

# The Prospects for the new Coalition Government in Ukraine

Although Petro Poroshenko's electoral victory in May was the largest of any president in post-Soviet Ukraine, his electoral bloc failed to gain a legislative majority in October's parliamentary elections. As a result, Poroshenko will continue to rely on the support of a cross-party coalition. A research project at the University of Oxford has explored the consequences of coalitional politics for governmental efficacy and democratic consolidation in presidential systems. The findings of this project illustrate some of the challenges that face Petro Poroshenko.

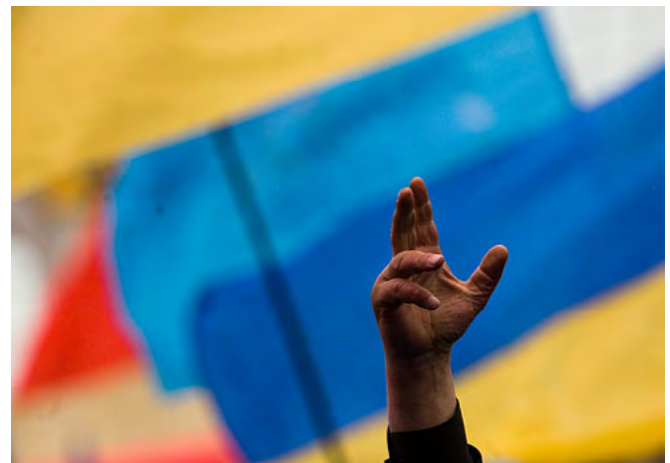


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## Key Findings

- President Petro Poroshenko must construct and maintain a legislative coalition in order to govern effectively.
- In a cross-regional study that includes over 300 legislators, Ukrainian legislators were among the most critical of the democratic costs of coalitional politics.
- The revision to the constitutional provisions of the 2006–2010 period is also likely to create serious governance problems, as this is the arrangement that MPs believe created the weakest form of coalition politics.

## Policy conclusion

Lacking a parliamentary majority, and without the power that his predecessor Viktor Yanukovich enjoyed to dictate the terms of the governing coalition, President Poroshenko faces significant institutional obstacles. At a time of severe social, political and economic turmoil, caused largely by conflict and instability in the east of the country, the decision by Ukraine's new political elite to revert back to the constitutional amendments of 2006–10 is likely to create serious governance problems. According to our survey research, MPs considered this constitutional variant to produce the weakest form of coalitional politics.

## Policy context

In emerging democratic systems across the globe, presidential parties frequently lack the majorities that presidents need to dominate legislatures without sharing power with other parties. They have responded by forming coalitions, which has produced a trade off. On the one hand, presidential coalitions have mitigated the conflicts that might be expected between presidents and assemblies. It has therefore contributed towards political stability in many countries, and has strengthened the policy decisiveness of presidents. Yet, on the other hand, the dominance of presidential coalitions has produced democratic costs, which could create longer-term problems for presidential regimes. In particular, it has undermined the accountability of executives to legislatures.

## Overview of project

Researchers from the University of Oxford have conducted the first cross-regional study of coalitional presidentialism. With the assistance of research consultants based in nine countries across three regions – Brazil, Chile, Ecuador (Latin America); Benin, Malawi (Africa); Armenia, Russia, Ukraine (Former Soviet Union) – they surveyed and interviewed over 300 MPs in government and opposition on their experience of coalitional rule.

## Project findings

The trade-off between presidential decisiveness and democratic accountability is pronounced in Ukraine. The survey conducted in 2011-2012 – at the height of Viktor Yanukovich’s rule – found that 96% of all Ukrainian respondents (coalition and opposition MPs) “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that presidential coalitions increased legislative decisiveness, while only 30% “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that presidential coalitions enhanced democracy. On both questions, Ukrainian MPs were at far end of the spectrum of responses.

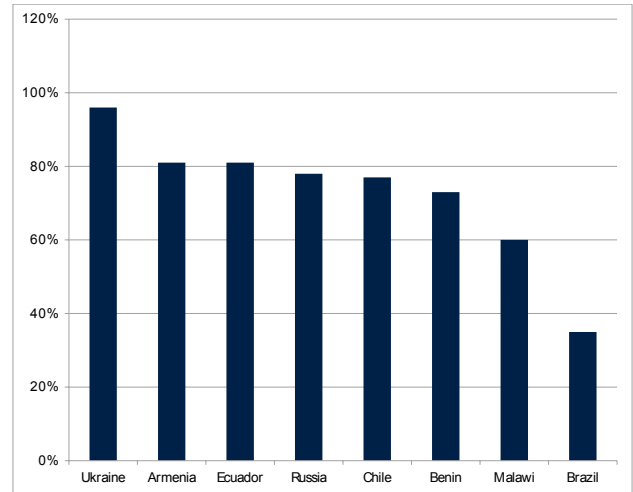


Figure 1: MPs who “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that presidential coalitions increased legislative decisiveness

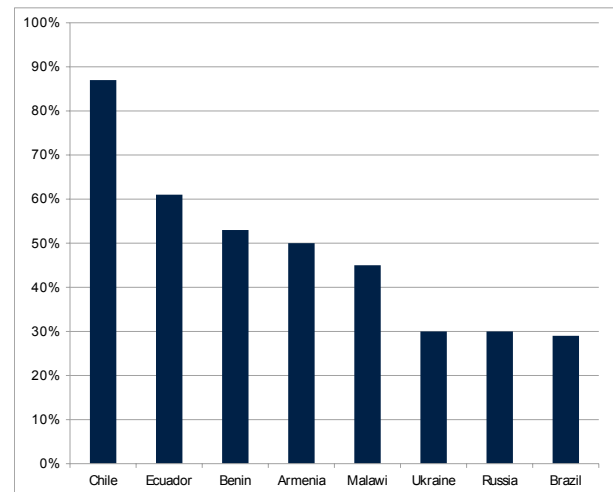


Figure 2: MPs who “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that presidential coalitions enhanced democracy

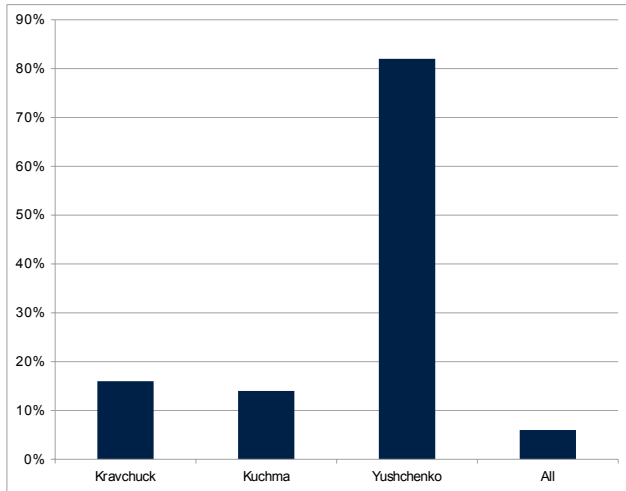


Figure 3: Which Presidents were ineffective coalition managers?

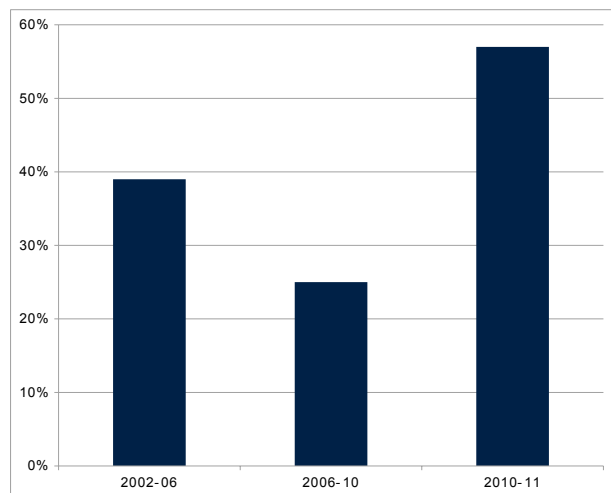


Figure 4: Percentage of executive bills enacted

Having also served since 2007, this cohort of Ukrainian MPs was well placed to compare periods when the president was (2010–2012) and was not (2006–2010) the principal formateur of legislative coalitions. In their opinion, presidential efficacy is likely to fall when the prime minister also has formateur powers, as is the case today. MPs overwhelmingly (82%) cited Viktor Yushchenko, who was in power during the 2006–2010 period, as the most ineffective coalition manager since independence.

During the Yushchenko presidency, the effectiveness of the executive in getting policy enacted reached its lowest point. As Figure 4 shows, the percentage of executive bills signed into law during the Yushchenko presidency was half that of the 2010–2011 period, when Ukraine reverted to the old constitutional arrangements. It is therefore clear that to have a successful presidency, Poroshenko must do what Yushchenko could not.

**For more detailed information**

For further information on the project, including references to other publications, see: [www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/presidentialism](http://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/presidentialism)

**Information about the Principal Investigators**

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