



UKRAINE'S COMPETING ELECTIONS: SORTING FACT FROM FICTION



Summer 2014

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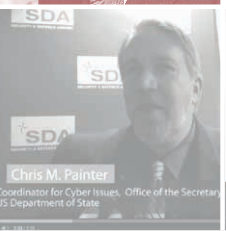
“A diplomat always talks, there is no military solution.”

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer,
SDA Co-President and former NATO Secretary General



“There has been a deficit of leadership of the EU in the Ukraine crisis.”

Pieter De Crem,
Belgian Minister of Defence



“The results of the right wing movements here in Europe are a very goof PR strategy for radical groups.”

Souad Mekhennet, Journalist, Wash-
ington Post and German ZDF Television



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UKRAINE'S COMPETING ELECTIONS: SORTING FACT FROM FICTION

Report of the policy spotlight

organised by the Security & Defence Agenda

with the support of the United States Mission to Belgium,

the United States Mission to the European Union and

the US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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...raine's competing elections

...ting fact from fiction

POLICY
Wednesday



...US on Twitter and tweet during the debate
...enda #UkraineElec

Introduction

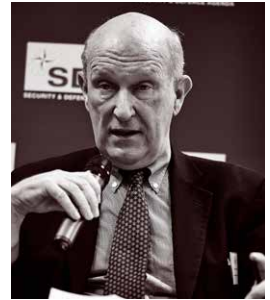
Ukraine's new President Petro Poroshenko has the enormous tasks of rebuilding a battered economy and constructing a civil society – all while juggling relations with a giant, unpredictable and often hostile neighbour.

A Security & Defence Agenda panel debated Ukraine and its future on 21 May, a few days before the presidential election, and presented scenarios for the country. On the one hand, the election could herald the start of a new, more successful era for Ukraine – allowing the country more control over its destiny. On the other, Ukraine's economic problems and corruption could lead to further instability.

“The country has to be brought together very quickly,” said **Paul Quinn-Judge**, Programme Director Europe and Central Asia at the International Crisis Group. “We have suggested it would be best to have a government of national unity – one which would be consciously formed from elements of all of Ukraine, linguistically, geographically and politically – with the exclusion of the Far Right.”

“The country has to be brought together very quickly. It would be best to have a government of national unity.”

Paul Quinn-Judge, Programme Director Europe and Central Asia at the International Crisis Group



The election followed the protests centred on Maidan Square in Kiev, which drove President Viktor Yanukovich to leave for Russia. Moscow then annexed Crimea, and two provinces in the east of the country have been racked by violence by pro-Russian separatists.

Twenty-one candidates registered for the presidential election. The two most prominent were Yulia Tymoshenko – the former prime minister, who was imprisoned while Yanukovich was president – and Petro Poroshenko, a

billionaire who made his fortune in chocolate. On 25 May, Poroshenko won the vote, without the need for a second round.

It was important for Ukraine to hold an election which was credible and was marked by a high turnout, said **Ihor Dolhov**, Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO. Preparations had been made in accordance with plans sent by the central electoral commission, and the elections had received financial support from foreign donors. There were 2 784 registered international observers, from international organisations and national governments.

“The legal and democratic grounds for the election could not be questioned.”



Ihor Dolhov, Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO

“The Ukrainian presidential campaign of 2014 takes place against a background of social and political tensions and security challenges, which Ukraine faces for the first time in its modern history,” said Dolhov. “In spite of this, the legal and democratic grounds for the election could not be questioned.”

Olena Prystayko, Head of the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels said: “Terrorists control six out of 22 electoral districts in Donetsk Oblast and maybe five in

Lugansk. “We believe that the electoral process will be held in due form and order. No matter what happens it will not have an impact on the results of the elections.”

Broad participation was expected from Ukrainians living overseas, who could vote at embassies and other facilities. In Belgium and Luxembourg, for example, “we expect higher activity than in the last elections to the parliament, even though we have fewer people registered,” said Dolhov. “It’s important to have as many people on the polling stations as possible,” he said. “It means more legitimacy for the new government, because it is not just a regular election - it’s about a new country.”

Prystayko said the Maidan protests had given Ukrainians a “personal commitment to the destiny of your country.”

“It is not just a regular election - it’s about a new country.”

Olena Prystayko, Head of the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels



Need for quick parliamentary elections

The period immediately after the election would be crucial, panellists said.

First, Russian President Vladimir Putin should acknowledge the legitimacy of the elections, putting an end to his continued support for exiled President Yanukovich, said Quinn-Judge. “By supporting Yanukovich he keeps the idea of Russian intervention open and hanging over the Ukrainian government,” he said.

Second, the presidential vote should be followed by parliamentary elections. Moderator **Giles Merritt**, Chairman of the Security & Defence Agenda, suggested that one reason for Poroshenko’s popularity in the polls might be his promise of snap parliamentary elections before the end of the year. “Does that suggest massive discontentment among Ukrainian people about the present political set-up?” he asked.



“New political forces are entering the political arena very quickly and they also have the right to be represented.”

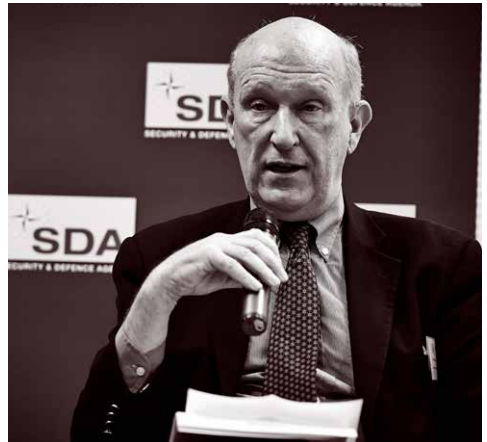
Ihor Dolhov, Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO

Ukraine is returning to an earlier version of its constitution, said Dolhov, under which the cabinet should be appointed by the parliament – unlike the current one. “It’s a must after the presidential election to have normal elections to parliament,” he said. “New political forces are entering the political arena very quickly and they also have the right to be represented to reflect the current state of Ukrainian society.”

In the longer term, the country needs to rebuild its political institutions, which have been damaged over the past 20 years, said Quinn-Judge. In addition to the Moscow-backed campaign of subversion, the country had suffered from

the “passivity, inaction, ineptitude and lack of responsiveness of the current government,” he said. “Not only do we have to re-establish a whole state and a whole series of institutions, but the next government will have to find a way to talk to its people extensively and permanently. Otherwise they are going to continue to struggle with their own sovereignty and their own development.”

“Not only do we have to re-establish a whole state and a whole series of institutions, but the next government will have to find a way to talk to its people extensively and permanently.”



Paul Quinn-Judge, Programme Director Europe and Central Asia at the International Crisis Group

Institutions are particularly important because whoever is elected is essentially going to be an oligarch, said Quinn-Judge. That means they will have made their money “under dubious circumstances under a number of dubious regimes”. While there is no hope of getting a president untarnished by the past, Ukraine might at least get a president looking for some form of redemption. “We’re also going to need a very vibrant political society that keeps their feet to the fire,” he said. “But this has to be strengthened. And until it is strengthened, the international community will have to play its role.”

Prystayko called on other countries to provide help in investigating financial crimes, money-laundering and corruption. “We need more assistance to help Ukraine clean up the system from within,” she said.

However, she said, there were signs that the oligarchs were changing – partly because they had witnessed what civil society did to the former government. “They seem to show more social commitment,” she said. “They are becoming governors of some troubled districts. And I’m sure that they are investing their own funds into state policies. Also they are financing the Ukrainian army. Also this is extremely important.”

There were also signs of growing civil society initiatives, Prystayko said, with groups of activists and specialists who are fighting corruption, proposing economic reforms and writing up draft laws.



Calls for inclusiveness

One problem for the new president will be how far to include extremists in the country's political life. Quinn-Judge said they would hurt Ukraine. "As long as the Far Right are considered to be a part of the legitimate political discourse, Ukraine is going to be doing serious damage to its reputation."

But Dolhov wanted the future government to be as inclusive as possible. "All Ukrainian citizens are Ukrainians – they live in Ukraine and they have equal rights," he said. "It means that the government or parliament should try to reach everybody, including those who now represent the separatist movement – unless they carry arms or have committed crimes. I really believe that via dialogue it is possible to bring peace, stability and order to Ukrainian society."

"The government or parliament should try to reach everybody, including those who now represent the separatist movement – unless they carry arms or have committed crimes."

Ihor Dolhov, Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO



A big economic problem would be Ukraine's defence industry, said Quinn-Judge. "Its defence industry is large, important – and largely oriented towards Russia," he said. "The Russians are talking about creating substitutes on their own territory for what is currently produced in Ukraine." Still, he said, the country did have a future in agriculture.

There are deficiencies in performance of the monetary system, said Dolhov. But the examples of other east European countries were encouraging. How long did it take to reunite eastern and western Germany? How long did it take Poland to become a reliable and strong EU and NATO member?

A road to EU membership?

For Ukraine, reform could be speeded up by opening the road to European Union membership, something that would give it a fixed goal. “If such a decision had been taken years ago,” Dolhov said, “we wouldn’t have had such a tragedy. Don’t forget that.”

Prystayko agreed that there had been scepticism over the integration of eastern European countries into the EU, but that they had managed. The first step for Ukraine would be full signature of its association agreement with EU, at the same time as extending cooperation in other areas.

“The future is bright and the future is European. What has happened is the political awakening of Ukrainians.”

Olena Prystayko, Head of the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels



“We need actual presence and we do need membership prospects – a way forward, where to go,” she said. “The future is bright and the future is European. What has happened is the political awakening of Ukrainians.”

Asked by Merritt whether the EU should be setting conditions of good behaviour on the new government in exchange for assistance, Quinn-Judge said this likely would not work. “They could try, but I would imagine anyone accused of having misbehaved would say, ‘well, what are you going to do about it?’”

“Until the aggressor is stopped, no measures are sufficient. If we do not stop Russia now, what is next?”

Ihor Dolhov, Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO



He said the West should encourage the new government to start explaining the need for some painful economic changes and severe economic policies. “If they do not prepare them, I think we could see more disillusionment at the very best or disorder at the worst,” he said.

Dolhov said the West needed to be tougher on Russia. “My approach is that until the aggressor is stopped, no measures are sufficient,” he said. “If we do not stop Russia now, what is next?”



ANNEX I – Programme

UKRAINE'S COMPETING ELECTIONS: SORTING FACT FROM FICTION

Tensions around the crisis in Ukraine are high, with elections for a new government in Kiev scheduled for May 25th, only eight weeks after the Crimea referendum that was hotly criticized by Western governments. How are the Ukrainian authorities handling preparations for the elections and will they be free and fair? What is the security situation on the ground and how is growing instability in the country's eastern regions likely to impact polling?

How are the OSCE and European Union supporting election operations on the ground, and how far does this reflect a common European position towards the Ukraine and Russia? Will a democratically elected government help tone down Russia's criticism of the lack of legitimacy of the current Kiev government? How far are international bail-outs dependent on a smoothly-run election? What is the way out of the current crisis, and are the upcoming elections likely to help or hinder in re-starting talks with Russia?

Ihor Dolhov

Olena Prystayko

Paul Quinn-Judge

Ukrainian Ambassador to NATO

Head of the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office
in Brussels

Programme Director Europe and Central Asia,
International Crisis Group

Moderated by **Giles Merritt**, Chairman of the Security & Defence Agenda



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