



Presidential elections

New date would cut Yushchenko's tenure short

April 02, 2009

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+380 44 391 5577**Verkhovna Rada composition**

Party of Regions	175
BYuT	156
Our Ukraine	72
Communist Party	27
Lytvyn Bloc	20
Total seats	450

Source: Central Election Commission

Recent presidential poll results**Razumkov Center survey**

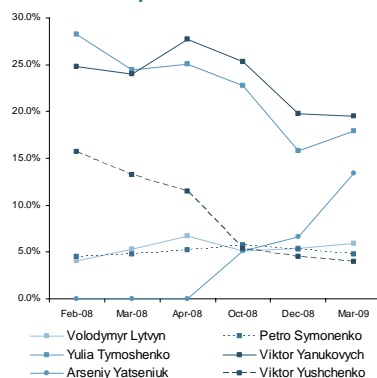
Viktor Yanukovich	19.5%
Yulia Tymoshenko	17.9%
Arseniy Yatseniuk	13.4%
Volodymyr Lytvyn	5.9%
Petro Symonenko	4.8%
Viktor Yushchenko	4.0%
Undecided	14.7%

Note: Conducted Feb. 27–Mar. 5
Source: Razumkov Center**Research & Branding Group survey**

Viktor Yanukovich	23.5%
Yulia Tymoshenko	16.9%
Arseniy Yatseniuk	12.6%
Petro Symonenko	4.6%
Volodymyr Lytvyn	4.6%
Viktor Yushchenko	3.1%
Undecided	6.8%

Note: Conducted Feb. 17–Feb. 27
Source: Research & Branding Group**FOM-Ukraine survey**

Viktor Yanukovich	20.0%
Yulia Tymoshenko	17.0%
Arseniy Yatseniuk	10.0%
Petro Symonenko	5.0%
Volodymyr Lytvyn	4.0%
Viktor Yushchenko	2.0%
Undecided	12.0%

Note: Conducted Feb. 2–Feb. 11
Source: FOM-Ukraine**Presidential poll trends**

Source: Razumkov Center

Yesterday the Verkhovna Rada ordered the next presidential election to be held on October 25, earlier than expected. With the president vowing to take the issue to courts, the judicial tussle and ensuing campaign stunts could be messy – but we see little impact on the real economy – Ukraine is used to living with the seemingly never-ending political quarrels.

Verkhovna Rada moves forward presidential election date to Oct. 25

Yesterday Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, voted to hold the next presidential poll on October 25. The measure was approved by 401 deputies: 174 lawmakers from the Party of Regions, 155 from BYuT, 27 from the Communist Party, 19 from the Lytvyn Bloc and even 26 from the pro-Presidential Our Ukraine Bloc.

Constitutional interpretations differ

While according to the Ukrainian Constitution, the Rada has the power to set the date, the norm is to hold the presidential election on the last Sunday of the last month of the incumbent's fifth year in office (Viktor Yushchenko was sworn in on Jan. 23, 2005, implying a January 2010 date). Representatives of Yushchenko's secretariat have already promised that the President will take the matter to the Constitutional Court; he had previously publicized a date of Jan. 17, 2010. The Rada-approved election date appears to adhere to provisions of the constitution in effect when Yushchenko was elected in 2004.

A look into political motivation for ballot dates

Ukrainian media reports today cited MPs as saying their decision on the earlier date was done to prohibit Yushchenko from calling another early *parliamentary* election, which would be prohibited within six months of a presidential election. Viktor Baloha, head of the presidential secretariat, has publicly spoken in favor of early parliamentary elections. The major candidates clearly have their own reasons to favor different dates:

- **Viktor Yanukovich** favors the Oct. 25 date. He has been leading the polls and, as his party is in opposition in parliament, could seek to assign responsibility for all the country's ills on the current government
- **Yulia Tymoshenko** also backs the Oct. 25 date. She stands to cash in on her current popularity, which has steadily eroded over time, as the economic crisis in Ukraine has worsened
- **Arseniy Yatseniuk** has not publicly spoken in favor of a specific date yet, but he has risen out of nowhere to rank highly in polls (10-13%) on the appeal of representing a completely fresh face in the executive
- **Petro Symonenko** and **Volodymyr Lytvyn** favor the Oct. 25 date.
- **Yushchenko** wants a Jan. 17, 2010 vote. He appears to be biding his time and hoping for a miracle; his polling numbers (2-4%) are dismal

October 25 could stick, look for early summer resolution

In our view, the Oct. 25 date is likely to stick, as not only the majority of politicians, but the general public, as implied by recent polls, are in favor of a change in the presidency. In the meantime, the battle over the election date could be quite contentious, but we see little material impact on the real economy – by now Ukraine is used to living with the seemingly never-ending political quarrels. We see the issue hopping to the top of the Constitutional Court's docket, and a final date determined in 1-2 months – each party will want to have ample lead-time to run a campaign, which by law cannot begin more than 60 days before an election. Hence, if the October 25 date holds, campaigns could officially begin in late August.

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