finish as runner-up. Just before the election a surprise contender has emerged, the Self-Reliance party led by the incumbent mayor of Lviv. Other groups widely regarded as certain participant of the new parliament were Yulia Tymoshenko's Bat-

²⁶ Regarding the elections, see Olszański, Tadeusz A.: [Ukraińskie partie polityczne na starcie kampanii wyborczej](#). *Analizy OSW*, September 17, 2014; Olszański, Tadeusz A.: [Przed wyborami parlamentarnymi na Ukrainie](#). (Before the parliamentary elections in Ukraine) *Komentarze OSW (Commentary OSW)*, No. 149. Oktober 15, 2014; [Ukraina przed wyborami. Stare elity trzymają się mocno](#). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 25, 2014; [Ukraina wybierze przyszłość](#). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 25, 2014; Olszański, Tadeusz A.: [Mocny głos na rzecz reform: Ukraina po wyborach parlamentarnych](#) *Analizy OSW*, October 29, 2014

²⁷ Poór Csaba: [Hősökkel indulnak a pártok](#). *Nol.hu*, October 25, 2014.

²⁸ Given that in the past few months there was a serious political debate between Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and President Poroshenko regarding the firmness of the political stance against the separatists backed by Russia, the People's Front was often billed as 'pro-war' as against Poroshenko's 'pro-peace' stance.

kivshchyna and the conservative, pro-European and anti-Russian Civic Position (Hromadska Pozycja) led by Anatoliy Hrytsenko.

Given that the main parties of the previous regime had been weakened (the Party of Regions fell apart and the Ukrainian Communist Party has been weakened), the opposition to the pro-European bloc primarily consisted of the Opposition Bloc led by Yuriy Boyko and the Strong Ukraine led by billionaire Serhiy Tihipko (with a strong backing in Eastern Ukraine), if the latter would be able to pass the 5% parliamentary election threshold. It also has to be mentioned that half of the members of parliament were to be elected from individual constituencies, thus representatives of the old regime could also make it into the legislation. Preliminary expectations were for the anti-European and pro-Russian camp to tally a total of 20-25% of the votes. This was even more likely because the direct purchase of votes remained a fixture of this election, although at a lower level. Preliminary polls also showed with a high degree of certainty that the Right Sector (Pravy Sektor) and the nationalist Svoboda (Freedom) party will not receive enough party list votes to make it into the parliament. This meant that the national radicals most criticized and opposed by Moscow would either be left out of parliament or would only have a marginal presence. It was also widely expected that the armed forces and security institutions would have a significant presence in the legislation, through Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko's Civic Position as well as having secured many positions on other parties' lists, such as those of Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, the People's Front, the Radical Party, Batkivshchyna and Self-Reliance.

<i>Party/Alliance</i>	<i>Exit poll (1)</i>	<i>Exit poll (2)</i>	<i>Exit poll (3)</i>	<i>Final result</i>	<i>Number of MPs</i>	
<i>Petro Poroshenko's Bloc</i>	24,3%	23,0%	22,2%	21,82%	132	<i>l n p a r l i a m e n t</i>
<i>Independents</i>					96	
<i>People's Front (A. Yatsenyuk)</i>	21,8%	21,3%	21,8%	22,16%	82	
<i>Self-Reliance (A. Sadovyi)</i>	12,5%	13,2%	14,2%	11,00%	33	
<i>Opposition Bloc (Y. Boyko)</i>	6,6%	7,6%	7,8%	9,36%	29	
<i>Radical Party (O. Lyashko)</i>	7,1%	6,4%	6,4%	7,44%	22	
<i>Batkivshchyna (Y. Tymoshenko)</i>	6,0%	5,6%	5,6%	5,68%	19	
<i>Left vacant (Crimea, breakaway regions)</i>					27 (12+15)	
<i>Freedom (O. Tyahnibok)</i>	6,3%	6,3%	5,8%	4,73%	6	<i>B e l o w 5%</i>
<i>Ukrainian Communist Party</i>				3,84%		
<i>Civic Position (A. Hrytsenko)</i>				3,11%		
<i>Strong Ukraine (S. Tihipko)</i>				3,10%	1	
<i>Pravy Sektor (D. Yarosh)</i>				1,8%	1	
<i>Volia (Y. Derevyanko)</i>				-	1	
<i>Zastup (V. Davidenko)</i>				-	1	
					450	

Preliminary and final results of the October 26, 2014 Ukrainian parliamentary elections²⁹

Exit polls already suggested that the predictions of the Ukrainian public opinion research institutes were far from reliable.³⁰ The exit polls predicted a marginal victory of Petro Poroshenko' Bloc, with the People's Front second and the Self-Reliance led by Lviv mayor Andriy Sadovyi in third place. Other parties that would make it into the legislation passing the

²⁹ Turnout at the election was 52.4% of the 31 million voters (with regional figures ranging from 32.4% to 70%). This was both lower than the turnout of the May presidential election (60.3%) and the 2012 parliamentary elections (57.9%).

³⁰ Экзит-полл "Университас": в Радупроходятдвеновыепартии. *korrespondent.net*, October 26, 2014; Экзит-поллШустера: выборы в РадувигралапартияБлокПорошенко. *korrespondent.net*, October 26, 2014.

5% threshold but staying below 10% would have been the Radical Party, Svoboda (Freedom Party – this prediction proved to be wrong) and Yulia Tymoshenko's Batkivshchyna. Exit polls also showed that both the Radical Party and Tymoshenko's party performed below expectations, while Civic Position and Strong Ukraine failed to even reach the 5% threshold.

The final results were even more surprising: even though Petro Poroshenko's Bloc won the elections based on the combined individual constituency and party lists, the party list contest was won by the People's Front. It also became evident that despite the expectations and forecasts, the Svoboda (Freedom) failed to pass the 5% threshold.³¹

The Ukrainian parliamentary elections resulted in the clear victory and absolute parliamentary majority of the pro-European and moderate camp (Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, People's Front, Self-Reliance and Batkivshchyna). The ruling coalition will probably consist of PPB, the People's Front and Self-Reliance; and should the need arise to modify the constitution, this could also be secured with the support of the Batkivshchyna and independent MPs joining the pro-European parliamentary factions. It seems certain that Arseniy Yatsenyuk will remain Prime Minister, who is Petro Poroshenko's ally, – but as of now also his competitor. The Ukrainian parliament will not have a single dominant party, and while this could result in more debates between the parties, it could also lead to making the Ukrainian political elite more inclined towards compromise and pragmatism, given the pressure for reaching agreement. Another important result is that the defining and important parties of the previous regime (Batkivshchyna, Ukrainian Communist Party, Freedom) and their successors (the Opposition Bloc and Strong Ukraine for the Regions' Party) have been relegated to the background, as have been – from another perspective – the pro-Russian political forces (Opposition Bloc, Ukrainian Communist Party, Strong Ukraine). The pro-Russian camp will only be represented in the legislation by the Opposition Bloc, with some additional support from individual MPs joining Strong Ukraine and independents joining the Opposition Bloc. The radicals have also been marginalized: Svoboda secured 6 individual seats, Pravy Sector only three and the Radical Party remained under 10% with 22 seats. It is also worth mentioning that none of the Svoboda MPs are from the ranks of the party's leadership. The election failure of the party also means that President Poroshenko will likely replace the party's members previously given regional administrative positions in the Western Ukrainian counties as will replace government members of the Pravy Sector.

Half of the parliament – or some 250 MPs – are newcomers to the legislation, although many of them probably have some experience in municipality administration. The majority of those with previous legislative experience – a few scores – are likely to cooperate with the faction of the Opposition Bloc. The pro-European factions will mainly consist of NGO activists, entrepreneurs, journalists, the military and armed volunteers. Most of them are well-educated, but lack political experience. Many observers point out that members of the military and armed volunteers with close tie to different military formations in the new legislation constitute a serious political hazard. The new government must also contend with the – somewhat reduced – legislative presence of those representing the oligarchy. Igor Kolomoisky would keep his influence through Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, Dmytro Firtash and Serhiy Lyovochkin through PPB, the Radical Party and the Opposition Bloc and Rinat Akhmetov through the Opposition Bloc.³²

The situation after the elections

Now the main question is what tasks lay ahead for the new president and the new parliament and how the new political elite will be able to solve the accumulated problems. They will certainly need Western assistance in issues such as the reconstruction of the Donetsk Basin (Donbas), securing electrical power supply during winter (given the reduced output of the Donetsk Basin mines), and in general in the consolidation of the Ukrainian economy. This

³¹ [Результаты выборов-2014: обработано 99,72% протоколов.](#) *korrespondent.net*, October 31, 2014.

³² Olszański, Tadeusz A.: [Mocny głos na rzecz reform: Ukraina po wyborach parlamentarnych](#) *Analizy OSW*, October 29, 2014.

latter aspect is of particular importance, because the Ukrainian economy – due the failures of the previous governments – has fallen into a catastrophic state even without the war in Eastern Ukraine.³³ It is important to note that the new Ukrainian government can only hope for – but cannot be assured of – substantial Western assistance if it tackles all-pervasive corruption, begins to dismantle the oligarchic establishment and implements market economy reforms.

Most likely Ukraine will have the opportunity to prove itself in the coming months, because it is unlikely that Russia – after its attempt to trigger and stage a ‘Russian Spring’ in Ukraine and federalize the country suffered an initial failure – will make another attempt at influencing Ukrainian policy with arms (through mobilizing and deploying tens of thousands of troops). It is much more likely that the Russian leadership – both internationally isolated and constrained by sanctions – will also attempt to seek positions in the Ukrainian parliament in order to hinder the new president and government.³⁴

The future of the separatist-controlled Eastern Ukrainian territories is also unclear. Although point 5 of the Minsk Agreement expressly forbade it, the Russian-backed separatists held elections both in Donetsk and Lugansk on November 2, 2014, eventually not having the elections recognized as legitimate even by Russia. The current leaders won the election in both cases: Alexander Zakharchenko in the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and Igor Plotnitsky in the so-called Lugansk People’s Republic.³⁵

The parliamentary elections in Ukraine had a fairly negative outcome for Moscow, confirming that Russia has very little influence upon Ukrainian politics. In the current scenario, Moscow’s most effective play would be to freeze the Eastern Ukrainian conflict in its existing stage, much like what happened in the disputed territory of Transnistria.³⁶ The future of the Donetsk Basin reconstruction is also unclear, because Kiev is unlikely to make efforts to consolidate a region that is still controlled by pro-Russian separatists. It is similarly unclear whether – in addition to armament and political support – Kiev would be willing to allocate resources to the reconstruction of the region. In addition, Moscow is not really interested in finalizing the status of these breakaway territories, because that would also mean an open admission that it has ‘lost the rest of the Ukraine’ – and that would be a major strategic loss for the Kremlin.

One of the most significant political tasks for the new Ukrainian administration will be gaining the support of the population of regions and social groups that have not been affected by the separatist movement, but where voters still expressed their dissent through absenteeism. Such regions are Odessa (39.7% turnout), Kherson (41.4%), Mykolaiv (42.8%), Kharkov (45.3%), Zaporozhye (47.2%) and Dnepropetrovsk (47.9%).

The new Ukrainian government’s inclination towards reforms could be increased by the fact that within the reformist camp, the parties calling for more resolute reforms (People’s

³³ Iwański, Tadeusz: [Gospodarka Ukrainy w cieniu wojny](#). *Komentarze OSW*, October 08, 2014.

³⁴ Most analysts agree that European and American sanctions have a significant impact on Russian economy, which has traditionally been vulnerable in at least three areas. First, on international energy markets that the country cannot influence on its own, while half of the Russian budget’s income and 67-69% of the country’s currency inflow comes from the export of crude oil, refined derivatives and natural gas. Second, during the import of high technology products, where except for certain military technologies even true the energy industry relies on technology import, such as technologies necessary for the extraction of shale gas and shale oil, as well as the construction of deep-sea pipelines. Third, Russia is vulnerable on the international financial markets, because Russian banks and enterprises are short on capital. Although the international literature often refers to Russia’s significant currency reserves (which supposedly amount to \$600 billion, while central bank reserves sum up to \$450 billion), they fail to mention to related issues. On the one hand, these reserves have been reduced by \$80 billion since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2013, primarily because Russia attempts to prop up the ruble (despite, the ruble rate has declined almost 25%). On the other hand, Russian foreign debts exceed the central bank’s reserves by at least \$200 billion. In addition, Russian economic growth has been slowing since the first half of 2012, amounting to 1.3% in 2013 and expected to barely reach 1% this year (practically stagnation), while this slowdown has occurred in a period when crude oil prices were still above \$100 and the country hasn’t yet been hit with sanctions.

³⁵ [Po wyborach na Ukrainie. Moskwa: Będziemy współpracować. Zacharczenko: Jestem gotów do dialogu z Kijowem](#). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 03, 2014.

³⁶ Andrusieczko, Piotr: [Donbas stopniowo odpywa od Ukrainy](#). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 03, 2014.

Front and Self-Reliance) fared well in the elections. Many analysts explain the (relative) 'defeat' of the PPB and the 'victory' of Arseniy Yatsenyuk's People's Front by saying that pro-European voters were dissatisfied with the cautious reformist stance of President Poroshenko as well as his willingness to compromise with the separatists.³⁷ And an even stronger impulse for reforms will be that should the new political elite abstain from wide-ranging reforms, most analysts predict that the existing dissatisfaction could trigger a new wave of major societal movements in the country.³⁸

³⁷ Olszański, Tadeusz A.: [Mocny głos na rzecz reform: Ukraina po wyborach parlamentarnych](#) *Analizy OSW*, October 29, 2014.

³⁸ [Analityk OSW: na Ukrainie możliwa jest druga fala rewolucji](#). *polskieradio.pl*, October 13, 2014.