

Outside View: Operation Stop Orange Revolution-2

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WASHINGTON, July 27 (UPI) -- WASHINGTON, July 27 (UPI) -- Ukraine's sixth parliamentary election campaign begins Monday for an election on the last Sunday of October. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich seeks -- and will probably receive -- a parliamentary majority to assist his re-election for a second term in three years' time.

Permitting the opposition to control Parliament is not an option for a president who has a track record of overseeing five election frauds since the late 1990s as Donetsk governor, prime minister and president.

If the opposition were able to secure control of Parliament they might succeed in freeing Yulia Tymoshenko and other political prisoners. Tymoshenko, who only lost by 3 percent to Yanukovich in a 2010 presidential election, would be a formidable opponent who could most likely defeat Yanukovich in the 2015 elections.

Ukrainian authorities have devised a 10-point strategy to ensure there is no repeat of the 2004 mass protests that became known as the Orange Revolution from the color of opposition banners.

This includes three strategies to increase support for the Party of Regions.

Social populism, including a "luxury tax" on Ukraine's wealthiest, was unveiled in March and aimed at the party's core working class and pensioner voters. Yanukovich's social populism outshines any of the measures attributed to Tymoshenko who has traditionally been accused of populism in Ukrainian politics.

This month authorities unveiled a second strategy of using the Russian language card when the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a controversial and divisive language law that led to riots on Kiev's streets and hunger strikes.

The new law undermines the constitutional status of Ukrainian as the country's state language and serves to further Russia's strategic goals of reintegrating Ukraine into the Eurasian cultural world.

A third strategy undermines the authorities claim to be reformers by promoting the Communist Party in Ukraine's tightly controlled media. The Communists have been Yanukovich's coalition partners on three occasions in the last decade and traditionally capture disgruntled Party of Regions voters.

An additional seven strategies undermine the opposition and make a mockery of Ukraine's elections because they are not being held on a level playing field.

Ardent Orange revolutionaries such as Tymoshenko and former Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko have been imprisoned and removed from elections for the next decade.

The opposition does not have other leaders capable of taking on Yanukovich while more pliant opposition leaders have been bought and blackmailed to remain "constructive."

Two former presidents, Yushchenko and Leonid Kuchma, have been pacified by threats of criminal charges for corruption and abuse of office.

Every political party, including the Communists, in Ukraine receives its main funding from big business. The jailing of prominent opposition leader Tymoshenko sent a signal to big business that they could no longer play

all sides and fund opposition political parties who are, as a result, cash-starved.

Surveillance of Western foundations similar to that undertaken in Russia is growing. The U.S. Embassy in Kiev and international foundations promoting democracy, such as Germany's Adenaur Stiftung, the International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute, have received similar letters from the prosecutor's office requesting information about which civil society groups they fund.

The investigations have been initiated by Party of Regions Deputy Vadym Kolesnichenko, who is vitriolic in his Soviet style anti-Americanism and is co-author of the language law. Democracy funding foundations have reported a massive growth of KGB-style surveillance of their activities by the Security Service of Ukraine -- known by the initials SBU -- outside Kiev during the last two years.

Law enforcement bodies, which are already massively overstuffed, have been given additional financial resources and personnel. In the Orange Revolution the authorities lost the streets to protesters when most law enforcement bodies defected.

Law enforcement is under the tight control of what has been dubbed "The Family," individuals who are personally loyal to Yanukovich and from his home region of Donetsk. The chairman of the SBU, minister of Defense and head of the presidents bodyguards are Russian citizens.

The SBU, Interior Ministry and military have been given additional powers to deal with popular unrest. New legislation, also drafted by Kolesnychenko, is modeled on that adopted in Russia and seeks to allegedly combat "terrorism" but in reality is meant to provide a fig leaf of legality to fight against the opposition under the guise of combating "extremism."

Funding for the Prosecutor-General's office, which has been at the forefront of imprisoning opposition leaders, is set to grow by a whopping 83 percent.

The cost of law enforcement bodies in maintaining order is set to grow by a staggering 50 percent. Funding for the SBU is set to expand by nearly 10 percent and the Foreign Intelligence Service -- SZR -- will grow in size by 800 personnel.

With a planned 4,000 personnel the SZR are an anomaly in a country that has little external intelligence capability and many of its seasoned officers will no doubt be used in surveillance operations against the opposition. With 30,000 officers the SBU has five times more officers than the combined British MI5 and MI6 while the SZR is larger than Britain's MI6.

Ukraine's state institutions have been undermined. Parliament has been transformed into a rubber-stamp institution, heavy political intervention into the judiciary has made the rule of law non-existent, the Supreme Court has been marginalized and the Constitutional Court is manipulated and corrupted.

Finally, censorship of oligarch-controlled television has reached an all-time high. Ukraine's last vestiges of independent media are being stamped out this month when the authorities closed independent media outlets such as the last remaining television channel TVi and Internet newspaper Left Bank.

With opposition leaders unable to participate in Ukraine's October election it will be difficult to describe them as conforming to democratic standards.

Operation Stop Orange Revolution-2 points to a more fundamental problem that the United States and Europe faces of Yanukovich not upholding democratic and European values.

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