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2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN UKRAINE: HOW ZELENSKY WAS ELECTED?

Viktoriia DEMYDOVA*

ABSTRACT

In April 2019, Ukrainians elected actor and showman Volodymyr Zelensky as their president. Zelensky was more than unexpected choice for the country that wages a war with its neighbor. This article concentrates on the two rounds of 2019 presidential election. The author discusses election results, factors of electoral behavior, regional voting patterns, role of oligarchs, stance of Russia and role of the virtual space in the election. It is argued that in Ukraine, citizens chose a person without political experience hoping for a change. While one can note presence of the regular elections and changes in the leadership in Ukraine, democratic principles and procedures have not institutionalized yet. Thus, oligarchs still back the candidates. At the same time, traditional regional voting patterns are deteriorating while the role of youth is growing and particularly this is possible due to the spread of the social media. The author analyzes three groups of sources. First, the election results are studied to reveal public support for different candidates and regional voting in Ukraine. Second, data related to electoral race including party programs, surveys about public support for the candidates and debates are examined. Finally, official documents indicating policies of the Ukrainian presidents are analyzed.

Keywords: Election, Poroshenko, President, Ukraine, Zelensky.

2019 CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI SEÇİMİ: ZELENSKY NASIL SEÇİLDİ?

ÖZET

Nisan 2019'da Ukrayna halkı aktör ve gösteri adamı olan Volodymyr Zelensky'yi cumhurbaşkanı seçti. Zelensky, sınır komşusuyla savaşmaya devam etmekte olan bir ülke için sürpriz bir adaydı. Bu makale 2019 cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminin iki turunu incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda yazar seçim sonuçlarını, seçim davranışı faktörlerini, bölgesel oylama modellerini, oligarkların üstlendiği rolü, Rusya'nın duruşunu ve sanal dünyanın etkisini ele alacaktır. Ukrayna halkının değişiklik umudu ile siyasal yönden deneyimsiz bir cumhurbaşkanı seçtiği tartışılmaktadır. Diğer yandan, Ukrayna'da düzenli seçimler ve lider değişimleri gözlenmesine rağmen demokratik prensip ve yönetmeliklerin tam anlamıyla kurumsallaşmadığı görülmektedir. Bu yüzden oligarklar adayları desteklemeye devam etmektedir. Aynı zamanda, geleneksel bölgesel oylama modelleri zayıflamakta olup, sosyal medyanın artan etkisiyle birlikte gençlerin rolü artmaktadır. Yazar üç farklı kaynağı analiz edecektir. Birincisi, seçim sonuçları incelenerek farklı adaylara ve bölgesel oylamaya olan halk desteği incelenecektir. İkincisi, seçim yarışıyla ilişkili olan bilgi dökümleri, parti programları, adaylara olan halk desteğine ilişkin anketler ve tartışmalar incelenecektir. Son olarak, Ukrayna cumhurbaşkanlarının politikalarını gösteren resmi belgeler analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cumhurbaşkanı, Poroshenko, Seçim, Ukrayna, Zelensky.

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Introduction

On 31 March, 2019 Ukraine had the presidential election, the second election following EuroMaidan and annexation of Crimea and the seventh in the history of independent Ukraine. In total, 44 candidates were registered, while only three candidates appeared to be leaders after the first round: Volodymyr Zelensky, Petro Poroshenko and Yuliya Tymoshenko. Since none of the candidates reached 50% of the votes, the run-off followed.

Starting from 2004 Orange Revolution Ukrainian elections were accompanied by serious political crises. This is applicable to 2004 elections and then 2014 elections that followed the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbass. 2010 election was quite smooth and peaceful but the incumbent president fled the country in February 2013 after the violent suppression of the mass rallies in Kyiv. 2019 election was also peaceful, however, it brought a very different type of the political leader, celebrity president. This article problematizes 2019 election in Ukraine: elected in 2014, nationalistic president Poroshenko had been seen as a figure who can curb separatism of at least Donbas. In contrast, Zelensky, had no political or administrative experience and his election in the country fighting against the neighbor had been seen very unlikely.

Within last twenty years, particularly after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine demonstrates positive changes towards electoral democracy. None of its presidents, except of Leonid Kuchma, was re-elected to the post of the president, unlike Russian of Belarussian presidents or the leaders of Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries. Presidential term in Ukraine constitutes 5 years. There were no changes to the Constitution similar to Russian adopted in order to keep president in power as long as possible. At the same time, early parliamentary election calls made by Poroshenko in 2014 and Zelensky in 2019 demonstrate willingness of the presidents to form pro-presidential parliamentary majority in order to avoid political deadlocks. Such crisis occurred in 2006 when three main political groups in the parliament failed to agree.

It is argued that Ukrainians associate new President with the positive changes and are eager to give a chance to what they consider 'an ordinary citizen'. These expectations are rather related to the populist promises of Zelensky, expressed in his TV series, and disbelief of the citizens in experienced but corrupted politicians. This reveals another problem: politics in Ukraine is moving into the virtual space, where young people are more active therefore their voices are more decisive. Virtual space allows populism to develop. Long-lasting regional voting pattern in Ukraine seems to deteriorate after 2013 crisis. Annexation of Crimea, war in Eastern Ukraine and economic collapse led to the situation when electoral behavior is explained by the desire of citizens to have a leader who would meet their basic needs rather than by the ethnic identity, language factor and foreign policy orientations. At the same time, some patterns remain alive and decisive in Ukrainian election. First, foreign constituency traditionally prefers nationalistic-oriented candidates since diaspora is always mobilized over the issues of Ukrainian language, traditions and culture. Second, Ukrainian presidents are still backed by the industrial-financial groups headed by famous oligarchs.

Analysis of the following three groups of sources is utilized as a data collection technique in this article. First, the election results are studied to reveal citizens' support for different candidates and voting of different regions in Ukraine. Here, 1994, 2004, 2010 and 2014 presidential elections are covered. Except for the 2014 election, they were conducted through two rounds of voting. Particular attention is paid to run-offs as they

clearly show political orientations of different regions in Ukraine. Second, data related to 2019 electoral race including programs of the candidates and political parties, surveys about public support for the candidates and debates of the leading candidates are examined. Here, author deals with three main candidates that are Poroshenko, Zelensky and Tymoshenko. Finally, policies of the Ukrainian presidents represented in the official documents, such as laws, decrees, amendments to the Constitution as well as the speeches, are analyzed. Particular attention is paid to the President Petro Poroshenko (2014 - 2019) since among other candidates he occupied this post before. Besides, his term of presidency coincided with the post-Crimea period in Ukraine, war in Donbas, economic crisis and completion of the Association Agreement with the EU.

This article starts with the analysis of the preliminary vote of 31 March, followed by the analysis of the leading candidates Zelensky, Poroshenko and Tymoshenko. Next, run-off of 21 April preceded by the grand debate is discussed. Then, article sheds the light on regional voting patterns in 2019 comparing them to the 2004, 2010 and 2014 presidential election. Finally, issues of Donbas and Crimea as well as role of Russia in the election are discussed.

The First Round of Election: Electoral Race

On 31 March, 2019, Ukraine had the first round of the regular presidential election. Election was conducted through the second ballot system with the minimum requirement of 50% of the votes. Three candidates appeared to be the leaders of the race after the first round of election. They were actor Volodymyr Zelensky (30.2%), acting President Petro Poroshenko (15.95%) and former Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko (13.4%). (Central Electoral Commission, 2019a). Distribution of the votes in the first round is presented in the Table 1. Former Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine (2010 – 2012) and former Minister of Fuel and Energy (2006 – 2007) Yuriy Boyko ended up with 11.67%. Former Minister of Defense, member of the Our Ukraine political party and leader of the Civil Position party Anatoliy Hrytsenko reached 6.91%. Head of the Security Service of Ukraine from 2003 to 2005 Colonel General Ihor Smeshko collected 6.04%. Finally, journalist and leader of the Radical Party Oleh Lyashko gathered 5.48% of the votes. Since none of the candidates had reached 50% of the votes, the run-off followed on 21 April, 2019.

Name	% of the votes	Number of the votes
Volodymyr Zelensky	30.2	5 714 034
Petro Poroshenko	15.95	3 014 609
Yuliya Tymoshenko	13.4	2 532 452
Yuriy Boyko	11.67	2 206 216
Anatoliy Hrytsenko	6.91	1 306 450
Ihor Smeshko	6.04	1 141 332
Oleh Lyashko	5.48	1 036 003
Oleksandr Vilkul	4.15	784 274
Ruslan Koshulynsky	1.62	307 244
Yury Tymoshenko	0.62	117 693
Oleksand Shevchenko	0.57	109 078
Valentyn Nalyvaychenko	0.22	43 239

Table 1: Presidential election results, 1st round (March 31, 2019)

(Central Electoral Commission, 2019a).

Closer look at the dynamics of the electoral race 2019 recorded by Ukrainian research institutions allows noting how quickly support for the leading two candidates was changing. Thus, according to February 2019 polls of the Razumkov Centre, the leader of the race (19%) was the actor Volodymyr Zelensky, famous due to the TV series *Sluga Naroda* (*The Servant of the People*). At the same time, Petro Poroshenko was the second with 16.8% of preferences. Yuliya Tymoshenko got 13.8% of the support (Razumkov Centre, 2019a).

Petro Poroshenko

In May 2014, Poroshenko was elected in the first round with 54.7% of the votes (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014a). Early election was held after president Yanukovych fell incapable of dealing with the mass rallies in Ukraine during EuroMaidan and fled to Russia. 2014 election was preceded by the loss of Crimea in March, when Russian troops entered the peninsula and annexed it without any resistance, and proclamation of independence by Eastern regions Donetsk and Luhansk in May. It was an election void of traditional regional pattern in Ukraine: in all parts of the country votes for Poroshenko dominated. As it can be concluded from the Table 2, in 2014, Poroshenko got 69.9% and 65.13% of the votes in traditionally the most nationalistic Western regions of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk respectively, in traditionally pro-Russian Eastern regions of Kharkiv he got 35.27% and in Luhansk 33.17% of the votes (Central Electoral Commission, 2014b). This shows that pro-European Poroshenko was more popular in Western, Central and Northern parts of the country. Traditionally, nationalist candidates are more popular in diaspora: Poroshenko got 62.31% in foreign constituency in 2014 (Central Electoral Commission, 2014c). On 25 August 2014, Poroshenko called a snap election to Ukraine's parliament Verkhovna Rada, to be held on 26 October 2014 (The Guardian, 2014). Petro Poroshenko's Bloc that was renamed in 'Petro Poroshenko's Bloc 'Solidarity' in 2015, received 127 mandates in Verkhovna Rada (Central Electoral Commission, 2014d). The ruling coalition 'European Ukraine' was created. Fractions of the Petro Poroshenko's Bloc, the Popular Front, Self-Help, the Radical Party of Oleg Lyashko and the Fatherland joined the coalition. In total, coalition included 288 deputies out of 421, thus forming a constitutional majority in parliament (RFEEL, 2014).



Map 1: Administrative division of Ukraine

Region	Candidate	Votes, %	Total votes	Protocols proceeded, %
Vinnytska	Poroshenko P.O.	67.32	895 219	100.00
Volinska	Poroshenko P.O.	52.41	581 796	100.00
Dnipropetrovsk	Poroshenko P.O.	44.72	1,465,139	100.00
Donetsk	Poroshenko P.O.	36.15	115,823	100.00
Zhytomyrska	Poroshenko P.O.	58.64	659 335	100.00
Transcarpathian	Poroshenko P.O.	62.02	486 273	100.00
Zaporizhzka	Poroshenko P.O.	38.15	735 764	100.00
Ivano-Frankivsk	Poroshenko P.O.	65.13	796 008	100.00
Kiev	Poroshenko P.O.	61.67	996,046	100.00
Kirovogradska	Poroshenko P.O.	50.96	467 755	100.00
Luhanska	Poroshenko P.O.	33.17	52,239	100.00
Lvivska	Poroshenko P.O.	69.92	1,554,016	100.00
Mykolaivska	Poroshenko P.O.	45.97	472,522	100.00
Odesa	Poroshenko P.O.	41.78	836 659	100.00
Poltavska	Poroshenko P.O.	54.55	761 748	100.00
Rivnenska	Poroshenko P.O.	55.46	614 771	100.00
Sumska	Poroshenko P.O.	55.40	570 645	100.00
Ternopil	Poroshenko P.O.	60.63	650 087	100.00
Kharkivska	Poroshenko P.O.	35.28	1,033,847	100.00
Khersonska	Poroshenko P.O.	48.71	439 332	100.00
Khmelnitsky	Poroshenko P.O.	56.26	728 864	100.00
Cherkasy	Poroshenko P.O.	54.61	673 734	100.00
Chernivetska	Poroshenko P.O.	56.72	431 758	100.00
Chernigivska	Poroshenko P.O.	44.81	557,295	100.00
m.Kiev	Poroshenko P.O.	64.10	1 380 012	100.00

Table 2: Support for Petro Poroshenko in May 2014 election according to the region (Central Electoral Commission, 2014a)

President Poroshenko was preceded by the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych (2010 – 2014) who, in his turn, occupied the post after the winner of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko (2005 – 2010). During 2014 campaign, Poroshenko promised to keep parliamentary-presidential form of government in the country, launch decentralization reform, visa-free regime with the EU and free trade zone with it (The Economist, 2014). All those promises were achieved. Besides, one of the most important issues for the country that was waging war with Russia was to reform the Ukrainian army. In this regard, military expenditures of Ukraine increased by 21% to $4.8 billion in 2018, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2019). Ukraine also started to diversify gas sources buying reverse gas from the EU.

However, despite the support of the so-called nationalistic and Europe-oriented regions of western Ukraine during the 2014 election, Poroshenko soon came to face serious criticisms from those who can be identified as occupying the right wing of the Ukrainian political spectrum for concessions to Eastern Ukrainian separatists. On 5 September, 2014, Poroshenko signed the Minsk Agreement on a ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine where anti-terrorist operation (ATO) was going on. The document called for the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire by the OSCE; decentralization of power,

including adoption of the special status law regarding local government provisional arrangements in the mentioned regions; inclusive national dialogue; and early local elections in accordance with the given law (OSCE, 2019). On 16 September, Verkhovna Rada adopted proposed by the president draft law on self-administration in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014b); as well as another draft law that prescribed protection of participants in the military conflict from persecution (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014c). The same day, the law on lustration was adopted (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014d) and the Association Agreement with the EU was ratified (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014e). According to the law on lustration, officials who were in office during Yanukovych's regime will not be able to hold state posts for 10 years.

One of the contradictory documents signed by Poroshenko was the decree of the National Security and Defense Council "On Urgent Measures to Protect Ukraine and Strengthen Its Defense Capability" (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014f). Council found it necessary to prepare for resurgent aggression against Ukraine and define strategic partnership with the United States, EU and NATO as a priority interest in the country's foreign policy. Council also agreed on the use of Ukraine's defense industry and on strengthening cybersecurity in the country. Additionally, Poroshenko decided to exempt defense products from taxation (*Ibid*.)

Poroshenko started the process of amending Ukraine's constitution to achieve Ukraine's administrative decentralization. In his draft, constitutional amendments proposed changing the administrative divisions of Ukraine, which should include regions (replacing the current oblasts), districts and '*hromadas'* (united territorial communities). In these amendments, he also proposed that village, city, district and regional administrations will be able to determine the status of the Russian language and other national minority languages of Ukraine in accordance with the procedure established by the law and within the borders of their administrative and territorial units (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015).

Poroshenko proposed that Ukrainian remained the only state language of Ukraine. Poroshenko further proposed to create the post of presidential representatives who would supervise the enforcement of the Ukrainian constitution and laws and the observation of human rights and freedoms in oblasts and districts/ districts of cities. In case of an 'emergency situation or martial law regime' they will 'guide and organize' in the territories they are stationed in. He repeatedly spoken out against federalization. 1 July 2015 decentralization draft law gave local authorities the right to oversee how their tax revenues are spent. The draft law did not give an autonomous status to Donbass, as demanded by the pro-Russian rebels there, but gave the region partial self-rule for three years (Venice Commission, 2015).

On 15 May 2015, Poroshenko signed a bill into law that started a six-month period for the removal of the Communist monuments and mandatory renaming of streets and other public places and settlements with a name related to Communism (The Guardian, 2015). Poroshenko believes that the communist repression and *holodomor*[1] of the Soviet Union are on par with the Nazi crimes of the 1940s. The legislation also provides "public recognition to anyone who fought for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century", including the controversial Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) combatants led by Roman Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera. On September 25, 2017, a new law on education was

[1] famine

signed by President Poroshenko (draft approved by Rada on September 5, 2017) which says that the Ukrainian language is the language of education at all levels except for one or more subjects that are allowed to be taught in two or more languages, namely English or one of the other official languages of the European Union (RFERL, 2017b). This provoked dissatisfaction among the Russian-speakers of Ukraine. Despite extensive anti-Russian measures and policies that strengthened defense of the country, Poroshenko remained unpopular due to unresolved conflict in Eastern Ukraine, inflation and corruption. Thus, inflation rate increased from 12.1% in 2014 to 48.68% in 2015 (Statista, 2020). The most significant scandal over corruption was related to the nationalization of the *Privat* Bank, the oldest bank in Ukraine that is responsible for approximately 60% of transactions in Ukraine. In 2016, upon the decision of the Cabinet, process of nationalization was launched. Before 2016, bank belonged to oligarchs Kolomoysky and Bogolyubov (DW, 2019). Despite Poroshenko's experience on the post of Minister of Trade and Economic Development, Foreign Minister, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, his is also known for being an oligarch and an owner of the chocolate producing factories *ROSHEN*. Ukrainian president was registered as an independent candidate due to the low (14.9%) rating of his party *All-Ukrainian Union Solidarity* (Razumkov Centre, 2018b).

In February 2019, 13.1% of the survey participants were to vote for Poroshenko (Razumkov Centre, 2019a) compared to 7.6% in May 2018 (Razumkov Centre, 2018a). Petro Poroshenko managed to improve his rating shortly before 2019 election thanks to his efforts on the establishment of the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the approval of the Constantinople Patriarchate (Demydova, 2019). Poroshenko mobilized the parliament and lobby groups that ended with the positive decision of the Constantinople Patriarch Bartholomew. Poroshenko also introduced the martial law following the crisis in the Sea of Azov in November 2018. Then, Ukrainian crew was captured by the Russian coast guard in the Kerch strait; correspondingly, Ukrainian government responded with the martial law (RFERL, 2018). Besides, in February 2019, Ukrainian parliament approved amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine as to the course of the country onto EU and NATO (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2019). Visa free travel regime for Ukrainians was introduced in June 2017 (RFERL, 2017a) that also contributed to Poroshenko's popularity. 2019 election program of Poroshenko included three main issues that are: relations with NATO and EU, occupied territories and relations with Russia, and finally, Ukrainian economy. For Poroshenko, Ukraine would enter NATO and EU only as regional leader. As to the return of Crimea and Donbass, Poroshenko followed his 2014 promises to uses diplomatic and political measures. In economy, the liquidation of poverty was announced a key issue (112.UA, 2019). However, no details about the relevant policies were provided.

Volodymyr Zelensky

Volodymyr Zelensky, in his turn, seemed to perform a role of his hero from the TV series, a history teacher Holoborod'ko who was elected a president. According to the scenario, students of Holoborod'ko recorded his criticisms of the existing system and shared them on the Internet as his electoral program. As a president, Holoborod'ko was trying to curb corruption in Ukraine and make Ukrainians stay and work for their country. Zelensky himself, during the electoral race, appeared to be very popular among youth but lacked experience and professional team. At the same time, he is considered as a protégé of the oligarch Ihor Kolomoysky; *The Servant of the People* TV series were aired on the *1+1* channel of the oligarch. Zelensky's party bears the same with the TV series name, *Sluga Naroda*.

Rating of support for Zelensky increased from 5% in May 2018 (Razumkov Centre, 2018a) to 17.5% in February 2019 (Razumkov Centre, 2019a). Election program of Volodymyr Zelensky was rather a utopian essay about the future of Ukraine. Program was summarized in very short sentences that criticized existing state of affairs and proposed a picture of the future but not the ways of its achievement. It had very superficial and populist demands of 'real salaries', 'decent pensions' and 'real sentences' for corrupted officials. Zelensky emphasized priority of democracy and referred to its direct form through the referendum (Peredviborcha programa kandidata). This is one of many general promises. Later, he proceeded with the concrete proposition of the law "About Power of the People" *("O Narodovlastii"*) and bill about lifting immunity of the members of the parliament, about impeachment of the president and about withdrawal of the deputies. As to the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Zelensky was planning to call the guarantors of the Budapest agreement to support Ukraine and is decisive about getting reimbursement from Russia for damaged cause to Ukrainian economy. Among unrealistic promises, Zelensky promised to introduce economic passport of Ukrainian so every person could benefit from the natural resources of the country (*Ibid*.)

Exodus of Ukrainians after 2014 seemed to become an issue for the country and found its place in the program of Zelensky. Thus, in one of the scenes of his TV series, Zelensky was talking about Ukrainians who had left country. During the electoral race, main page of the Ukrainian observer *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia (Zerkalo Nedeli)* opened with a banner and logo "Vote to Make Them Come Back". According to International Organization for Migration report, in 2019 about 1 million Ukrainians worked abroad, while the whole population constituted 44 million people. This is twice more than in 2015. Compared to Moldova, Georgia and Belarus, Ukraine is the leader in labor migration. At the same time, according to the report, 30% of the labor migrants work unofficially and 14% of Ukrainian population were potential labor migrants in 2019 (IOM 2019: 4). It is also noteworthy that apart from this official statistics, significant number of Ukrainians who work abroad illegally cannot be calculated.

Volodymyr Zelensky is being perceived as more pro-Russian candidate compared to nationalist pro-Western Petro Poroshenko. He used to use Russian language in his shows, TV series, even speeches and was born in Kryvyi Rih of Dnipropetrovsk oblast' of Ukraine that is a Russian-speaking region. TV series and comedy shows produced by his *95 Kvartal* media empire were shown on Russian TV channels. Furthermore, following 2019 election, Ukraine started to change its stand as to Russia: Zelensky is much softer towards Russia compared to Petro Poroshenko. The dialogue between two countries renewed within Normandy format in Paris in December 2019. Then, accompanied by Merkel and Macron, Russian and Ukrainian leaders came together (President of Russia, 2019). Also, Zelensky avoided criticisms of the 12-step plan adopted by a group of former politicians and academics for the solution of the Donbas crisis during the Munich Security Conference in February 2020. Plan proposed measures in the area of security, politics, economy and humanitarian spheres. It suggested establishment of the Joint Center for Control and Coordination and Normandy format dialogue. One of the main contradictions of the plan is that Russia, among others, is trying to settle down the conflict while being the only responsible for its start: without military and financial aid of Kremlin, Donbas separatists would have never succeeded (EASLG, 2020). Besides, the information war (and the 12-step program seems to be the part of it) aims at deteriorating the image of Ukraine not only in Russia but in the whole world. In general, in relations with Russia, Volodymyr Zelensky rather prefers diplomacy to military conflict unlike his predecessor. Moreover,

speaking in Munich, he called the leaders of the countries to restore international law and support for Ukraine. And even agreed on joint patrolling of the Russian – Ukrainian border during the Ukrainian lunch sponsored by Pinchuk at Munich security conference (UNIAN, 2020).

Zelensky did not seem obsessed with the nation building in the way Poroshenko was. In his 2019 New Year address he emphasized unimportance of the memory politics in Ukraine referring to the renaming of the streets and demolition of the monuments by the previous president (President of Ukraine, 2019). He seemed failed to realize the nature of the fight of Ukrainians for their own national identity within last years. On the other hand, as expert on Ukraine Taras Kuzio argues, this suggests that Zelensky would promote inclusive patriotism instead of divisive nationalism (Kuzio, 2020). Zelensky also demonstrated neglect of the religious affairs in Ukraine calling *tomos* a thermos in his show (YouTube 2019).

Volodymyr Zelensky's political party *Sluga Naroda* (The Servant of the People) was officially registered in April 2016 and renamed in December 2017 (Sluga Narodu). It is populist, pro-Western party that has anti-corruption stance. Party can be characterized as catch-all since in its very broad program appeals to very different categories of the electorate. As of February 2019, Razumkov Center polls on Ukrainian parties rating before the 2019 parliamentary election showed the rating of the party as equal to 18% (Razumkov Centre, 2019a). Program of the party comprised of sixteen titles. One of the most important political issues included abolition of the immunity for members of the parliament; public veto; introduction of the proportional system with the open lists; and use of referenda (Sluga Narodu. Program 2018). As to the electoral system 2019 parliamentary election in Ukraine was held in accordance with the mixed system. Presence of the 50% of the MPs elected through the single member constituencies opens way to numerous violations and corruption insofar as informal connections determine the outcome of the election. On the other hand, party lists in Ukraine are closed that also signifies the lack of transparency.

The Servant of the People Party obtained more than 43% of the votes in parliamentary election 2019 (Central Electoral Commission, 2019e.) and occupied 254 out of 450 seats in Ukrainian parliament. Despite the lack of experience being party of-the-president secured victory of the SoP in early election. Razumkov Center divided parties into those that are more supported by young people and those that are more supported by the older generation. Parties that attract youth include, first and foremost, the Servant of the People Party: 57% of young people under 30 were ready to vote for it in June 2019. Further, as voter age increases, support declines somewhat, with voters between the age of 50-59 and over 60 having 27% and 29%, respectively. However, even in this senior constituency, the Servant of the People is a clear leader (Razumkov Centre, 2019b). According to the results of the Central Electoral Commission, party was more popular in Eastern regions, with the highest score in Dnipropetrovsk (56.7%), the home region of Zelensky. In contrast, Western regions demonstrated the lowest support to The Servant of the People Party, with 23.09% in Lviv. However, in all regions of Ukraine part appeared to be a winner (Central Electoral Commission, 2019f).

Yuliya Tymoshenko

Yuliya Tymoshenko had been participating in the presidential race for the third time. In 2004 - 2005 election, she joined pro-Western Orange coalition of Viktor Yushchenko, that succeeded during the Orange Revolution, and eventually became the

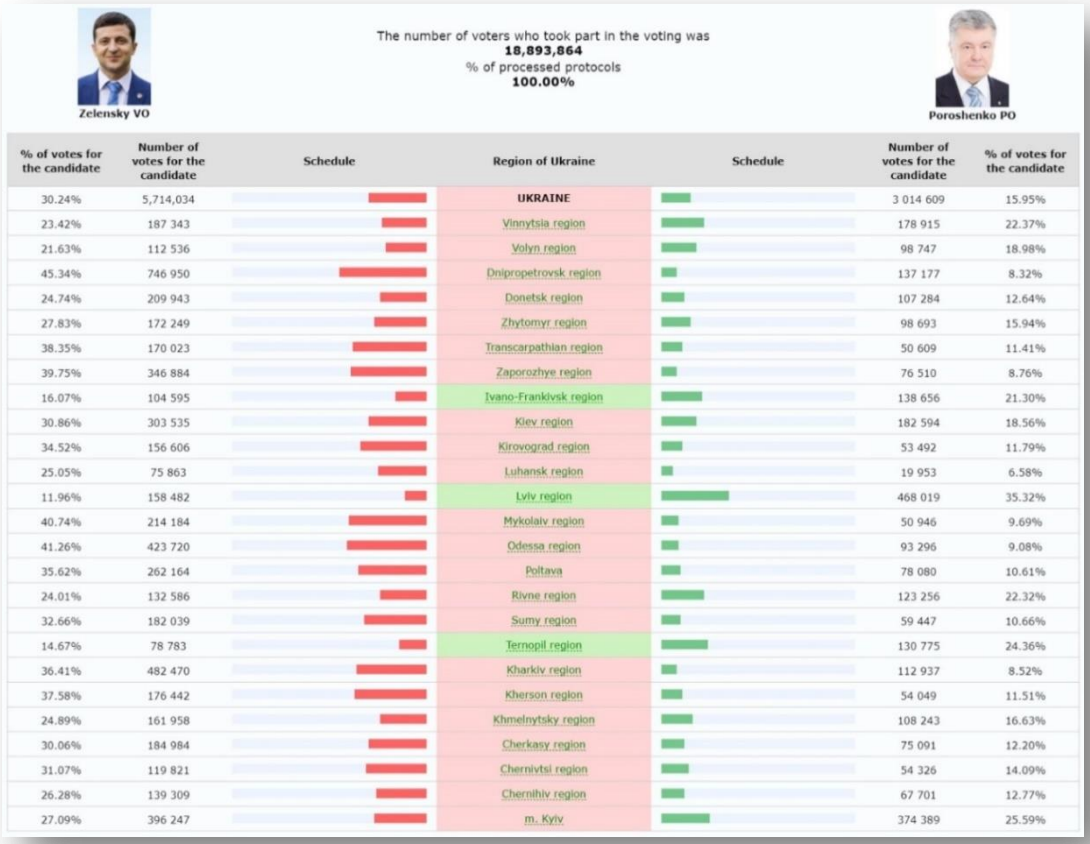
prime minister of Ukraine in February 2005 where she stayed till September 2005. In 2010, in the run-off, Tymoshenko stood against pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovych. As soon as Yanukovych occupied presidential chair, Tymoshenko was accused of concluding illegal gas contracts and imprisoned. In this way potential rival for 2015 presidential election was removed. Tymoshenko's 2019 political program was very blurred; it has mainly evolved around the topic of Euro-integration and NATO membership for Ukraine (Vox Ukraine, 2019). Very emotional Tymoshenko has created an image of the fighter for freedom and democracy, a martyr of Yanukovych's authoritarian regime, but could not made significant updates for her program. The promises of twice lower prices for gas and higher pensions and salaries are rather populist. Tymoshenko has also enjoyed significant air time on *1+1* channel of Kolomoysky. Besides, Yury Tymoshenko and Yuliya Lytvinenko are recognized as fake candidates, promoted to withdraw votes from Yuliya Tymoshenko. Rating of Tymoshenko was increasing steadily from 12.1% in December 2017 (Razumkov Centre, 2018a) to 17.8% in September 2018 (Razumkov Centre, 2018b), and then dropped to 11.5% in February 2019 (Razumkov Centre, 2019a).

Run-Off

The presidential run-off was preceded by the big debate: Petro Poroshenko and Volodymyr Zelensky met at the Olympic Stadium in Kyiv on Friday, 19 April to present their electoral programs once again. The main emphasis of Zelensky was on corruption of Poroshenko. Petro Poroshenko was accused of being corrupt, of selling the products of his confectioneries ROSHEN to Russia and bringing the country to a state of permanent crisis. Besides, the inability of the president to end the conflict on Donbass despite numerous promises before 2014 election were condemned. According to Poroshenko, Zelensky's main problem was the lack of experience in politics and scenic past. During the debate, Volodymyr Zelensky knelt down in front of the Ukrainians in order to commemorate the victims of the war in Donbass while Poroshenko got down on one knee and turned his face to the Ukrainian flag. Candidates ended up singing Ukrainian national anthem (Ruptly, 2019).

During the run-off, support for the leading candidates was extremely low: 30.94% for Zelensky and 15.95%. for Poroshenko (Table 6). Even traditional pro-Western regions of Ukraine Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk demonstrated very low performance.

According to Zelensky, the parliament of Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada, tried to postpone the announcement of the official results and inauguration ceremony to deprive the president of his right to dismiss the parliament. According to Ukrainian Constitution, the election of the legislature is to be conducted on 27 October, and the parliament cannot be dismissed less than 6 months prior to the election. Early parliamentary election calls made by Poroshenko in 2014 and Zelensky in 2019 prove the willingness of the presidents to form pro-presidential parliamentary majority in order to avoid political deadlocks. Such crisis occurred in 2006 when three main political groups in the parliament failed to agree. Then, Yulia Tymoshenko's Bloc (*BYuT*) could form a coalition with *Our Ukraine* Party of Viktor Yushchenko and Oleksandr Moroz' Socialist Party (*SPU*) to prevent Yanukovych's *Party of Regions* from gaining the power in the parliament. However, they failed to reach consensus and early election followed (Clem & Craumer 2008: 131). On the other hand, pro-presidential majority in the parliament would mean *Verkhovna Rada's* support for the legislative initiative of the president. Consequently, shortly before the elections, one can trace the trend of the formation of parties with the only goal to support a political actor. This was the case of the party *Servant of the People*.



Zelensky VO

The number of voters who took part in the voting was
18,893,864
% of processed protocols
100.00%

Poroshenko PO

% of votes for the candidate	Number of votes for the candidate	Schedule	Region of Ukraine	Schedule	Number of votes for the candidate	% of votes for the candidate
30.24%	5,714,034		UKRAINE		3 014 609	15.95%
23.42%	187 343		Vinnytsia region		178 915	22.37%
21.63%	112 536		Volyn region		98 747	18.98%
45.34%	746 950		Dnipropetrovsk region		137 177	8.32%
24.74%	209 943		Donetsk region		107 284	12.64%
27.83%	172 249		Zhytomyr region		98 693	15.94%
38.35%	170 023		Transcarpathian region		50 609	11.41%
39.75%	346 884		Zaporozhye region		76 510	8.76%
16.07%	104 595		Ivano-Frankivsk region		138 656	21.30%
30.86%	303 535		Kiev region		182 594	18.56%
34.52%	156 606		Kirovograd region		53 492	11.79%
25.05%	75 863		Luhansk region		19 953	6.58%
11.96%	158 482		Lviv region		468 019	35.32%
40.74%	214 184		Mykolaiv region		50 946	9.69%
41.26%	423 720		Odessa region		93 296	9.08%
35.62%	262 164		Poltava		78 080	10.61%
24.01%	132 586		Rivne region		123 256	22.32%
32.66%	182 039		Sumy region		59 447	10.66%
14.67%	78 783		Ternopil region		130 775	24.36%
36.41%	482 470		Kharkiv region		112 937	8.52%
37.58%	176 442		Kherson region		54 049	11.51%
24.89%	161 958		Khmelnytsky region		108 243	16.63%
30.06%	184 984		Cherkasy region		75 091	12.20%
31.07%	119 821		Chernivtsi region		54 326	14.09%
26.28%	139 309		Chernihiv region		67 701	12.77%
27.09%	396 247		m. Kyiv		374 389	25.59%

Table 3: Zelensky versus Poroshenko, run-off according to the regions (21 April, 2019). (Central Electoral Commission, 2019c)

The President-elect criticized the adoption of the Law "On Functioning of Ukrainian Language as a State Language" by the parliament on 25 April arguing that such decision should be discussed with the citizens.

Regional Features

Ukraine has traditionally demonstrated regional differences in voting. This is explained by the history of the country and resembled in languages of the regions as well as their political orientations. Generally, Ukrainian East and South were pro-Russian regions, while West was pro-Western. The latter is also logical taking into consideration the working migration of the Ukrainians into the European countries, such as Poland or Italy. Northern and Central regions are also pro-Western but this pattern is weaker. In 1994, Kuchma won in Eastern and Southern regions, while Kravchuk was popular in Western, Central and Northern regions (Birch 1995: 98-99). In 2004, Yanukovych led in the East and South, while the Orange bloc of Yushchenko-Tymoshenko won in the Center, North and West. As it can be seen in the table of the 3rd round of voting in December, Viktor Yanukovych, prime minister of Ukraine at that time, got the highest number of votes in Donetsk and Luhansk: 93.54% and 91.24% correspondingly. Crimea brought Yanukovych 81.24% of the votes. His program included promises about closer relations with Russia among others (Ukrayins'ka Pravda, 2004). Correspondingly, pro-Western

Yushchenko obtained the highest number of votes in Ternopil (96.03%), Ivano-Frankivsk (95.72%) and Lviv (93.74%) regions (Central Electoral Commission, 2004a). In the foreign electoral district, Yushchenko obtained 59.52% against 38.5% of Yanukovych (Central Electoral Commission, 2004b).

Yushchenko				Yanukovych		
%	Total votes		Region of Ukraine		Total votes	%
51.99%	15 115 712		UKRAINE		12 848 528	44.20%
15.41%	178 755		Autonomous Republic of Crimea		942 210	81.26%
84.07%	905 497		Vinnytska region		139 421	12.94%
90.71%	613,05		Volinsk region		47,438	7.01%
32.01%	648,072		Dnipropetrovsk region		1 237 547	61.13%
4.21%	132 614		Donetsk region		2 940 890	93.54%
66.86%	535 209		Zhytomyr region		231,37	28.90%
67.45%	407 328		Transcarpathian region		166 608	27.58%
24.51%	277 006		Zaporizhzhya region		792 549	70.14%
95.72%	882 282		Ivano-Frankivsk region		26,411	2.86%
82.70%	935 380		Kiev region		155,837	13.77%
63.40%	380 224		Kirovohrad region		190,448	31.76%
6.21%	101 873		Lugansk region		1,494,715	91.24%
93.74%	1 616 043		Lviv region		81 393	4.72%
27.72%	199,029		Mykolaivsk region		481 867	67.13%
27.46%	343,297		Odessa region		832 008	66.56%
66.00%	636 512		Poltava region		281 189	29.15%
84.52%	602 567		Rivnenska region		87 673	12.29%
79.45%	613 407		Sumy region		130,442	16.89%
96.03%	731 215		Ternopil region		20 589	2.70%
26.37%	446,795		Kharkiv region		1,154,178	68.12%
43.43%	276 987		Kherson region		327 306	51.32%
80.47%	703,255		Khmelnitsky region		140 131	16.03%
79.10%	650 545		Cherkasy region		142,696	17.35%
79.75%	404,237		Chernivtsi region		83 007	16.37%
71.15%	514,405		Chernigiv region		174,669	24.16%
78.37%	1 299 410		m.Kiev		290 373	17.51%
7.96%	19 359		m.Sevastopol		215 874	88.83%

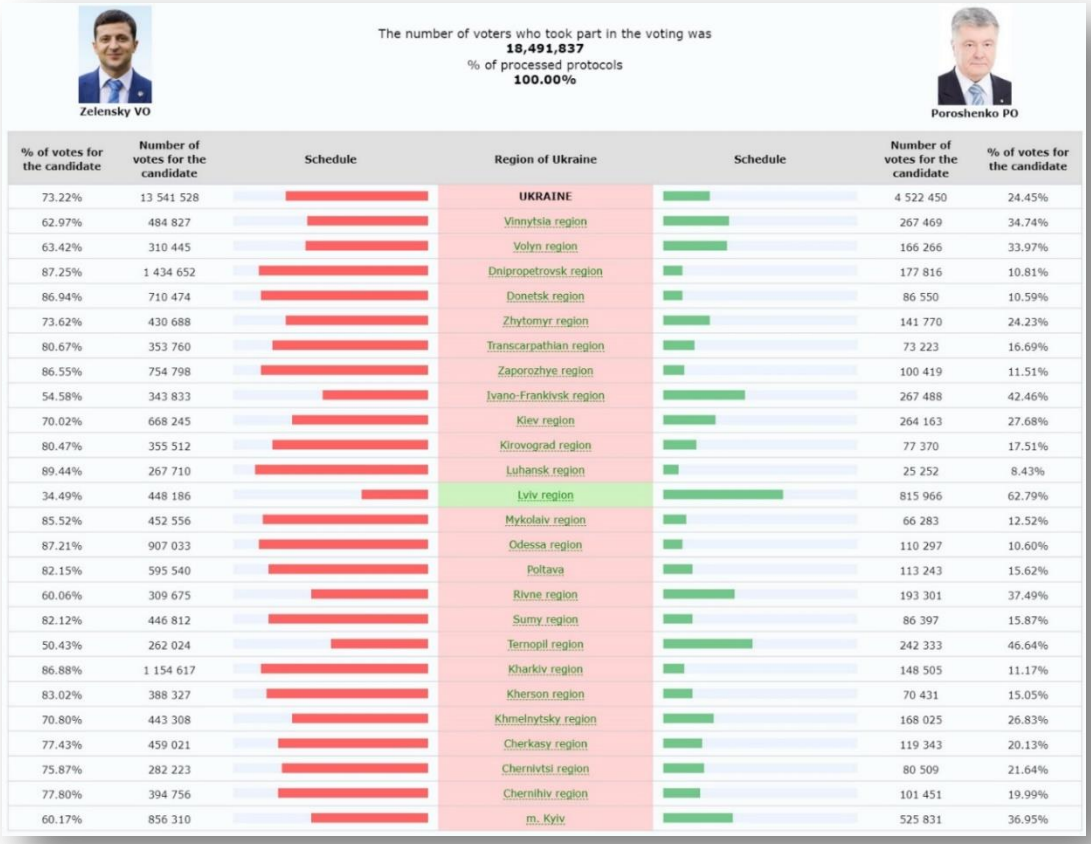
Table 4: Viktor Yushchenko versus Viktor Yanukovych, 3rd round (December 26, 2004). (Central Electoral Commission, 2004a)

In 2010, during run-off when the two leading candidates were Yanukovych and Tymoshenko, Yanukovych won in Eastern and Southern regions, while Tymoshenko in Western, Northern and Central.

Yanukovych				Tymoshenko	
%	Total votes		Region of Ukraine	Total votes	%
48.95%	12 481 266		**UKRAINE**	11 593 357	45.47%
78.24%	821 244		Autonomous Republic of Crimea	181 715	17.31%
24.26%	227 633		Vinnytska region	667 101	71.10%
14.01%	84 212		Volinsk region	491 854	81.85%
62.70%	1,154,274		Dnipropetrovsk region	536 321	29.13%
90.44%	2,435,522		Donetsk region	173,82	6.45%
36.70%	258,695		Zhytomyr region	405,289	57.50%
41.55%	224 917		Transcarpathian region	279 631	51.66%
71.50%	731 932		Zaporizhzhya region	227 531	22.22%
7.02%	57 849		Ivano-Frankivsk region	731 858	88.89%
23.61%	229,858		Kiev region	678 533	69.71%
39.61%	203,999		Kirovohrad region	281 509	54.66%
88.96%	1 237 922		Lugansk region	107 523	7.72%
8.60%	131 136		Lviv region	1 313 904	86.20%
71.53%	446,05		Mykolaivsk region	143 135	22.95%
74.14%	868 533		Odessa region	228 757	19.52%
38.99%	318,405		Poltava region	442,583	54.20%
18.91%	121,446		Rivnenska region	489 579	76.24%
30.40%	194 608		Sumy region	402 591	62.89%
7.92%	53,773		Ternopil region	599 697	88.39%
71.35%	1,076,962		Kharkiv region	338 643	22.43%
59.98%	323 201		Kherson region	181 754	33.73%
24.94%	191 484		Khmelnitsky region	535,371	69.74%
28.84%	202 512		Cherkasy region	459,041	65.37%
27.64%	121 381		Chernivtsi region	291 944	66.47%
30.95%	194,069		Chernigiv region	398,953	63.63%
25.72%	376,099		m.Kiev	955,406	65.34%
84.35%	178 201		m.Sevastopol	21 940	10.38%

Table 5: Viktor Yanukovych versus Yuliya Tymoshenko, 2010 run-off (Central Electoral Commission, 2010)

In 2014, Poroshenko won absolute majority in the first round scoring the highest number of votes in Lviv (69.92%), hometown Vinnytsia (67.32%) and Ivano-Frankivsk (65.13%) (Central Electoral Commission, 2014b). In March 2019, during the first round of election, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Ternopil demonstrated very low support for pro-Western Poroshenko although they elected him: 21.3%, 35.32% and 24.36% correspondingly. As to Zelensky, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa and Mykolaiv appeared to be the most pro-Ze regions: 45.34%, 41.26% and 40.76% correspondingly (Central Electoral Commission, 2019b). Unlike Eastern regions of Ukraine, Crimea did not participate in the election. However, Zelensky seems to be the Southern candidate rather than the Eastern. In April 2019, during the run-off Pro-Western and nationalistic oriented Poroshenko managed to secure majority only in Lviv region – 62.79%. Ternopil voted for Zelensky although the difference was slight: 50.43% versus 46.64%. Ivano-Frankivsk demonstrated greater difference between two candidates but also elected Zelensky in the run-off (54.58% versus 42.46%). Eastern regions of Ukraine also supported Zelensky: Luhansk (89.44%), Dnipropetrovsk (87.25%), Odessa (87.21%), Donetsk (86.94%), Kharkiv (86.88%), Zaporizhia and (86.55%) were the most significant supporters of Zelensky (Central Electoral Commission, 2019c). However, Poroshenko was the leader in the foreign constituency with 54.73% of the votes, compared to Zelensky who got 43.78% (Central Electoral Commission, 2019d).



Zelensky VO

The number of voters who took part in the voting was
18,491,837
% of processed protocols
100.00%

Poroshenko PO

% of votes for the candidate	Number of votes for the candidate	Schedule	Region of Ukraine	Schedule	Number of votes for the candidate	% of votes for the candidate
73.22%	13 541 528		UKRAINE		4 522 450	24.45%
62.97%	484 827		Vinnytsia region		267 469	34.74%
63.42%	310 445		Volyn region		166 266	33.97%
87.25%	1 434 652		Dnipropetrovsk region		177 816	10.81%
86.94%	710 474		Donetsk region		86 550	10.59%
73.62%	430 688		Zhytomyr region		141 770	24.23%
80.67%	353 760		Transcarpathian region		73 223	16.69%
86.55%	754 798		Zaporozhye region		100 419	11.51%
54.58%	343 833		Ivano-Frankivsk region		267 488	42.46%
70.02%	668 245		Kiev region		264 163	27.68%
80.47%	355 512		Kirovograd region		77 370	17.51%
89.44%	267 710		Luhansk region		25 252	8.43%
34.49%	448 186		Lviv region		815 966	62.79%
85.52%	452 556		Mykolaiv region		66 283	12.52%
87.21%	907 033		Odessa region		110 297	10.60%
82.15%	595 540		Poltava		113 243	15.62%
60.06%	309 675		Rivne region		193 301	37.49%
82.12%	446 812		Sumy region		86 397	15.87%
50.43%	262 024		Ternopil region		242 333	46.64%
86.88%	1 154 617		Kharkiv region		148 505	11.17%
83.02%	388 327		Kherson region		70 431	15.05%
70.80%	443 308		Khmelnytsky region		168 025	26.83%
77.43%	459 021		Cherkasy region		119 343	20.13%
75.87%	282 223		Chernivtsi region		80 509	21.64%
77.80%	394 756		Chernihiv region		101 451	19.99%
60.17%	856 310		m. Kyiv		525 831	36.95%

Table 6: Zelensky versus Poroshenko, preliminary vote according to the regions (31 March, 2019). (Central Electoral Commission, 2019c)

Compared to figure of 2004, absolute majority and almost univocal regional preferences seem to disappear. As it can be seen from the figures, the highest number did not even pass the 50%. Even in foreign constituency Poroshenko's performance deteriorated from 62.31% in 2014 to 54.73% in 2019 run-off. Poroshenko has a support of the Ukrainian diaspora in the US, he has also established close relations with diaspora in Turkey, particularly during the negotiations with Fener about independent Ukrainian church. Yuliya Tymoshenko has almost equal support in the Western and Central regions (approximately 17%), but traditionally very low performance in the South (9.6%) and the East (7.4%).

Oligarchs, Celebrities and Humor in 2019 Election

At the same time, some patterns apart from the diaspora voting behavior remain alive and decisive in Ukrainian election. Ukrainian presidents are still backed by the industrial-financial groups headed by famous oligarchs. In the case of Yanukovych, it was Donetsk clan led by Rinat Akhmetov. President Leonid Kuchma (1994 - 2004) was backed by Dniprovetrovsk clan (Pleines, 2016). Poroshenko is an owner of the confectionary empire *ROSHEN* that has shops in Russia even after 2014 events. Nowadays, President Zelensky is backed by oligarch Ihor Kolomoysky.

Finally, celebrity politics flourished in post-Orange Ukraine and 2019 election has at least two evidence for that. The very fact that showman and actor, media figure without relevant education and experience, became a president shows how people are affected by the unreal world that promises new start. Young people are eager to give a chance to a new actor on the political arena. At the same time, the role of the social networks where Zelensky was particularly active cannot be neglected. As in the case of the egg incident with Yanukovych in 2004, that was followed by the splash of the internet memes and cartoons about the incident and his criminal past as well as the inability to spell the word 'professor' correctly, in 2019 election humor and satire also appear to play significant role. While it does not determine the political activism per se, it disseminates information about political processes in a very understandable way for the ordinary citizens. Channels like Instagram and YouTube used by the team of Zelensky are also accessible by ordinary citizens and particularly available to the youth. Important to note that criticisms are also provided in *95 Kvartal* show that facilitates public opinion formation among the people. Under these conditions, people feel more affiliated with the political processes. However, political humor and satire led to certain mistakes during the campaign. And if the incident with the Chechen leader Kadyrov (YouTube 2015) is not relevant to the Ukrainians, the fact that Ukrainian President to-be Zelensky called autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church, *tomos,* a thermos (YouTube 2019), was treated as humiliation by many Ukrainians. At the same time, it seemed that for many Ukrainians, the unreal nature of the Zelensky's campaign was a very significant factor. This is mentioned by Taras Kuzio who warned that the victory of Zelensky may be a good speculating factor for Russia propagating about fake election in Ukraine (Kuzio, 2019). In this regard, even the hash tag #nepoprikolu ('not for fun') was initiated in the social networks to justify the reality of the Ukrainian election. Another example of the celebrity candidate was the rock star Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, leader of the famous Ukrainian band *Okean Elzy.* He was elected into the parliament of 2007 – 2008, and later, in 2019 from the party *Golos* (Voice). For a very long time, it was unclear whether he was going to register himself for the race. Finally, he announced that he is not going to participate in the election. Instead, he called his fans to support Volodymyr Zelensky (RFERL, 2019).

Electoral Behavior

What was the driving force for the Ukrainian people to vote for a candidate in 2019? Regarding the motives for choosing a particular candidate, Razumkov Center named the main two applicable to all candidates: the attractiveness of the candidate's personality (a significant motive for 36% of voters) and the closeness of ideas and proposals of the candidate (also 36%). But the other motives for the choice are different for different candidates: for Yulia Tymoshenko, what is significant to her constituents is that she "sees real ways of overcoming the economic crisis and securing the economic recovery of the country" (35%); the same motive works for voters of Oleg Lyashko (32%). For voters of Yuriy Boyko and Anatoly Hrytsenko, it is important that these candidates will be able to secure peace in the Donbas (34% among the voters of Hrytsenko and 31% - among the voters of Boyko). It is also important for Boyko voters that he belongs to the party they support (32%). Svyatoslav Vakarchuk and Volodymyr Zelensky attract their voters first and foremost as personalities (half of the electorate of both candidates), one third of their voters see in them the 'fresh blood' that the current government so needs, and as for Zelensky, there is an expectation that 'he will a person like me.' (Razumkov Centre 2018b: 2). Most different from the others are motives for voting for Petro Poroshenko: his

constituents value him for what he has already done for Ukraine (33%) and for being respected in the world (25%)(*Ibid*.).

Issue of Crimea and Donbass

Return of the Crimea annexed by Russia in 2014 took some place in the programs of the candidates. Thus, according to *Krym Realii* internet newspaper, only Yuliya Tymoshenko was radical and decisive to the return of the peninsula into Ukraine. Tymoshenko proposed military-diplomatic way of solution of the Crimean knot. Petro Poroshenko remained within the diplomatic framework, while the leading candidate Zelensky preferred populist expressions about Ukrainian Crimea (Krym Realii, 2019). During the Azov crisis when the crew of the Ukrainian boats were arrested in the Crimea, or during the searches in the houses of the Crimean Tatars on March 27, Zelensky remained silent. Zelensky is particularly active in his social networks, ignores public debates that rather shows his image as a showman. Petro Poroshenko used the Crimean Tatars as a trump card to draw attention of the international community to the issue of Crimea, recognizing them as an indigenous population of Crimea eventually in April 2014. (Yapıcı 2018: 314). He also discussed the idea of the Crimean Tatars autonomy in the Southern Ukraine. But Ukrainian government decided to close the North Crimean Canal that used to supply Crimea with water. This nearly put the region onto the edge of the humanitarian crisis and gave Kremlin a topic for anti-Ukrainian propaganda (TASS, 2019). Also, Ukrainian leadership remained silent during the shooting in the Kerch polytechnic college in Eastern Crimea. Apparently, Crimea seems to be gone for the Ukrainian authorities. Even during the Munich Security Conference in February 2019, Crimea did not obtain attention.

Ukrainian Elections and Russia

Despite occupation of Crimea and long-lasting war in the Eastern Ukraine, fake news about Ukrainian fascist regime, pro-Russian candidates still can be seen in Ukraine. These are Yuriy Boyko (*Oppositon Platform for Life Party*); supported by the pro-Russian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov Oleksandr Vilkul (*Oppobloc - Peace and Development Party*); and Yevgeniy Murayev (*Ours Party*).

Despite the loss of Crimea and war with Russia, pro-Russian former prime minister and former energy minister Yuriy Boyko got 11.53% of the votes leaving a huge gap between him and former defense minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko who got 6.91%. This became possible probably due to the trip to Russia aiming at negotiation of the gas contract (RBC, 2019b). Last minute, Murayev withdrew himself from the list of the candidates (RBC, 2019a). However, it should be noted that, despite the presence of these candidates, Russia would be comfortable with Poroshenko. Since he has an image of a nationalist president, that can be easily manipulated and converted into the fascist. For the media wars and mobilization of Russians, as well as for the soft power sake, Poroshenko is the best option.

During the electoral campaign in Ukraine, Russia continued to spread fake news, myths about Ukraine through its state-run of Kremlin-controlled media. The main topics included statements that Poroshenko bribed the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to get an independent church for political gain; the fake conclusions on behalf of the UN about an 'atmosphere of intimidation' prevailing in Ukraine; criticisms of PACE regarding the election campaign in Ukraine; exaggerating of the significance of pro-Russian candidates; allegations about fake Ukrainian elections and falsification; possible 'third Maidan'; violations of freedom of speech before the election (Matychak, 2019).

Conclusion

As it was discussed in this article, within last years, particularly after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine demonstrates positive changes towards electoral democracy. None of its presidents, except Leonid Kuchma, was re-elected to the post of the president, unlike Russian of Belarussian presidents or the leaders of Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries. Presidential term in Ukraine constitutes 5 years. At the same time, early parliamentary election calls made by Poroshenko in 2014 and Zelensky in 2019 prove the willingness of the presidents to form pro-presidential parliamentary majority in order to avoid political deadlocks. Such crisis occurred in 2006 when three main political groups in the parliament failed to agree. Long-lasting regional voting pattern in Ukraine seems to deteriorate after 2013 crisis. Annexation of Crimea, war in Eastern Ukraine and economic collapse led to the situation when electoral behavior is explained by the desire of citizens to have a leader who would meet their basic needs rather than by the ethnic identity, language factor and foreign policy orientations. Foreign constituency traditionally prefers nationalistic-oriented candidates since diaspora is always mobilized over the issues of Ukrainian language, traditions and culture. At the same time, some patterns apart from the diaspora voting behavior remain alive and decisive in Ukrainian election. Ukrainian presidents are still backed by the industrial-financial groups headed by famous oligarchs.

The victory of the comedian signified the switch of the politics to the virtual sphere, where young Ukrainians are particularly active. Though, he is supported by the young Ukrainians. East and South of Ukraine chose Zelensky, not a typical pro-Russian candidate, so one can trace a different voting pattern this time. Ukrainians should not expect the radical reforms, or end of the war in Donetsk and Luhansk, or the return of Crimea. National policies or economic reforms will also be weak. But the most important is that despite significant losses of Ukraine in the war with Russia, Zelensky is still demonstrating eagerness to negotiate with Moscow neglecting all years of fight of Ukrainians for their sovereignty and identity.

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