

Ukrainian president Zelensky's new party wins parliamentary elections

By Jason Melanovski
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The newly created Servant of the People party of Ukraine's recently elected President Volodymyr Zelensky won an overwhelming victory in Ukraine's snap parliamentary elections on Sunday. The party won 43 percent of the vote and 253 out of 450 seats in Ukraine's Parliament. The win marks the first time any political party has held an absolute majority in Ukraine's parliament since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Zelensky will now be granted unprecedented political powers as president.

The snap elections had been called, in an authoritarian move by Zelensky in his inauguration speech, following his landslide victory last April against the widely hated former president Petro Poroshenko, who had been brought to power by the imperialist backed far-right coup in Kiev in February 2014.

The parties of both ex-president Poroshenko ("European Solidarity"), which had gained a majority in the previous parliamentary elections in 2015, and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko ("All-Ukrainian Fatherland Party") both received only 8 percent of the vote and 25 seats in parliament each.

The Opposition Platform—For Life party finished second with 13 percent of the vote and 44 seats. This party, whose leadership maintains ties to the Kremlin and favors ending the war in Eastern Ukraine and restoring peaceful social and economic ties with Russia, will now serve as the opposition party in parliament, since Zelensky has pledged to never form a coalition with the party because of its stance towards Russia.

This stance further exposes the fact that Zelensky is bowing to the demands of Ukrainian nationalists and the United States government, who refuse to accept any negotiated settlement with separatists in the Donbass

region of the country. Despite his rhetoric during the presidential campaign indicating possible negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Zelensky since coming into office has joined the anti-Russia campaign of the West and of his predecessor.

Now, reports suggest that Zelensky will most likely seek to form a coalition with another newly-created party, Golos (Voice), which is likewise led by a popular entertainer, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk of the Ukrainian pop rock band Okean Elzy. The party won just 6 percent of the vote and 20 seats, mainly in western Ukraine, but would enable Zelensky to garner support among the middle and upper middle classes in that region, as well as among right-wing Ukrainian nationalists, who were totally shut out of parliament in Sunday's elections.

Zelensky has even invited Vakarchuk to discuss the position of Prime Minister, hinting at the possibility that Ukraine's two most important political offices could be held by a comedian and a pop-star.

Vakarchuk has a much more extensive political history than Zelensky, which testifies to his close ties to the pro-Western section of the Ukrainian oligarchy.

He was a prominent figure in Ukraine's 2004 US-backed "Orange Revolution," supporting the western-backed former President Viktor Yushchenko and later serving in parliament as a member of Yushchenko's party. He later supported Ukraine's far-right backed coup against elected President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014. In 2015 Vakarchuk participated in an international fellowship program at Yale University and in 2018 he went to Stanford University as a visiting scholar. Vakarchuk holds perhaps even more openly right-wing "free market" views than Zelensky, and supports the country's entry into both the EU and NATO.

The remaining 47 seats will be held by independent candidates and members of other minor parties. The Communist Party of Ukraine was prohibited from running in the elections because of the right-wing “de-communization” laws which were passed under Poroshenko in 2015.

While much has been made by both the Ukrainian and Western press about the “stunning” turnover of the elected members of the Ukrainian government, the results are in fact symptoms of a political crisis in which there is little to no trust or faith in the institutions of the Ukrainian state within the Ukrainian working class.

All of the parties now in parliament, including Zelensky’s Servant of the People party, lack a clear political program and are financially backed by billionaire oligarchs or Western-backed NGO front groups like Vakarchuk’s Golos. Zelensky himself maintains close ties to the oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, who has long played a central role in Ukrainian politics.

None of the candidates within Zelensky’s party have previously held parliamentary seats. Out of the 450 seats in the newly assembled parliament a total of 323 seats will be occupied by entirely new deputies. Like Zelensky, who had no political history prior to his huge victory over Poroshenko in April, many of the members of his new party have no political experience.

They are drawn, for the most part, from Ukraine’s middle and upper-middle classes that supported the Maidan movement of 2013-2014, which culminated in the Western-backed coup of February 2014. They are comprised of “activists, entrepreneurs, lawyers,” as well as entertainers and celebrities like Zelensky, according to the *Financial Times*.

They will now be “educated” by the Kiev School of Economics, according to *Bloomberg News*, and will work to implement the free-market, pro-EU, pro-NATO reforms and “anti-corruption” policies that Zelensky ran on.

Reports also suggest that many of Zelensky’s close advisers and future cabinet members will be figures from earlier administrations with close ties to the country’s oligarchic class and imperialist governments.

On Tuesday Zelensky announced that Ruslan Demchenko will serve as his presidential advisor. Demchenko, one of the most experienced politicians of

the oligarchy of post-Soviet Ukraine, previously served as the advisor to Poroshenko and also worked in both the administrations of the right-wing western-backed Viktor Yushchenko presidency (2005-2010) and the presidency of Leonid Kuchma (1994-1998). In the immediate wake of the restoration of capitalism, from 1992 to 1994, he had served as the Ukrainian ambassador to the US.

As for the prospective prime minister, although Zelensky has suggested that Vakarchuk could serve in the position, he has also stated that he wants “an economy guru respected in the West, not a politician,” which may point to the appointment of former Economy Minister Aivaras Abromavicius.

During his time in the Poroshenko regime, Abromavicius favored the rapid selling off of Ukraine’s remaining state-owned industry to pay off the country’s massive IMF debt and stem the rapid fall of Ukraine’s currency. The Washington, DC-based Atlantic Council think tank declared that, “choosing Abromavicius would signal to investors, Western governments and Ukrainians that Zelensky is serious about changing Ukraine.”

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