



Putin Will Likely Punish Kyiv for Not Holding Elections in Russian-controlled Eastern Ukraine

November 30, 2020

By George Barros with Joseph Kyle

Key Takeaway: Ukraine conducted countrywide local elections for the first time since 2015 on October 25, 2020. Zelensky's Servant of the People (SoP) Party's performed poorly—in part due to reinvigorated Kremlin military, diplomatic, and informational pressure campaigns targeting Zelensky. The Kremlin intensified these campaigns in fall 2020 after Zelensky rejected holding local elections in Russian-controlled eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin will likely exploit SoP's poor electoral performance to impair Zelensky's reelection campaign in 2024. Zelensky is more vulnerable to Russian pressure and subversion following the October 25 elections. Ukraine backslid on a key anticorruption reform, a development that could undermine Ukraine's efforts to become a liberal democracy and join Western structures. Kremlin pressure is likely compelling Ukraine to disengage from positions close to the frontline in Donbas. The Kremlin may escalate its military pressure campaign against Ukraine in the winter of 2020–2021.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky resisted intensified Russian pressure to hold regular Ukrainian elections in Russian-controlled eastern Ukraine in October. The Kremlin tried to coerce Ukraine to include occupied Donbas in Ukraine's nationwide local elections on October 25, 2020. Kyiv's inclusion of Russian-controlled Donbas in Ukrainian elections would have undermined Ukraine's sovereignty, legitimized Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, and increased Kremlin control over Kyiv's decision making.

Russian President Vladimir Putin punished Zelensky for refusing to conduct elections in Russian-controlled Donbas. The Kremlin conducted a coordinated pressure campaign against Ukraine before the elections to impair Zelensky's Servant of the People (SoP) party's electoral performance by intensifying ongoing Russian military, diplomatic, and information campaigns.

The Kremlin increased military and diplomatic pressure against Ukraine in late summer 2020—after Zelensky took Donbas elections off the table.¹ Ukraine's parliament passed a resolution on July 15, 2020, against holding elections in occupied Donbas.² The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs resumed accusing Ukraine of undermining the ceasefire in Donbas in August.³ A Kremlin-controlled proxy in Donbas accused Ukraine of undermining the ceasefire on September 5 and killed a Ukrainian soldier on September 6—the first Ukrainian serviceman combat death since July 21.⁴ The Kremlin's proxies backtracked on a prisoner exchange on September 14 by making it conditional on Donbas participating in October elections.⁵ Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov canceled his participation in agreed-upon peace talks in September.⁶

The Kremlin's recent pattern of behavior is consistent with the Kremlin's history of using peace talks, prisoner exchanges, and strategic de-escalation and escalation in its pressure campaigns to force key Ukrainian political concessions.⁷ The Kremlin still seeks local elections in Donbas, possibly as soon as March 2021.⁸

The Kremlin used an information operation exploiting COVID-19 to increase support for Ukraine's pro-Russian opposition party in the run-up to the elections. Ukraine's principal pro-Russian politician—Viktor Medvedchuk, a key Putin ally in Ukraine—linked the election of the pro-Russian opposition party with quick access to a viable COVID-19 vaccine.⁹ Putin met Medvedchuk on October 6 and claimed that Kyiv's current leadership is undermining the possibility of the Kremlin distributing the Russian COVID-19 vaccine in Ukraine.¹⁰ Medvedchuk also used his media holdings in Ukraine before the fall 2020 elections during fall to promote disinformation claiming EU vaccine tests for Ukrainian citizens could be unsafe.¹¹

The Kremlin intensified information operations aimed at degrading support for Zelensky and his SoP Party. Medvedchuk reinvigorated efforts to accuse Zelensky of failing to end the war in Donbas, one of Zelensky’s key 2019 election promises, in fall 2020.¹² Kremlin and pro-Russian Ukrainian media exploited the optics of the deteriorating ceasefire in Donbas and the canceled prisoner swap to enhance these efforts. These campaigns—along with Zelensky’s own scandals and reform backsliding—likely suppressed Ukrainian turnout, which dropped significantly since the last local elections in 2015.¹³

This shift in tone marks a significant change in the way the Kremlin initially framed Zelensky. These observed information tactics and attack patterns targeting the incumbent political force in Ukraine’s 2020 local elections are consistent with previous Kremlin influence campaigns in Ukraine.¹⁴ The Kremlin initially helped elect Zelensky by attacking then-incumbent President Petro Poroshenko while framing Zelensky’s candidacy with reserved optimism during the spring 2019 Ukrainian presidential election, for example.

SoP performed poorly in the October 25, 2020, local elections. Mayoral and local legislatures positions were up for reelection for the first time since 2015. SoP received approximately 17.6 percent of the national vote and did not win any major mayoral positions.¹⁵ This is a significant decrease in SoP’s performance compared to its performance in 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections, and a major blow to Zelensky’s image as a popular leader.¹⁶ Zelensky won 73.22 percent of the national vote in the April 2019 Ukrainian presidential election.¹⁷ His SoP party won 43.16 percent of the national vote and 57.77 percent of single-member districts in July 2019 snap parliamentary elections—an unprecedented supermajority.¹⁸ SoP technically gained regional council seats in the October 2020 elections from a baseline of zero seats, since SoP did not exist in 2015, but the dramatic drop in vote percentages made those apparent gains a defeat in reality.

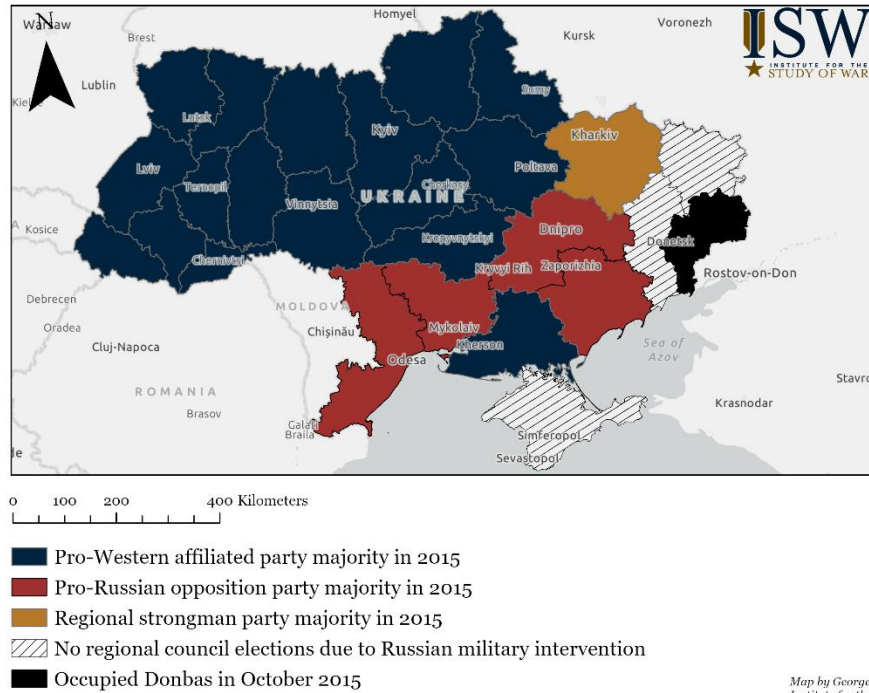
April 2019 Ukrainian Presidential Election Results (Second Round at the Oblast Level)



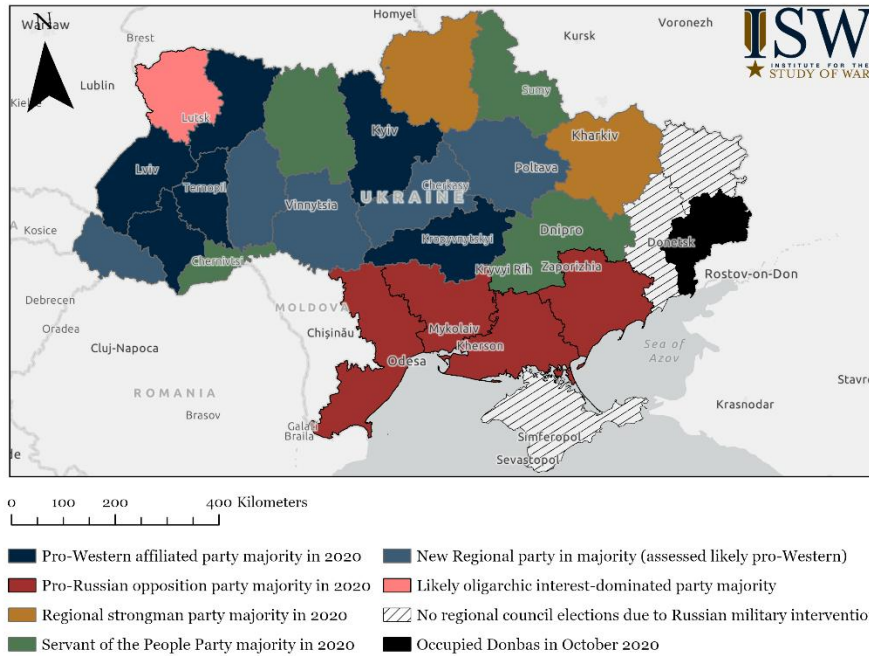
Above: Zelensky performed extremely well in Ukraine’s April 2019 presidential election. His party performed poorly in October 2020 local elections relative to this baseline.

Below: These two maps illustrate the performance decrease SoP suffered since its 2019 debut and the increased marginalization of explicitly pro-Western reformist parties that came to power after the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution.

Assessed Political Orientations of Ukrainian Regional Councils (Oblasna Rada) in 2015



Assessed Political Orientations of Ukrainian Regional Councils (Oblasna Rada) in 2020



Zelensky is likely more vulnerable to Russian pressure and subversion following the October 25 elections. The Kremlin has likely gained leverage and flexibility to intensify political pressure and subversion campaigns now that the local elections are effectively over.¹⁹ More overt Russian subversion efforts would have likely undermined Kremlin efforts to promote pro-Russian political forces in the run-up to the elections, although the explicitly pro-Russia For Life party performed poorly regardless. The Kremlin no longer faces this constraint in the short-term. The Kremlin likely seeks to use the new political status quo to further marginalize more explicitly pro-Western reformist parties that came to power after the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution.²⁰

Ukraine backslid on a major anticorruption reform after the elections. Ukraine's supreme court equivalent effectively eliminated the country's electronic declaration system for monitoring government officials' assets—a major anticorruption reform necessary for Ukraine's continued cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and European Union (EU)—on October 27, 2020.²¹ This development advances Putin's campaign to undermine Ukraine's efforts to reform to join Western structures, such as the EU and NATO.²² Russian influence in Ukraine likely played a role in subverting this key reform.²³ Zelensky seeks to overturn the court's decision, but it is a major Kremlin victory that this backsliding occurred in the first place.²⁴

Forecast:

The Kremlin may escalate its military pressure campaign in Donbas during the winter of 2020 and into early 2021. Ukraine is preparing to withdraw more forces from portions of the Donbas frontline as part of the Kremlin's preferred peace process.²⁵ The Kremlin's proxies in Donbas abused a similar November 2019 Ukrainian withdrawal by conducting a false-flag attack in the disengagement zone in January 2020.²⁶ Ukrainian military intelligence reported numerous indicators of Russian escalation in Donbas on October 27.²⁷ The Kremlin likely has increased flexibility to intensify the war in Donbas now that it maximized its gains in local elections.

The Kremlin will likely exploit SoP's poor performance to impair Zelensky's reelection in 2024. The Kremlin will likely exploit the optics of Zelensky's poor electoral performance to amply impressions that SoP's overall influence is decreasing. The Kremlin will likely amply this narrative to pressure Zelensky for concessions and make his reelection as difficult as possible, similarly to how Kremlin information operations targeted former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's reelection campaign in 2019.²⁸ The Kremlin's intensified information campaign against Zelensky will likely coincide with escalating Russian economic, military, and diplomatic pressure campaigns against Ukraine.

The Kremlin will likely attempt to co-opt Ukraine's regional strongmen. Ukraine's decentralization reforms have helped incumbent regional strongmen perform well in local elections.²⁹ The Kremlin will likely attempt to co-opt regional strongmen—such as Odesa's and Kharkiv's mayors—as part of the Kremlin's larger subversion efforts in Ukraine.³⁰

¹ George Barros, Nataliya Bugayova, and Mason Clark, "Russia in Review: Kremlin Escalates in Ukraine While Playing Peacemaker," *Institute for the Study of War*, June 1, 2020, <https://www.iswresearch.org/2020/06/russia-in-review-kremlin-pressure-on.html>.

² "Ukraine's Parliament Approves Date for Local Elections," *Unian*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.unian dot info/politics/local-elections-ukraine-s-parliament-approves-date-for-polls-11075672.html>.

³ ["Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE A.K. Lukashevich at a Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on the Situation in Ukraine and the Need to Implement the Minsk Agreements, Vienna, September 3, 2020"], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, September 3, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4309811; ["Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE A.K. Lukashevich at a Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on the Situation in Ukraine and the Need to Implement the Minsk Agreements, Vienna, September 17, 2020"], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, September 19, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4341548.

⁴ “DNR’ Occupiers Announce Date Transfer of Attack on Joint Forces Positions on September 9,” *Ostro*, September 7, 2020, <https://www.ostro dot info/news/5782/>; “UNIAN: Russia-Backed Separatists Threaten to Open Fire on Ukrainian Positions in Donbas,” *Kyiv Post*, September 6, 2020, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/unian-russia-backed-separatists-threatens-to-open-fire-on-ukrainian-positions-in-donbas.html>; Illia Ponomarenko, “Amid Longest Ceasefire, Ukrainian Soldier Killed in Action in Donbas,” *Kyiv Post*, September 7, 2020, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/amid-longest-ceasefire-ukrainian-soldier-killed-in-action-in-donbas.html>; [“Daily Report No. 186/2020 Issued by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) on 6 August 2020,” *Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe*, August 6, 2020, <https://www.osce.org/ru/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/459364>; <https://novynarnia dot com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/tajmlajn-vtrat-veresen-2020-scaled.jpg>; Facebook Post, *Joint Forces Operation*, September 6, 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/pressjfo.news/photos/a.364697644022858/941355359690414/?type=3&__xts__\[“o”\]=68.ARARXT_3ZoUkLzD6kvQnEqhaUSsKqC44-i4HnKWMudpDsrUm4Inr87aT83m_MyJfXDJ7quEAen03XqKG7HfXagP-SwsKzM9d44G-rr_7K-_fo4M4DNoM4oegEKec-GuWv4VfhEQ8mCWckYQDHJoS2TWq98Rx7d29JQOv8wpTvoM8V3z8cc2nHsqB4aGTIPehDO2PB4lhnRUerOv7aGZOa2YLIANDHa5HOWYqWoG2yPic_bLPG5cltZB-4d9jgzj4UquoLUntgZBcd3axFtf46rFWuVdTfyGivMk9u36rR3iRq2wbiFrqCUy-7oMjTA6UQj2WfLFLVMcob4Ec6aFbRn8](https://www.facebook.com/pressjfo.news/photos/a.364697644022858/941355359690414/?type=3&__xts__[“o”]=68.ARARXT_3ZoUkLzD6kvQnEqhaUSsKqC44-i4HnKWMudpDsrUm4Inr87aT83m_MyJfXDJ7quEAen03XqKG7HfXagP-SwsKzM9d44G-rr_7K-_fo4M4DNoM4oegEKec-GuWv4VfhEQ8mCWckYQDHJoS2TWq98Rx7d29JQOv8wpTvoM8V3z8cc2nHsqB4aGTIPehDO2PB4lhnRUerOv7aGZOa2YLIANDHa5HOWYqWoG2yPic_bLPG5cltZB-4d9jgzj4UquoLUntgZBcd3axFtf46rFWuVdTfyGivMk9u36rR3iRq2wbiFrqCUy-7oMjTA6UQj2WfLFLVMcob4Ec6aFbRn8)].

⁵ [“Exchange of Detainees is Expected in Ukraine in the Coming Weeks – Ermak”], *Gordonua*, August 7, 2020, <https://gordonua dot com/news/war/zhdem-obmena-plennymi-v-techenie-blizhayshih-nedel-ermak-1512700.html>; [“Exchange of Prisoners: Terrorists ‘DPR’ Put Forward a New Condition for Kiev”], *Weekly Mirror*, September 14, 2020, <https://zn dot ua/POLITICS/obmen-plennymi-terroristy-dnr-vydvinuli-kievu-novoe-uslovie.html>.

⁶ “Fake: Normandy Format Meeting Canceled as Ukraine Unable to Keep Its Word,” *Stop Fake*, September 2020, <https://www.stopfake dot org/en/fake-normandy-format-meeting-canceled-as-ukraine-unable-to-keep-its-word/>; [“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a News Conference Following a Video Conference of the BRICS Foreign Ministers, Moscow, September 4, 2020”], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, September 4, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4318038; [“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a News Conference Following a Video Conference of the BRICS Foreign Ministers, Moscow, September 4, 2020”], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, September 4, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4318038.

⁷ “Russia in Review: The Kremlin’s Fake De-Escalation in the Donbas,” *Institute for the Study of War*, February 24, 2020, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia-review-kremlins-fake-de-escalation-donbas>; Nataliya Bugayova and George Barros, “The Perils of Talks on Russia’s War in Ukraine,” *Institute for the Study of War*, December 7, 2019, <http://www.iswresearch.org/2019/12/the-perils-of-talks-on-russias-war-in.html>.

⁸ [“Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry Reveals Term for Holding of Elections in Occupied Donbas”], *112 Ukraine*, November 5, 2020, <https://112 dot international/conflict-in-eastern-ukraine/ukraines-foreign-ministry-reveals-term-for-holding-of-elections-in-occupied-donbas-56234.html>.

⁹ [“Medvedchuk: Ukraine will not Receive a European Vaccine Before 500 million EU residents”], *112 Ukraine*, October 16, 2020, <https://video.112 dot ua/medvedchuk-ukraina-ne-poluchit-evropeyskuyu-vakcinu-ranshe-500-millionov-zhiteley-evrosoyuzaz-334202.html>; [“Medvedchuk on Testing European Vaccine on Ukrainians: Why our People Should Participate in Some Experiments”], *112 Ukraine*, October 16, 2020, <https://112 dot ua/obshchestvo/medvedchuk-o-provedenii-ispytaniy-evropeyskoy-vakciny-na-ukraincah-pochemu-nashi-lyudi-dolzny-uchastvovat-v-kakih-to-opytah-553799.html>; “Kiev is not Ready for Similar Response to Russia’s Partial Lifting of Sanctions: Expert,” *TASS*, October 15, 2020, <https://tass dot com/world/1212709>.

¹⁰ [“Meeting with Viktor Medvedchuk”], *President of Russia*, October 6, 2020, <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/64165>.

¹¹ [“Medvedchuk: Ukraine will not Receive a European Vaccine Before 500 million EU residents”], *112 Ukraine*, October 16, 2020, <https://video.112 dot ua/medvedchuk-ukraina-ne-poluchit-evropeyskuyu-vakcinu-ranshe-500-millionov-zhiteley-evrosoyuzaz-334202.html>; [“Medvedchuk on Testing European Vaccine on Ukrainians: Why our People Should Participate in Some Experiments”], *112 Ukraine*, October 16, 2020, <https://112 dot ua/obshchestvo/medvedchuk-o-provedenii-ispytaniy-evropeyskoy-vakciny-na-ukraincah-pochemu-nashi-lyudi-dolzny-uchastvovat-v-kakih-to-opytah-553799.html>; “Kiev is not Ready for Similar Response to Russia’s Partial Lifting of Sanctions: Expert,” *TASS*, October 15, 2020, <https://tass dot com/world/1212709>.

¹² [“Kravchuk Announced the Impossibility of Fulfilling the Minsk Agreements”], *RIA Novosti*, September 11, 2020, <https://ria dot ru/20200911/donbas-1577116422.html>; [“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Interview to the Trud Newspaper, Published on August 21, 2020”], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, August 21, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4293771; [“Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE A.K. Lukashevich at a Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on the Situation in Ukraine and the Need to Implement the Minsk Agreements, Vienna, 23 July 2020”], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, July 24, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4253600; [“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Interview with RTVI TV Channel, Moscow, September 17, 2020”], *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, September 17, 2020, https://www.mid dot ru/ru/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktnOZLTvbbS3/content/id/4340741; [“Medvedchuk: Zelensky and his Entourage have no Chance of Achieving Peace in Donbas”], *112 Ukraine*, September 16, 2020, <https://112 dot ua/politika/medvedchuk-u-zelenskogo-i-ego-okruzheniya-net-shansov-na-dostizhenie-mira-na-donbasse-550046.html>.

¹³ Turnout in 2020 was very low at 37%. It was 47% in 2015 and 50% in 2020. ["Voter Turnout was about 37% - CEC"], *Pravda*, October 25, 2020, <https://www.pravda dot com.ua/rus/news/2020/10/25/7271179/>; ["The Party of Regions is Leading the Elections"], *British Broadcasting Channel*, November 1, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news/2010/11/101101_elex_morning_is; ["CEC: The Turnout in Local Elections in Ukraine was More than 46%, the Largest -in the west, the smallest – in the Donbas"], *Interfax*, October 26, 2015, <https://interfax dot com.ua/news/general/299004.html>; Adrian Karatnycky, "Zelenskyy's Old New Faces," *Atlantic Council*, August 11, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/zelenskys-old-new-faces/>; Katya Gorchinskaya, "A Brief History of Corruption in Ukraine: The Dawn of the Zelensky Era," *Eurasianet*, June 17, 2020, <https://eurasianet dot org/a-brief-history-of-corruption-in-ukraine-the-dawn-of-the-zelensky-era/>; Ilya Timtchenko, "Which Way Will Ukraine Swing?," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/20/ukraine-zelensky-corruption-russia-european-union/>; Roman Olearchyk and Ben Hall, "Foreign Backers Urge Ukraine to Stand Firm on Corruption," *Financial Times*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/683d7d83-0901-4c66-9256-9e6dd03268b7>; ["Kuzmin: Corruption Scandal with Venediktova Could be the Beginning of Zelensky's Impeachment"], *112 Ukraine*, September 23, 2020, <https://112 dot ua/mnenie/kuzmin-korruptcionnyy-skandal-s-venediktovoy-mozhet-stat-nachalom-impichmenta-zelenskogo-551004.html>; ["The Maintenance of the State Dacha in Koncha-Zaspa, where Zelensky Moved, will cost the Budget UAH 3.5 Million – OP"], *New Time*, August 13, 2020, <https://nv dot ua/ukraine/politics/dacha-zelenskogo-v-koncha-zaspe-na-soderzhanie-dachi-potratyat-3-5-mln-grn-op-novosti-ukrainy-50105852.html>; ["The Dacha. Zelensky Uses State Dacha in Koncha-Zaspa. Schemes #266"], *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 13, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe9oFpSVFAY&ab_channel=%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%96%D0%BE%D0%A1%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0.

¹⁴ "Russia in Review: The Kremlin's Fake De-Escalation in Donbas," *Institute for the Study of War*, February 24, 2020, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russia-review-kremlins-fake-de-escalation-donbas>.

¹⁵ ["Representatives of the "Servant of the People" received the largest number of seats in the local elections – CEC"], *Gordonua*, November 19, 2020, <https://gordonua dot com/news/politics/na-mestnyh-vyborah-naibolshee-kolichestvo-mandatov-poluchili-predstaviteli-slugi-naroda-cik-1528016.html>.

¹⁶ SoP's performance is a key indicator of Zelensky's domestic political support. ["Elections of People's Deputies of Ukraine"], *Central Election Commission*, <https://www.cvk dot gov dot ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>; ["254 Deputies from the "Servant of the People", 124 from all Other Parties and 46 Self-Nominated Candidates Pass to the Rada – CEC"], *Interfax*, July 26, 2019, <https://interfax.com dot ua/news/political/603773.html>; ["Elected Deputies of Local Councils"], *Central Election Commission*, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm002pt001f01=695pt00_t001f01=695.html.

¹⁷ "Ukraine Election: Comedian Zelensky Wins Presidency by Landslide," *BBC*, April 22, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48007487>.

¹⁸ ["Results by Multi-Member Districts,"] *Central Electoral Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>; ["Elections of the President of Ukraine 2019"], *Central Election Commission*, <https://www.cvk dot gov dot ua/pls/vp2019/wp300pt001f01=720.html>; ["Elections of People's Deputies of Ukraine"], *Central Election Commission*, <https://www.cvk dot gov dot ua/pls/vnd2019/wp300pt001f01=919.html>; ["254 Deputies from the "Servant of the People", 124 from all Other Parties and 46 Self-Nominated Candidates Pass to the Rada – CEC"], *Interfax*, July 26, 2019, <https://interfax.com dot ua/news/political/603773.html>.

¹⁹ Some localities are still conducting special run offs in races in which a mayoral candidate did not win more than 50 percent of the vote. Kherson Oblast's elections will likely have to be recounted or redone in some capacity given election authorities declared their results invalid due to election fraud. ["Elections for the Kherson Regional Council: A Court Ordered to Recount Votes in 32 Precincts,"] *Ukrinform*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.ukrinform dot ru/rubric-elections/3132087-vybory-v-hersonskij-oblsovet-sud-obazal-perescitat-golosa-na-32-ucastkah.html>.

²⁰ E.g. The European Solidarity Party and Holos Party.

²¹ Roman Olearchyk, "Ukraine Court Strikes Blow to Anti-Corruption Efforts," *Financial Times*, October 28, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/1567e6e5-247f-42c8-aedb-97c8d36ec653>; Basil A. Kalymon and Oleh Havrylyshyn, "How Ukraine Can Use E-Declarations to Target the Most Corrupt," *Atlantic Council*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/how-ukraine-can-use-e-declarations-to-target-the-most-corrupt/>.

²² ["TV Wool is Getting Bigger. How Medvedchuk and Co. Launched Another Channel"], *Censor*, August 11, 2020, https://censor dot net/ru/video_news/3213069/tvaty_stanovitsya_bolshe_kak_medvedchuk_i_ko_zapustili_ochednoyi_kanal_video.

²³ Medvedchuk submitted a request to Ukraine's Constitutional Court to challenge Ukraine's major anticorruption reforms in August. ["Who are These People. Full list of 47 People's Deputies, at Whose Request the Constitutional Court Adopted a Scandalous Decision on Declarations"], *New Time*, October 29, 2020, https://nv dot ua/ukraine/politics/47-deputatov-verhovnoy-rady-ukrainy-kotorye-podali-v-ksu-delo-o-deklarirovani-spisok-50120798.html?fbclid=IwAR3rxp_7jTDQy4QkM7xmkDOSR78Hvk6k-sKe6LCSokUu8CHY6mtOpaFdcE8; Facebook Post, *Schemes: Corruption in Detail – RFERL*, October 28, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/1014410855259363/posts/3752592144774540/?d=n>.

²⁴ Anna Myroniuk, "Zelensky Convenes National Security Council over Threat to Anti-Corruption Institutions," *Kyiv Post*, October 29, 2020, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/zelensky-convenes-national-security-council-over-threat-to-anti-corruption->

institutions.html; Vladimir Shilov, ["Zelensky Demanded to Dismiss all Judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine"], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 30, 2020, <https://rg dot ru/2020/10/30/zelenskij-potreboval-uvolit-vseh-sudej-konstitucionnogo-suda-ukrainy.html>.

²⁵ ["Ukraine is Preparing a New Withdrawal of Troops in Donbas"], *112 Ukraine*, October 16, 2020, <https://112 dot ua/ato/ukraina-gotovit-novoe-razvedenie-voysk-na-donbasse-553845.html>; Victor Pichugin, "TCG Agreed on New Points of Withdrawal of Troops in Donbas," *Nakipelo*, November 4, 2020, <https://nakipelo dot ua/tkg-soglasovala-novye-tochki-razvedeniya-voysk-na-donbasse/>.

²⁶ "Russia in Review: The Kremlin's Fake De-Escalation in Donbas," *Institute for the Study of War*, February 24, 2020, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-review-kremlins-fake-de-escalation-donbas>; ["Timeline of Ukraine Army Losses: 5 Killed in September After the Longest Period of "Silence"'], *Novynarnia*, October 1, 2020, <https://novynarnia dot com/2020/10/01/timeline-september/>

²⁷ ["Summary of the Press Service of the Ministry of the Defense of Ukraine on the Situation in the Area of the Joint Forces Operation"], *Ministry of Defense of Ukraine*, October 27, 2020, <https://www.mil.gov dot ua/news/2020/10/27/zvedennya-pressluzhbi-minoboroni-ukraini-shhodo-obstanovki-v-rajoni-provedennya-operaczii-obednanih-sil/>.

²⁸ ["Poroshenko said that Ukraine Cannot End the War"] *Regnum*, February 17, 2019, <https://regnum dot ru/news/2574414.html>; ["Poroshenko Again Warned of a Possible War with Russia"], *Lenta*, February 21, 2019, <https://lenta dot ru/news/2019/02/21/porosh/>; ["Lies and Inefficiency: Poroshenko Recalled Failure to Fulfill Election Promises"], *Actual Comments*, January 20, 2019, <https://actualcomment dot ru/lozh-i-neeftivnost-poroshenko-pripomnili-nevpolnenie-predvybornykh-obeshchaniy-1901301339.html>; ["Poroshenko is Fighting Against Zelensky Under the Slogan "Either I, or Putin"'], *TASS*, April 9, 2019, <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/6314396>; Alexander Sharkovsky, ["Ukraine is Again Talking About a War with Russia"], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 18, 2019, https://www.ng dot ru/armies/2019-03-18/100_20071803_ukr.html; ["Cash in on the War": Poroshenko's Income Grew 95 times in one Year"], *Tsar Guard*, April 1, 2019, https://tsargrad dot tv/news/nazhilsja-na-vojne-dohody-poroshenko-za-odin-god-vyrosli-v-95-raz_192134

²⁹ "Local Elections, National Implications: Ukraine at the Ballot Box," *Atlantic Council*, October 27, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-MhUVbanxo&ab_channel=AtlanticCouncil; ["Ukraine, Chernihiv Regional Council"], *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=4847pf769I=4847pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html; ["Ukraine, Odessa Regional Council"], *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=9473pf769I=9473pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html; ["Ukraine, Kharkiv Regional Council"], *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=5441pf769I=5441pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html.

³⁰ "A tour of Odesa's corrupt underbelly," *Kyiv Post YouTube Channel*, December 20, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdMiwWZP9OY&ab_channel=KyivPost; Oleg Sukhov, "Odesa Mob Rule: Leaders in Black Sea Port Have Unchecked Powers," *Kyiv Post*, August 17, 2018, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/leaders-in-black-sea-port-of-odesa-have-unchecked-powers.html>; Tom Burrige, "Ukraine Politicians' Huge Cash Piles Exposed in Reform Drive," *BBC*, October 28, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37785741>; Oleg Sukhov, "Kernes, Kharkiv Mayor, Escapes All Criminal Charges," *Kyiv Post*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/kernes-kharkiv-mayor-escapes-all-criminal-charges.html>; Bohdan Ben, "Scandalous Ukrainian Mayors Prepare to Win. Again." *Euromaidan Press*, September 21, 2020, <http://euromaidanpress dot com/2020/09/21/this-is-why-ukrainians-will-vote-for-old-corrupt-mayors-despite-their-love-for-new-faces/>; ["Ukraine, Chernihiv Regional Council,"] *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=4847pf769I=4847pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html; ["Ukraine, Odesa Regional Council,"] *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=9473pf769I=9473pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html; ["Ukraine, Kharkiv Regional Council,"] *Central Election Commission*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.cvk.gov dot ua/pls/vm2020/pvm057pid112=12pid102=5441pf769I=5441pt001f0I=695rej=opt00_t001f0I=695.html.