

Russia planning to falsify 2019 Ukraine elections, SBU says **Ukraine**

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Analyst: "Poroshenko is more interested in a Russian-oriented parliamentary opposition emerging rather than a pro-Western progressive opposition that is oriented towards a faster pace of more radical reforms. In that context, we view the SBU official's comments as a possible pretext for authoritarian methods that are increasingly common for the Poroshenko administration."

KYIV, Nov 29, 2017 - Russian intelligence services are developing a plan to falsify the 2019 elections in Ukraine, Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) Deputy Head Viktor Kononenko told a forum in Kyiv on Nov. 28, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. "The main threat today is a disruption of the situation from within," he said. "The main efforts of the Russian intelligence services are directed inside the country. No one believes in a quick and lightning-fast war. They all are counting on replacing the government by means of vote-buying and agreements. A complex effort is being conducted in preparation for the 2019 elections." The SBU is currently working to disrupt these plans, he said. If presidential elections were held this week, 9.8% of Ukrainians would vote for President Petro Poroshenko, 8.8% would vote for pro-EU populist Yulia Tymoshenko, 7.4% would vote for intellectual pop star Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, 5.7% would vote for Russian-oriented oligarch Yuriy Boyko and 5.6% would vote for pro-EU reformer Anatoliy Grytsenko. If parliamentary elections were held this week, 9.7% would vote for Tymoshenko's Fatherland party, 9.4% for the Solidarity Poroshenko Bloc, 6.4% for Boyko's Opposition Bloc, 6.2% for Grytsenko's Civic Position and 5.7% for the Russian-oriented For Life party led by Vadim Rabinovich. The poll was jointly conducted by four leading Kyiv polling firms between Oct. 28 and Nov. 14 of 20,000 respondents. Presidential elections are tentatively scheduled for March 2019, while parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 2019. Zenon Zawada: As we stated in our political report released on Sept. 21, Russia's decision to extend its campaign of military aggression in Ukraine will largely depend upon the results of the 2019 elections. If a Russian-oriented parliamentary opposition emerges, which we believe is a more likely possibility, then Russian President Putin will gain new momentum to extend the aggression, achieve Ukraine's capitulation and return the territory under his control. Moreover, European politicians will gain even more excuses to relax sanctions by then. Where we disagree with the SBU is that Russia will employ methods other than vote falsification to skew the elections in favor of their candidates. These include intensifying the warfare in Donbas throughout 2018-19 in order to persuade the public to vote for Russian-oriented candidates calling for immediate peace. Another method are mass media reports calling for the need to renew economic cooperation, which are already being broadcast. The poll figures reveal that a lot of falsification won't be necessary. Two of the five parties that can qualify for parliament are Russian-oriented and capable of forming the parliamentary opposition with their combined vote. Moreover, Poroshenko is more interested in a Russian-oriented parliamentary opposition emerging rather than a pro-Western progressive opposition that is oriented towards a faster pace of more radical reforms. In that context, we view the SBU official's comments as a possible pretext for authoritarian methods that are increasingly common for the Poroshenko administration.

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