

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES



Populist Volodymyr Zelensky is currently leading in the polls with 25% to 27%. Current Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko are tied for second with roughly 15% to 18%. Pro-Russian Yuriy Boyko is polling fourth with 9% to 13%. All other candidates are trailing in the polls. Polling data is based on a survey of recent poll results.¹ Chart citations can be found on the ISW Research Blog.

General Information	Political Positions	Likelihood of Advancing Russia's Goals
<h2>Petro Poroshenko</h2> <p>POROSHENKO BLOC "SOLIDARITY" Running as Independent²</p>		
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incumbent President • Founder of Roshen, the largest chocolate company in Ukraine³ • Supported Euromaidan Revolution in 2014⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key supporter of Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO • Strong opponent of the Kremlin in Ukraine • Suffers from negative public ratings due largely to failed anti-corruption reforms 	<p>Poroshenko is unlikely given his history to make voluntary concessions to Russia. The Kremlin has likely already expended most of its existing leverage on Poroshenko.</p> <p>Russia would likely continue to intensify its military provocations and other forms of pressure on Ukraine in the event of a victory by Poroshenko. It would also likely attempt to limit his presidential powers through the election of favorable candidates in the Ukrainian Parliament.</p> <p>Poroshenko stands to hold a diminished ability to shape policy even if he wins reelection. His popular support is slipping and he would likely win only by a slim margin. His bloc also stands to lose ground in the Ukrainian Parliament.</p>
<h2>Yulia Tymoshenko</h2> <p>ALL-UKRAINIAN UNION "FATHERLAND" (Batkivshchyna)⁵</p>		
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former Prime Minister • Leader in Orange Revolution of 2004 • Brokered major gas deal that favored Russia in 2009⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Populist • Frames self as pro-Western and Ukrainian nationalist • Opposed to IMF⁸ • Promises to lower gas prices and increase social welfare benefits⁹ • Frequently attacks reformist policies¹⁰ 	<p>Tymoshenko's populist agenda will likely impede the economic and political reforms necessary for Ukraine's further integration with the West. She and her bloc routinely frame reforms promoted by the EU and NATO as anti-Ukrainian.</p> <p>Tymoshenko may also be willing to restore trade with Russia and make other political concessions in order to secure the financial backing necessary to implement her populist economic promises, including lower gas prices.</p>



Volodymyr Zelensky

SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE¹¹

- Played President of Ukraine on the TV series “Servant of the People”¹²
- Famed comedian on I+I Channel
- Supported by oligarch *Ihor Kolomoyskyi* (owner of I+I Channel; ally of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and opponent of both Poroshenko and Tymoshenko)¹³

- Populist
- Promises zero tolerance for corruption at all levels¹⁴
- Promises referendums for all major decisions¹⁵
- Calls for negotiations with Russia to end the war in Eastern Ukraine without comprising the sovereignty of Ukraine
- Claims to support Ukraine’s integration into the EU and NATO¹⁶

Zelensky is a political newcomer with a relatively thin support network heavily reliant upon popular mobilization, making him particularly vulnerable to influence operations by the Kremlin.¹⁷

The Kremlin would also likely be able to exploit the increased use of popular referendums in Ukraine promoted by Zelensky. Zelensky has stated that he will use referendums to inform all major policy decisions, including those to end the war in Eastern Ukraine or join the EU or NATO.

Zelensky’s populist agenda will likely impede the economic and political reforms necessary for Ukraine’s further integration with the West.



Yuriy Boyko

OPPOSITION PLATFORM FOR LIFE¹⁸

- Former Minister of Fuel and Energy
- Supported by many politicians and oligarchs linked to Russia including:
 - *Serhiy Lyovochkin* (former Head of the Presidential Administration for pro-Russian Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich)¹⁹
 - *Dmytro Firtash* (oligarch heavily involved with Russian Gazprom)²⁰
 - *Viktor Medvedchuk* (oligarch with close personal ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin)²¹

- Pro-Russia
- Eurosceptic
- Calls for neutrality and non-alignment with any foreign power block (including NATO)²²
- Pledges to peacefully end the war in Eastern Ukraine and increase social welfare benefits

The Opposition Bloc is the successor of the defunct pro-Russian Party of Regions, which rebranded after former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled Ukraine during the Euromaidan Revolution in 2014. The Opposition Bloc experienced a schism between Boyko and Oleksandr Vilkul (below) in November 2018.²³

Boyko and his faction openly advocate for the restoration of full relations with Russia. Boyko will impede Ukraine’s integration with the West using the rhetoric of ‘non-alignment’ while simultaneously driving closer ties with Russia.

Boyko is unlikely to win the election due to insufficient public support and his open stance in favor of Russia. He is nonetheless using the presidential race to gain broader support for his faction in the upcoming 2019 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections.





Oleksandr Vilkul

OPPOSITION BLOC

Party for Peace and Development / Industrial Party of Ukraine²⁴

- **Former Vice Prime Minister**
- **Supported by oligarch Rinat Akhmetov (one of the wealthiest oligarchs in Ukraine; generally favors Russia but supports candidates across the political spectrum)²⁵**

- **Pro-Russia**
- **Eurosceptic**
- **Aims to balance the relationships between Ukraine, Europe, and Russia in order to protect the business interests of himself and key backers such as Akhmetov²⁶**

The Opposition Bloc is the successor of the defunct pro-Russian Party of Regions, which rebranded after former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled Ukraine during the Euromaidan Revolution in 2014. The Opposition Bloc experienced a schism between Vilkul and Yuriy Boyko (above) in November 2018.

Vilkul represents the more moderate side of the pro-Russian Opposition Bloc. He will likely seek to reopen trade and other economic relations with Russia in order to advance the business interests of his supporters as well as make major concessions to Russia to end the war in Eastern Ukraine.

Vilkul is unlikely to win the election due to insufficient public support and his stance in favor of Russia. He is using the presidential race to gain broader support for his faction in the upcoming 2019 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections.



Oleh Lyashko

RADICAL PARTY²⁷

- **Former member of Tymoshenko Bloc²⁸**
- **Supported by oligarch Rinat Akhmetov (above)²⁹**

- **Populist**
- **Frequently alters his political positions³⁰**
- **Frames self as anti-Russia and Ukrainian nationalist³¹**
- **Opposed to IMF³²**

Lyashko's strong populist platform will likely impede the economic and political reforms necessary for Ukraine's further integration with the West. Lyashko is also an opportunist who is more likely to alter his policy decisions given pressure or other incentives from external actors such as Russia. He is using the presidential race to gain broader support for his party in the upcoming 2019 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections.



Anatoliy Hrytsenko

CIVIL POSITION³³

- **Former Minister of Defense**

- **Generally aligns with reformist forces in Ukraine**
- **Promises high annual economic growth, the return of Eastern Ukraine, and a genuine fight against corruption and oligarchs**

Hrytsenko has limited political support and remains unlikely to win the election. He is instead attempting to unite various reformist and democratic candidates to set conditions ahead of the 2019 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections. He is unlikely to make voluntary concessions to Russia but he will likely come under growing pressure from the Kremlin as his support base expands.

