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US Officials Paint Ukraine Vote as Defeat for Russia

By Jason Ditz

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While the jury is still very much out on what kind of President Petro Poroshenko will end up being, Obama Administration officials are quick to paint his election as a rebuke to Russia, with Secretary of State John Kerry presented Poroshenko's victory as a vote for a "united Ukraine."



Kerry went on to declare Ukraine's future lied with "European institutions," and not Russia. The eastern oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, both dominated by ethnic Russians, by and large were not able to vote.

Obama declared Poroshenko's victory a "first step" in Ukraine's west-ward march, while Rep. Ed Royce (R – CA) presented it as a "big setback to Vladimir Putin."

Presenting Poroshenko as solidly pro-West may be wishful thinking on the administration's part, as the billionaire has served in governments across the political spectrum in Ukraine, including the last elected government, whose violent removal was cheered by the US.

Russia isn't acting as though this is a defeat either, and they have expressed eagerness for direct talks with Poroshenko to restore normal relations. Though at the moment Poroshenko seems to be leaning West, his history is one of changing whenever it was to his political advantage, and right now even those who voted for Poroshenko are likely less clear on what they voted for than what they voted against, as the runners-up were largely more pro-West, and hawkish.