



## Helpdesk Research Report

# Political party development in Ukraine

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### Question

*What has been the pattern of political party development in Ukraine over the last 10 years and how have these parties performed in recent elections?*

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## 1. Overview

Political parties in Ukraine were first formed only in 1990, initially as formations based largely on former dissident groups with national-democratic orientation and the tendency to frequently split into separate parties. By the mid-1990s various regional financial industrial groups became involved in forming centrist parties to further their interests. All parties in Ukraine remain highly underdeveloped. Despite some seeming stabilisation of the main parties after the 'orange revolution' of 2004, the 'Euromaidan revolution' of 2013-14 and the departure of President Yanukovich from the political scene has prompted a **thoroughgoing restructuring of the party space**. The main competitors in the pre-term parliamentary elections due to take place in October 2014 now include a **large number of new configurations and recently-formed electoral alliances**. Nevertheless, despite the presence of new faces on parties' electoral lists, the key players remain established politicians who are attempting to prove their 'revitalisation' by including Euromaidan civil society activists and officers from the Donbas conflict.

Key political developments include:

- Ukraine's 7th parliamentary elections will take place according to a **mixed electoral system** where 225, or 50 per cent of seats, will be elected by a proportional party list system using closed party lists and allocating seats to parties obtaining over 5 per cent of the vote. The remaining seats will be elected via a single member district plurality (first past the post) system.<sup>1</sup> This electoral system was in operation during the 2012 elections, but remained contested by political elites vying for an advantage in the electoral rules. For each of the preceding elections, the electoral law was subject to considerable changes in terms of the electoral system (from full majoritarian [1994] to mixed [1998, 2002] to full proportional [2006, 2007] to mixed [2012, 2014] again) and key features (threshold, registration rules etc.). The conduct of elections at national and local level under President Yanukovich deteriorated markedly and the 'party of power', the Party of Regions – Ukraine's only political machine – benefitted from extensive access to state administrative resources in Russophone eastern and southern Ukraine.
- The **institutional environment** for conducting elections has changed substantially since the previous parliamentary elections held in 2012. On 21st February 2014, at the same time as impeaching President Yanukovich, the parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) voted to reinstate the 2004 version of the Constitution (used in 2006-2010) that reduces the role of the president in the formation of the executive, and foresees formation of the government by a parliamentary coalition of parties.
- The 2004 constitutional reform formally significantly enhanced the role of parties in Ukraine's political system. However, in conditions of a weakly institutionalised party system (Rybyi 2013; Razumkov 2010), the reform tended to aggravate existing problems such as **domination by Financial Industrial Groups (FIGs), excessive personalisation of parties, weakness of grassroots organisations, limited ideological or programmatic coherence and regionalised basis of electoral support.**
- In 2010, President Yanukovich pressured the Constitutional Court to restore the 1996 version of the Constitution. This endowed the president with significant formal powers over the executive. The 1996 constitution provided few institutional incentives for politicians to invest in party building. Another dubious Constitutional Court ruling permitted individual MPs to defect to join coalitions, increasing political corruption to very high levels as opposition MPs were bribed to move to the governing coalition. Parliament was characterised by high levels of **party defections** and comparatively **low voting discipline** during 1996-2006 (Whitmore, 2004) and in 2010-2014.
- **Party loyalties** even among party leaders remain extremely weak and fluid in Ukraine and party leaders utilise non-transparent, populist and sometimes corrupt (e.g. selling places on the list to business people) criteria in forming party lists. In 2014, the result is rather eclectic collections of politicians under the main party brands, including **Bloc of Petro Poroshenko, Batkivshchina, Popular Front, Civic Position, the Radical Party and Strong Ukraine.**
- The **weakness of ideology** and huge **political corruption** has meant that leading Ukrainian politicians have been **chameleons**. Poroshenko was one of five party leaders who established the Party of Regions, then moved to Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine, Yatseniuk's Front for Change

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<sup>1</sup> According to the constitution, Ukraine's parliament has 450 seats. However due to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, it is not possible to conduct elections to the 12 Crimean constituencies. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions means that it will not be possible to hold elections in an estimated 9-18 of the 32 constituencies in those regions (OPORA 2014).

and Klitschko's UDAR (Ukrainian Alliance for Democratic Reforms). In the course of this political career he has launched three virtual parties with 'Solidarity' in the title. Yatseniuk was an ally of Tihipko, then of Yushchenko, launched Front for Change, turned against Tymoshenko, offered Yanukovich his availability for the position of prime minister, merged Front for Change with *Batkivshchina* and became its leader when Tymoshenko was in prison and after she was released defected to re-reform his own political vehicle.

## 2. The pattern of party development in Ukraine

Scholarly studies consistently point to the structural and ideological weaknesses of political parties in Ukraine and the lack of institutionalisation of the party system (*inter alia* Haran and Zimmer 2008; Kuzio 2014; Rybyi 2013). Although Ukraine can boast an incredibly large number of legally registered parties (225 in September 2014, with 27 new parties registered in 2014 alone (State Registration Service of Ukraine, <http://www.drsv.gov.ua/party>)), a large proportion do not participate in elections. This proliferation attests to the extreme personalisation of the party system and the shallowness of grassroots organisation, which help to account for high turnover of parties and especially MPs, between elections. Applying Western definitions of the functions of political parties, few, if any, parties in Ukraine can claim to aggregate interests, reflect societal cleavages, offer alternative governments or act as a linkage mechanism between state and society.

Research tends to point to a combination of institutional and structural factors to account for party development in Ukraine, although there is no clear consensus on the relative ordering of the various factors such that party weakness seems over-determined. Kuzio (2014) emphasises predominantly cultural and societal factors such as Soviet political culture, corruption, elites' provinciality and regional/linguistic diversity. The **weakness of ideology** in political parties is commonplace throughout post-Soviet Eurasia, not just in Ukraine, making the region different to post-communist Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Rybyi (2013) focuses on the **poor incentives for party institutionalisation** due to the design and instability of the institutional rules of the game (overall the constitution and law on elections) and electoral volatility. In addition to institutional factors such as the lack of incentives for party building in presidential political systems, Bader (2010) draws attention to the **extensive use of state administrative resources** by regime-supported parties (such as the Party of Regions in the Ukrainian case) and the **dominance of party leaders** at the expense of internal party democracy. In addition, the **vast influence of various FIGs** on parties' formation, operation, decision-making, legislative activity and voting records in parliament increased during 2004-2014 (Matuszak 2012, p.14-16; Razumkov 2010) and so far there is little evidence to suggest that the Euromaidan revolution has substantially changed this.

### Influence of Financial Industrial Groups (FIGs)

In Ukraine big business and politics remain closely fused, because (as in other post-Soviet countries) in the absence of a functioning rule of law, one of the best ways to protect and advance one's business interests is by entering politics, either directly, or via proxies embedded in (sometimes several) political parties. Being on good terms with the president is both vital for the success of big business and good for access to insider privatisation and preferential treatment over the allocation of government contracts. This has been evident in 2010-2014 with the growth of the business empires of Rinat Akhmetov, Dmytro Firtash and President Yanukovich's 'Family' clan. This tendency became more pronounced after the 2004 constitutional change came into force (in 2006), which increased the role of political parties in government formation and survival. It was also due to the desire of various FIGs to protect their businesses from the threat of 'reprivatisation' immediately after the 'orange revolution', during Tymoshenko's premiership in

2005. The absence of alternative sources of funding and high costs of media and campaigning also reinforce party's dependence on FIGs.

FIGs influence on parties engendered the widespread use of negative campaigning, election fraud and blackmail dubbed 'political technology' (Wilson 2005), with oligarchic takeovers of existing party brands (Haran and Zimmer 2008), the creation of project parties (that aimed to win seats for a particular FIG or FIGs) and spoiler parties (created to take votes from the competition). Such influence also contributed to extremely opaque party funding (Rybyi 2013, p.418-9) and inflated or bogus membership claims (Razumkov 2010).

The main FIGs in Ukraine were/are:

- **Akhmetov group** (Donetsk) – Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov and key associates such as Borys Kolesnikov, were key financiers of the Party of Regions (PRU) since its inception in 2000-2001 (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2014) and PRU's parliamentary faction contained approximately 50 MPs considered to be Akhmetov's people. Akhmetov however is also alleged to have 'spread bet' by financing other political parties including, allegedly, Yatseniuk's 'Front for Change' party in 2011-12 and virtual election spoilers such as Forward Ukraine! (formerly the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine) in 2012.
- **The 'gas lobby'** – linked to opaque gas trading intermediaries Eural-Tran-Gas (ETG), RosUkrEnergo (RUE) and OstChem, operated as a pro-Russian lobby or even as a proxy for (unspecified) Russian interests in Ukraine, such as a Russian controlled consortium over Ukraine's gas pipelines. Key figures include former head of Yanukovich's administration Serhiy Lyovochkin who is standing in the 2014 elections, RUE shareholder Dmytro Firtash who is on bail in Vienna awaiting deportation to the US to stand trial on corruption charges, and former Deputy PM Yuriy Boyko who is heading the Opposition Bloc in the 2014 elections. This group has always successfully established good relations with each of Ukraine's five presidents and had close contacts with Yushchenko during his presidency and established a centre of influence within the Party of Regions. During Yanukovich's presidency the gas lobby received the positions of Chief of Staff (Lyovochkin), Minister of Energy (Boyko) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (Kostyantyn Hryshchenko). The gas lobby was in conflict with Yulia Tymoshenko (PM in 2005, 2007-2010 and co-leader of the orange revolution) and consistently supported opposition alternatives to Tymoshenko, whether Yatseniuk (2010), Klitschko (2012), Poroshenko (2014) and Liashko's Radical Party (2012, 2014). Poroshenko and Klitschko visited Firtash in Vienna in March where he persuaded the latter to drop his candidacy in favour of the former.
- **The 'Family'** – a group of businessmen close to Viktor Yanukovich, headed by his eldest son Oleksandr, a dentist by profession whose business empire massively expanded in 2010-2014. 'The Family' was an attempt by Yanukovich to create his personal clan independent of his older Donetsk allies and the gas lobby. Its members fled to Russia with Yanukovich and they are not reported to be funding political parties.
- **Privat group** (Ihor Kolomoyskyi and Hennadiy Boholyubov) – this group has tended to pursue a very pragmatic approach to political involvement, depending on who is in power, although they have tended to side with democratic and nationalist forces. During the last decade Kolomoyskyi backed both Our Ukraine (Yushchenko) and Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchyna* when opportune (Matsuzsak 2012, p.28), and sought some accommodation with Yanukovich. During 2014 Kolomoyskyi enjoyed good relations with Petro Poroshenko, and was appointed governor of Dnipropetrovsk region. Kolomoyskyi's media holdings were involved in negative campaigning against Radical Party leader Liashko (<http://tabloid.pravda.com.ua/focus/54212dea5e81c/>).
- **Many minor oligarchs** – were also involved in funding/controlling political parties. These included **Petro Poroshenko** (Solidarity party 1 was a founding party of PRU, Solidarity party 2 merged with

Yushchenko's Our Ukraine and Solidarity party 3 is a member of the Poroshenko bloc) and **Serhiy Tihipko** (Labour Ukraine and Strong Ukraine, which merged with the Party of Regions in 2012 but 'seceded' from it after the Euromaidan).

## Regional nature of parties

Regional differentiation is considered in the literature and by experts as significantly more important in explaining patterns of party support than rural/urban distinctions.<sup>2</sup> Regional differentiation of party support and the **limited ability of any party to establish a truly national electorate** has been a persistent feature of Ukrainian parliamentary elections (Haran and Zimmer, 2008, p.547). Regional identities were mobilised by parties during election campaigns in the absence of coherent ideological or programmatic party differentiation. Parties thus have sought to tap into thorny questions around language use, attitudes to foreign policy and assessments of historic figures and events where there exists significant variation in attitudes to these issues as one travels from western to eastern Ukraine (Razumkov, 2010, p.17; Melnykovska et al., 2011).

It has been argued that if before 2004 **socio-cultural factors** were one of the factors **structuring the party system, after 2004 they became decisive** because of the extensive use of 'political technology' during the 2004 presidential election campaign that brought Ukraine close to interregional conflict (Razumkov, 2010, p.17). The Kuchma and Putin regimes' backing of Yanukovich's candidacy involved 'black PR' to paint Yushchenko as an agent of the USA, as an anti-Semite and as a western Ukrainian fascist (Wilson, 2005a, pp.94-6) – all themes that were made more prominent under Yanukovich and especially during and since the Euromaidan. After 2004, parties tasks of mobilising the electorate was simplified by manipulating public consciousness over **identity issues**, which served to distract voters from socio-economic problems (Razumkov, 2010, p.18, 25). Such contentious issues were especially successful in mobilising voters in the two heartlands of the Party of Regions and CPU – Donbas and Crimea – and produced anger and hostility against the 'fascist' Euromaidan that was viewed as illegitimate and put into power by a 'Western coup.' The Party of Regions and CPU monopolised power in Russophone eastern and southern Ukraine and their marginalisation has opened up a political vacuum in this region. The party is in the process of disintegration following Yanukovich's flight and with 2-3 per cent support in the polls, is not standing in the 2014 elections. Polls also show its ally, the Communist Party (CPU) that could be banned over allegations of supporting separatists, unlikely to cross the threshold.

## Personalisation and weakness of grassroots organisation

Political parties remain heavily dependent upon the presence of a **charismatic leader** to win votes, and the most successful parties/coalitions of the last decade have been excessively personalised. Put simply there would be no *Batkivshchina*, Our Ukraine and UDAR without Yushchenko, Tymoshenko and Klitchko. Personalised parties such as Yushchenko's Our Ukraine and Tymoshenko's *Batkivshchina* consequently were prone to splits and defections, particularly when out of power. Recent research has demonstrated that the Party of Regions was much more organisationally coherent due to more consensual decision making borne of the need to balance the interests of various FIGs (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2014). Parties therefore often function as the **personal 'project' of a particular individual**, and even the core 'team' can be quite fluid and change affiliation between elections.

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<sup>2</sup> Information and data on urban/rural voting patterns is not readily available.

## Limited ideological or programmatic coherence

Ukrainian voters have little idea about the ideological or programmatic orientation of the parties they vote for, instead tending to be guided by the ‘personal factor’ of the leader, which is not surprising given the amorphous positioning of parties (Rybyi 2013, pp.415-6) and frequent changes in stated policy preferences of leaders (Kuzio 2014, p.4). Given the dramatic restructuring of the party space during 2014, it is likely to be even harder for voters to identify the orientation of parties and voters will divide into moderates backing Poroshenko-Klitschko (Poroshenko bloc) and Tihipko (Strong Ukraine) and radicals more willing to play with nationalism backing Tymoshenko (*Batkivshchina*) and Yatseniuk (Popular Front) or those seeking to protest vote backing Liashko (Radical Party)

## 3. The main parties and their electoral performance, 2004-13

Table 1 shows the main political parties in Ukraine and their electoral performance in the last four parliamentary elections, during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010) and Viktor Yanukovych (2010-2014). The main parliamentary parties were the **Party of Regions (PRU)**, the **Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko** (reformed as political party *Batkivshchina* which merged with Arseniy Yatseniuk’s Front for Change in 2011 as a result of the new electoral law which banned the participation of blocs) and **President Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine bloc**, which disintegrated towards the end of his presidency (in 2010), with some politicians and component parties joining Tymoshenko’s bloc (BYuT).

**Table 1: Electoral performance of key parties shown as percentage of votes**

Party	Leader	2002*	2006	2007	2012*
Party of Regions (PRU)	Mykola Azarov, Viktor Yanukovych	11.2 as part of For a United Ukraine bloc	32.1	34.4	30.0
Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) (Batkivshchina in 2012)	Yulia Tymoshenko (1999-2011 and since 2014)/Arseniy Yatseniuk in 2012-14	7.5	22.3	30.7	25.6
UDAR	Vitaly Klychko	-	-	-	14.0
Communist Party	Petro Symonenko	20.8	3.7	5.4	13.2
Freedom (Svoboda)	Oleh Tyanhybok	-	-	0.8	9.7
Our Ukraine	Viktor Yushchenko (2002-04 and since 2010, Yu. Lutsenko (2005-10), Valentyn Nalyvaychenko (2009-11)	24.5	14.0	14.2	1.1
Agrarian Party (to 2004)/People’s Party (2005-2006)/Lytvyn Bloc (in 2007)	Volodymyr Lytvyn (with Tihypko’s Strong Ukraine in 2007)	-	2.4	4.0	1.1

Radical Party	Oleh Liashko	-	-	-	1.1
Socialist Party	Oleksandr Moroz, Mykola Rudkovskiyi	7.1	5.7	2.9	2.4
For a United Ukraine bloc (incl. Party of Regions)	Volodymyr Lytvyn	12.2	-	-	-
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine- United	Viktor Medvedchuk	6.5	1.1 (as part of bloc 'Ne Tak' [Not Like This])	-	-

\*Election held under a mixed PR/majoritarian system. Table shows the result in the proportional vote only.

Source: [www.cvk.gov.ua](http://www.cvk.gov.ua)

Note: A large number of unaffiliated MPs were present in the parliament, as parties and blocs included many notables and entrepreneurs who were not party members in their party lists, and in 2002 and 2012 elections, 'independents' also competed alongside party candidates in single member districts.

The **Party of Regions was the main opposition party under Yushchenko** and was able to preserve its integrity by offering protection to the business interests it housed (Kudelia and Kuzio, 2014). The period was marked by bitter political battles between the three groupings, with two allied against the third at different points. For instance, the parliamentary coalition supporting Tymoshenko's government, comprising Our Ukraine, BYuT and the Socialist Party, struggled to support the government's bills due to, *inter alia*, bitter infighting between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko. **Following the 2006 elections, the parties were unable to form a working coalition for six months, before finally a deal was struck between Yushchenko where PRU's Yanukovich became PM** backed by the PRU, Communists and Socialists, with Our Ukraine briefly maintaining some governmental positions. This was an unstable situation, leading to early elections in 2007 after which Yulia Tymoshenko returned as PM. However, the 'orange' coalition of 227 (only 2 more than the minimum) never gave her support as within Our Ukraine there was a large anti-Tymoshenko faction which supported a grand coalition with the Party of Regions. Yushchenko and Tymoshenko at different times sought to negotiate grand coalitions, the former in 2006-2007 and the latter in 2008-2009, with the Party of Regions.

**After Yanukovich's election as president in 2010, he moved swiftly to restructure the parliamentary coalition and remove Tymoshenko as PM.** MPs from her coalition were persuaded (including by extensive use of bribery) to join a **new coalition based on the Party of Regions and Communists, buttressed by a number of 'independent' deputies**, many of whom were defectors from Our Ukraine and BYuT. This coalition remained intact until **February 2014**, when the use of snipers to murder over 100 unarmed protesters in the centre of Kyiv prompted an exodus of 30-50 MPs and the Party of Regions **denunciation of Yanukovich**. After Yanukovich fled from Kyiv, his **impeachment** and the later appointment of Yatseniuk as PM by over 300 votes signalled a **restructuring of parliamentary groupings**. The **new government was supported by a coalition of Batkivshchina, UDAR, Svoboda and new groups 'Economic Development' and 'Sovereign European Ukraine'** (both moderate defectors from the Party of Regions), but this coalition struggled to support key government bills and early elections were sought by President Poroshenko to renew the legitimacy of a parliament tarnished by its role in passing a legislative basis for dictatorship on 16 January 2014. The Communist Party was banned from forming a parliamentary faction after its membership dropped below the minimum requirement and as a result of court proceedings to ban the party for its support of separatism. The Party of Regions shrank to 77 MPs, as others left or joined new factions, some supporting the new president and government.

## 4. Leading competitors in the 2014 parliamentary elections

29 parties are registered to participate in the 2014 elections in the party list part of the vote, but a majority of these are polling less than 1 per cent. Table 2 shows those competitors polling over 1 per cent in recent polls in comparison to their performance in the 2012 elections and indicates significant turbulence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Yanukovich regime and of the Party of Regions. **The newly formed electoral bloc supporting Petro Poroshenko is likely to receive a plurality of votes**, while the Party of Regions, which won a plurality in the previous three elections, withdrew from competing. The poll data does not take into account the recent formation of the 'Opposition Bloc', which brings together figures from the previous regime and led by Yuriy Boyko.

The election is likely to see 5-7 parties pass the 5 per cent threshold, with other supporters elected in single mandate constituencies. The new Rada will be more radical on reform and nationalistic than its predecessor, as the **main parties** have sought to show their patriotism by **including prominent civic activists, anti-corruption journalists and also military officers into their party lists**, but there will be plenty of faces familiar to parliament with both political and business backgrounds.

The text below the table offers some orientation on individual party/bloc's positioning, electoral basis (on the basis of Kyiv International Institute of Sociology poll data) – including regional support, and potential sources of financial support (though this is highly speculative due to the opaque nature of party funding in Ukraine, and draws on media sources, expert opinion and Matuszak 2012). Figures for party membership were not publically available, except for two parties. However, in general due to political corruption in the post-Soviet space, the value of party membership figures is very limited.

**Table 2: Leading competitors in the 2014 parliamentary elections**

Party	Leader/Key figures	2012 election performance	Current % rating (all respondents)	Current % rating (those intending to vote)
Bloc of Petro Poroshenko	Vitaliy Klitchko, Yuriy Lutsenko	UDAR obtained 14.0	26.8	45.7
Radical Party	Oleh Liashko	Liashko was elected with BYuT 2006 & 2007	8.1	13.7
Civic Position	Anatoliy Hrytsenko	Hrytsenko was elected with Our Ukraine (2007) & Batkivshchina (2012)	4.8	8.1
<i>Batkivshchina</i> (Fatherland)	Yulia Tymoshenko	25.6 (when Tymoshenko was in prison the party was led by Arseniy Yatseniuk)	4.7	8.1
Popular Front [announced its formation only in August]	Arseniy Yatseniuk, Oleksandr Turchynov, Arsen Avakov	(key figures led Fatherland in 2012)	3.3	5.6

Strong Ukraine	Serhiy Tihipko	(merged with PRU 2012 until 2014)	2.8	4.4
<i>Svoboda</i> (Freedom)	Oleh Tiahnybok	9.7	2.6	4.5
Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU)	Petro Symonenko, Adam Martyniuk	13.2	2.0	2.9
Party of Regions (PRU)*	Borys Kolesnikov, Nestor Shufrych	30.0	1.3	1.9
Association "Self-Help" ( <i>Samopomich</i> )	Andriy Sadovyi, Hanna Hopko	-	1.2	2.0
Opposition Bloc	Yuriy Boyko, Yuriy Miroshnychenko, Natalya Korolevska	(includes ex-PRU deputies)		
Not intending to vote			15.5	

\*not participating in 2014 elections

Poll data shows only parties polling over 1%. Sourced from SOCIS poll conducted 5-10.9.14, <http://www.socis.kiev.ua/ua/press/rezultaty-sotsiolohichnoho-doslidzhennja-ukrajina-na-starti-vyborchoji-kampaniji-2014.html> (accessed 23.9.14).

- **Bloc of Poroshenko** – this electoral bloc brings together Vitaliy Klitchko’s UDAR party of former politicians and business people associated with ex-President Yushchenko and Our Ukraine, well-known civic activists, journalists and military figures as well as several figures connected with the previous regime (moderates from the Party of Regions, gas lobby and former corrupt Kyiv Mayor Leonid Chernovetskyi). According to KIIS polls, the bloc will draw its electorate predominantly from the centre and west of the country, and it intends to cooperate with Yatseniuk’s People’s Front and Tymoshenko’s *Batkivshchina* in single mandate constituency contests (Koshkina 2014). In the May 2014 presidential elections, Poroshenko won support throughout Ukraine. UDAR like Strong Ukraine attracts middle class business and professional voters in eastern and western Ukraine.
- **The Radical Party of Oleh Liashko** – widely seen as a spoiler party funded by Serhiy Lyovochkhin (the ‘gas lobby’) to take votes from Tymoshenko’s *Batkivshchina* in 2012 and Tymoshenko in May 2014, it has become a populist anti-establishment party likely to win seats and form its own faction in the new parliament. The party is strongly based on Liashko’s maverick charismatic personality and forthright, hectoring style. He achieved much publicity for vigilante operations in the conflict zone. The party list includes neo-Nazi politician Ihor Moysyuk, other volunteer battalion commanders, Euromaidan activists as well as singers and sportspeople. His electoral support basis is in Kyiv, west and central Ukraine and the party is likely to take protest votes given to *Batkivshchina* and *Svoboda* in 2012.
- **Civic Position** – together with the little known Democratic Alliance Party. Bloc leader Anatoly Hrytsenko is a respected ex-defence minister of national-democratic orientation, who was previously allied with Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine (2007-10) and Tymoshenko’s *Batkivshchina* (2010-2014). The party is the only one polling an even level of support across Ukraine’s regions. Hrytsenko was one of the first to reveal his party donors from medium-level businessmen.
- ***Batkivshchina* (Fatherland)** – since its inception for the 2002 elections *Batkivshchina* was subsumed into the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT), which was a rather heterogeneous alliance of variously national democratic, nationalist, social and liberal democratic forces, backed financially by minor oligarchs and the Industrial Union of Donbas led by Serhiy Taruta, now governor of Donetsk. During Yanukovich’s presidency, Tymoshenko’s imprisonment helped the

party convincingly brand itself as the united opposition force, led by Arseniy Yatseniuk. The party lost many of its oligarchic funders during this period as they were put under pressure to not support the opposition on pain of losing their businesses (Matsuszak 2012, p.40). The party split at the end of August 2014 over election tactics, losing PM Yatseniuk along with deputy leader, parliamentary speaker and long-term Tymoshenko ally Oleksandr Turchynov and several other prominent politicians, who are standing in a new bloc, Popular Front. The party list contains prominent military figures and Euromaidan activists as well as sitting MPs. Previous election performance and recent polls demonstrate the party's electoral base is in western and central Ukraine.

- **Popular Front (*Narodnyi Front*)** - former Fatherland politicians who announced their intention to join a parliamentary coalition with the Bloc of Poroshenko, and briefly they negotiated forming a single party list before deciding to stand separately. The party sought to underscore the tougher political stance of PM Yatseniuk with regard to the war in Donbas by forming a military council at its founding conference. However domestic and international pressure persuaded the party not to include two far right candidates from the Social National Party leading the volunteer Azov battalion onto the party list.
- **Strong Ukraine** – this party, formed as Labour Ukraine in 1998 as the political home of a wing of the Dnipropetrovsk clan and then renamed, was the vehicle of Serhiy Tihypko that merged with the Party of Regions in 2012 and 'seceded' in 2014. Prior to that the party entered parliament as part of the Bloc of Volodymyr Lytvyn in 2007. The party list contains oligarch Tariel Vasadze, (formerly of BYuT and the Party of Regions) and former Security Service Chairman Valery Khoroshkovskyy who split with the Party of Regions in late 2012 and went into 'exile' abroad. The party's electoral support base is among middle class voters in the east and south.
- **Svoboda (Freedom)** – this populist nationalist far right party lost much popular support during the Euromaidan revolution as they transpired to be less radical in deeds than in words, but also because they benefitted considerably from protest votes against Yanukovich in 2012. *Svoboda* have been in power in three Galicia regions since 2010 and public disappointment in their performance is palpable. Some figures put their membership at 15,000 (Olszański, 2011). Their electoral support is concentrated in western and central Ukraine.
- **Communist Party of Ukraine** – the CPU is an unreconstructed successor party to the Soviet era party and was the best institutionalised party in terms of organisation, ideology and membership during the 1990s, but its electoral support was eroded by competition with the much better resourced Party of Regions in its electoral heartland of the East and South. The party membership is estimated at 115,000 which makes it one of the largest in Ukraine. The party was in parliamentary coalitions with the oligarchic Party of Regions (in 2006-2007 and 2010-2014) and as such is seen as part of the *ancient regime*. It was funded by including a number of entrepreneurs into its party list.
- **Party of Regions (PRU)** – in early September the PRU decided not to compete in the face of poor poll ratings and the loss of much of its core electorate in annexed Crimea and partly occupied Donbas. Instead a number of its MPs will seek election as independents in single mandate constituencies or on other party lists.
- **Opposition Bloc** is widely regarded as a project of 'gas lobbyist' Lyovochkhin and the party list is headed by former Party of Regions deputy Yuriy Miroshnychenko and Minister of Energy Boyko and contains other ex-Party of Regions MPs. The bloc position is for Ukraine's neutrality and preserving non-aligned status. Poll data for this bloc is not yet available, but its positioning suggests

it is aiming for votes from the east and south. It was formed in September 2014 as a coalition of six small, extra-parliamentary parties, the most well-known of which is Natalya Korolevska's Forward Ukraine!, a party that as the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine was a member of BYuT in the 2002, 2006 and 2007 elections. The party was subsequently the subject of a hostile takeover by Yanukovych and Akhmetov, its leadership changed and it was renamed. In 2012 this party received enormous funding from Akhmetov for a prominent campaign that was positioned to take votes from *Batkivshchina*. It obtained 1.6% vote and in 2012, Korolevska joined the government.

Note: **People's Strength** (*Syla Liudey*) is a genuine grassroots party that emerged from Euromaidan and is funded by membership dues and crowd-sourcing, which sought to articulate a clearly orientated programme and be based on internal party democracy. The party's candidates were professionals and activists and did not contain high profile, charismatic figures. One well-known candidate was constitutional lawyer, Viktor Musiaka. Although the party will struggle to compete with the better-known and better-funded parties and is unlikely to enter the parliament, this is one of several new formations that models a genuine commitment to transparency and democracy new to Ukrainian party politics.

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## Key websites

- SOCIS Centre for Marketing and Social Research:  
<http://www.socis.kiev.ua>
- KIIS - Kyiv International Institute for Sociology:  
<http://www.kiis.com.ua>
- CHESNO:  
<http://www.chesno.org>
- OPORA:  
<http://www.oporaua.org>
- Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU):  
<http://www.cvu.org.ua>

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