

# Justin Cooper Northwestern University - Extemp

📅 Thu, 3/12 10:37AM ⏱ 10:31

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

european union, ukraine, explains, russia, election, laughter, backgammon, fish, relationship, ukrainians, involved, eu, policy proposals, april, people, vladimir putin, commodities, european, european nations, brookings institution

## SPEAKERS

Justin Cooper



Justin Cooper 00:19

Volodymyr Zelensky is a pretty typical presidential candidate for Ukraine in their upcoming April 21 elections. A former comedian turned random politician with no experience and no policy proposals is probably going to win. (Laughter)



Justin Cooper 00:35

Typical by 2019 standards. And one group that's pretty worried about this is the European Union. Der Spiegel, a German magazine, explains on March 13 of 2019, that as Zelensky moves closer and closer to defeating Petro Poroshenko, the current president of Ukraine, many in the European Union are worried that this will allow Ukraine to move closer into Russia's sphere of influence, because Zelensky supposedly has a strong relationship with Vladimir Putin. Now, many in the European Union are worried about this, because as Stratford Global Intelligence explains on April 2, 2019, not only for the past decade, has the European Union tried to get Ukraine to join them, but at the same time, it pushes this nation, Ukraine, further and further away from democracy. For the sake of democracy across the globe, it's imperative that we ask ourselves today's question, should European nations actively campaign against Volodymyr Zelensky so that Ukraine doesn't drink into Russia's sphere of influence? And the answer is definitely not. Because that would only

exacerbate the current geopolitical conundrum for three specific reasons. First, because many in Ukraine are tired of EU puppeteering.



Justin Cooper 01:58

Second, because the relationship between Zelensky and Putin really isn't that strong. And finally, because the European Union may actually benefit from a slightly stronger relationship between the Ukraine and Russia, under a Zelensky administration.



Justin Cooper 02:17

So you guys remember from your childhood when your dad would tell you to clean your room, and you would go? "Yes, Father, of course." (Laughter.)



Justin Cooper 02:25

That never happened. In fact, you'd say, "You're not my real dad," and run away and do the opposite. (Laughter)



Justin Cooper 02:32

Exact geopolitical situation we're seeing today. (Laughter)



Justin Cooper 02:37

The first reason why the European Union should not get involved in this election is because Ukrainians are tired of the European puppeteering. We saw this throughout Petro Poroshenko's regime. As was explained by The Hill on January 21, 2019. One of the largest problems for Ukraine is that the European Union kept trying to implement their own policy proposals, especially surrounding cyber security and election meta-law, and as a result, many Ukrainians had a poor disposition when it comes to the European Union. The Brookings Institution explains on April 3 of 2019, that in their most recent attempt to stop election meddling, even though there was no election meddling in Ukraine at all, many European nations decided to get involved anyway. And the people of Ukraine took to the streets, claiming that they would meddle in the election and cause corruption just to spite the European Union. The people of Ukraine don't want the European Union getting involved. And if they were to get involved when it comes to Volodymyr Zelensky, and the upcoming April 21 elections, they would go in the exact opposite direction, they would begin to vote for Volodymyr Zelensky, even if that's not what the European Union wants, making it clear that the EU should not get involved.



Justin Cooper 03:54

But the second reason that the European Union should not get involved in this upcoming election is ultimately because the relationship between Zelensky and Putin, really isn't that strong. Now, the only reason that people in the European Union believe this relationship is strong, as *The Economist* explains in just last weekend's edition, is because the two once had a game of backgammon. Back in 2017. I've played backgammon with many people and I would not call any of them my best friends. (Laughter) The European Union to believe that a Zelensky administration would move into Russia's sphere of influence, and if the European Union were to get involved, it would be completely mundane.



Justin Cooper 04:38

Furthermore, as was explained by the *Wall Street Journal* on February 15, 2019, if the European Union were to get involved in this election, then it wouldn't only signal to Zelensky that maybe he should get involved with Russian politics. After all, the European Union is so worried about it. It's clearly a hot button issue. And Zelensky like Trump, just wants press. It's clear that the European Union should stay out of this because their relationship isn't even that strong, and it's actually decreasing in strength. The Center for Strategic and International Studies explains on April 1 of 2019, that in the last three attempted meetings between Putin and Zelensky, Zelensky canceled at the last second, probably because he doesn't trust Vladimir Putin. It's clear that the EU should just stay out, because it's not clear that there will be a stronger relationship between Russia and Ukraine if Zelensky is elected.



Justin Cooper 05:34

But the final reason why Zelensky and the European Union should not actually get involved in this election is ultimately because a stronger relationship between Ukraine and Russia under the Zelensky administration might actually benefit the European Union. It was Bruce Jones, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution explains in his 2019 book, *Fish Wars*, the European Union has a major problem with the commodity, fish. You see with Brexit looming Great Britain makes up nearly 70% of the fish market for the European Union, especially within Southern and Western Europe. And as a result, they need as much fish as possible to remain within their own borders. This is exactly where the Ukraine comes into play, because as the Council on Foreign Relations explains on March 17 of 2019 if Ukraine were to move into Russia's sphere of influence, economically, which is what this Zelensky administration would likely do, not politically, then they would move towards Russia on other commodities, like fish and fish isn't the only commodity that matters here. The Peterson Institute for International Economics explains on March 21, of 2019 that other

commodities, like copper and nickel, are also very rich in Southern and Western Europe, but not so much in Northern and Eastern Europe. And so they want to keep that insular to their own countries, rather than being forced to export into the Ukraine. So when we return to today's question, should European nations actively campaign against Volodymyr Zelensky so that Ukraine doesn't drift into Russia's sphere of influence. The answer is clearly no, it would worsen the problems. First, because Ukrainians are tired of EU interference. Second, because the relationship between Putin and Zelensky really isn't that strong. And finally, a strong relationship between Ukraine and Russia might actually be a good thing for the EU. (Applause)



07:34

Great speech, just a few questions for your left brain. Starting off with your intro. You say that Poroshenko didn't exactly have a relationship with Putin, and Zelensky could have a stronger one what exactly did Poroshenko's relationship with Putin look like.



Justin Cooper 07:47

It. As I mentioned, it was not a good relationship at all and every single time that Vladimir Putin tried to enter that the Ukrainian sphere of influence, it only exacerbated the situation that people in Ukraine do not want Russia to interfere anymore. Which is why they're rooting for Zelensky.



08:03

Okay, perfect. Moving on to your first point. Yes, the European Union is getting way too involved in Ukraine, however, isn't Russia also getting involved? They literally invaded Ukraine.



Justin Cooper 08:14

Weirdly, the Ukrainians don't mind Russian involvement nearly as much as they might European Union involvement. I didn't get into this in my speech, but in a poll taken by the by the Real Clear Politics on January 21 of 2019, the people of the European Union actually reported that they would rather have the European Union- they would rather have Russia involved in their own political economy than the European Union by a 71% to 53% margin.



08:40

Perfect. So you also talked about how you've played badminton with people and you're certainly not friends with them.



Justin Cooper 08:45

Yeah, backgammon.



08:45

Backgammon, excuse me. (Laughter) Well, you're also certainly not Vladimir Putin, who we know to be a very secretive politician who knows what him and Zelensky talked about over that game and couldn't this potentially be the seeds of a friendship between the two.



Justin Cooper 09:00

Oh, absolutely, the two could be best backgammon buddies for years. But remember, this was before the Zelensky was involved in politics at all. Furthermore, he canceled the last three meetings, as I mentioned in my speech, meaning that Zelensky doesn't really want a strong relationship with Putin.



09:16

Building off of that couldn't Zelensky, be trying to distance himself, from Putin before the election happens, in order to try to make friends with all the people who are going to be voting against him.



Justin Cooper 09:25

I mean, he might be doing that, but that's just guesswork. It's more likely that he's distancing himself because he wants to distance himself.



09:32

Perfect. Let's move on to your third point.



09:33

So you talked about the European Union and Ukraine can actually make up some of the issues of Brexit by buying fish from Russia. However, the United Kingdom has very specific fish markets, namely cod that they're famous for. Does Russia have a similar fish market are they just both have fish?



Justin Cooper 09:34

So I think we're a little bit confused about what I was talking about. In the point I didn't say that they would buy more Russian fish, but rather than they wouldn't have to sell to Ukraine as much because Ukraine could rely on Russian fish markets rather than just European fish markets.



10:02

Perfect.



10:03

Also moving on within this point, you also talk about how they are going to be able to sell copper. What exactly does the market for copper in Ukraine look like?



Justin Cooper 10:11

Well, it's not so much that there's a huge market for copper in Ukraine, which is why I focused on fish. But that's just one of a variety of commodities that the European Union wants to insular to their own countries to avoid the opportunity cost associated with international trade.



10:25

Thanks, great job.



Justin Cooper 10:26

Thank you. (Applause)