



UKRAINE: Hrytsenko aims to reshape civil society

Tuesday, April 7 2009

An Oxford Analytica Profile

SUBJECT: A profile of Anatoliy Hrytsenko, influential parliamentary deputy and possible 'kingmaker' in Ukraine's October presidential election.

SIGNIFICANCE: Hrytsenko is one of a number of relatively young leaders whose popularity is growing at a time when established politicians have been discredited. Regardless of the outcome of the presidential election, he will remain a key figure in civil society and defence policy-making for the foreseeable future. [Go to conclusion](#)

ANALYSIS: Anatoliy Hrytsenko is unique in Ukrainian politics: he has a deep military background, has attended Western training courses and fellowships, speaks fluent English and has published books and academic articles in Ukraine and abroad. He has combined a military and political background with 15 years of analytical and research experience in the Defence Ministry, National Security and Defence Council (RNBO) and Kiev's leading think tank, the Razumkov Centre.

Hrytsenko's academic research focused on democratic civilian control of the armed forces, and he pioneered the study of Ukrainian civil-military relations as a visiting scholar in the Netherlands and, later, as a NATO fellow. He has also written on military reform in Ukraine.

Defence reformer. As such, Hrytsenko was uniquely qualified to serve as defence minister, a position he occupied under two 'Orange' governments (February 2005-August 2006), as well as the government of opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich (August 2006-December 2007). However, Hrytsenko fell out of favour with presidential secretariat head Viktor Baloha, and as a consequence, was not nominated again during the formation of Yulia Tymoshenko's second government in December 2007.

As minister, Hrytsenko implemented defence reforms with a view towards building a professional military, and was instrumental in the preparation of the state programme that continues to guide defence development ([see UKRAINE: Defence reform faces formidable challenges - April 7, 2005](#)). The areas he focused on while defence minister included:

- adopting NATO best practices in armed forces education, training and readiness;
- strengthening the Ukrainian military's morale; and
- streamlining the system of command and control by creating the Joint Operational Command and reforming military logistics and acquisitions on the basis of market standards.

Rising star. Hrytsenko's popularity has grown in line with other 'rising stars', such as former parliamentary Speaker Arseniy Yatsenyuk ([see UKRAINE: Yatsenyuk capitalises on public discontent - March 6, 2009](#)). However, although the two are often compared, there are a number of strategic and political differences between Hrytsenko and Yatsenyuk:

- **Civil society focus.** Rather than launching a new political party, Hrytsenko has established a civil society organisation, Civic Initiative. This reflects his belief that Ukraine already has too many parties, many of which are 'virtual' -- that is, created by political technologists and lacking a substantive electoral base. Hrytsenko's emphasis on civil society also arises from his tenure as director of the Razumkov Centre.
- **'Kingmaker'?** Hrytsenko has not yet said whether he will stand in the October presidential election; if he runs, he claims that a realistic aim will be to come third. This could make Hrytsenko the kingmaker in the second round, when the top two candidates will face off. This strategy is reminiscent of the path followed by another former defence minister, Yevhen Marchuk, in the 1999 election, when he supported then-presidential candidate Leonid Kuchma and was rewarded with the position of RNBO secretary.

Milestones



- Anatoliy Hrytsenko is a former air force officer who attended a number of military and civilian training programmes in the United States and Europe.
- For six years, he served as president of the Razumkov Centre, Ukraine's premier think tank, which provided extensive analytical support to President Viktor Yushchenko's 2004 election campaign.
- After the election, he served as defence minister in three successive governments, and championed military professionalisation, defence reform and strengthening Ukraine's relationship with NATO.
- Over the last 18 months, Hrytsenko has emerged as a fierce critic of Yushchenko's attempts to centralise authority. While he favours a strong presidential system, he has also called for Western-style democratisation and separation of powers, as reflected in the agenda of his newly created civil society organisation, Civic Initiative.

Photo via Wikipedia.

- **Independent strategy.** Unlike Yatsenyuk, who is close to President Viktor Yushchenko, Hrytsenko is a critic of the president and has refused to join any government as long as Yushchenko remains in office. Hrytsenko has ruled out creating a joint bloc with Yatsenyuk, though he has considered allying with former boxer and current Kiev city council deputy Vitaliy Klitschko.
- **Executive authority.** Hrytsenko is among a small minority of parliamentary deputies who support returning the country to a presidential system of governance. Ukraine had a presidential system from 1996 to 2005, when reforms came into effect that transformed the government into a combined presidential-parliamentary system.

Democratic presidentialism. Hrytsenko's support for a strong executive stems not only from his military background, but also from observing Yushchenko's lack of leadership ([see UKRAINE: Coalition collapse threatens stability - September 5, 2008](#)). He has emphasised the need for a single authority figure who takes upon himself (or herself) responsibility for the government's decisions. Hrytsenko has also been critical of Yushchenko's use of the RNBO and presidential secretariat as 'counter-governments' to undermine the prime minister and cabinet of ministers. He believes this strategy of obstruction -- along with Yushchenko's infringement (or at least loose interpretation) of the constitution and Ukrainian law -- has only strengthened support for a parliamentary system of government, especially within Tymoshenko's bloc (BYuT).

However, Hrytsenko is careful to draw a distinction between strong leadership and authoritarianism. He described the proposed creation of a BYuT-Party of Regions grand coalition in September 2008 as a "bulldozer" which, although beneficial in breaking the logjam in parliament and government, could also be a threat to democracy. In his parliamentary role, Hrytsenko has blocked Yushchenko's efforts to consolidate control over the security forces, including by transferring military hardware to the presidential guard and re-establishing a National Guard under the president's direct and exclusive control. Hrytsenko is critical of the continued politicisation of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), and has condemned the president's appointment of anti-Tymoshenko businessman Valeriy Khoroshkovsky as SBU first deputy chairman.

Future plans. Civic Initiative has announced it plans to contest local and national elections in 2012, especially if Hrytsenko is successful in reaching third place in this year's presidential election. If Tymoshenko were to seek his support in the second round, she would do so with the firm knowledge that Hrytsenko could become a challenger in the 2012 parliamentary and 2014 presidential elections.

Civic Initiative's strategy, influenced by Hrytsenko's tenure at the Razumkov Centre, aims to build a cohort of around 100 leading activists who could enter senior government, parliamentary and executive positions. A second aim is to use the three years until the parliamentary elections to build up a minimum membership of 10,000 activists who could enter local councils.

Civic Initiative supports continued use of the proportional system in national elections (used in the 2006 and 2007 elections), but returning to majoritarian elections at the local level. It has also called for the liquidation of local state administrations that are currently controlled by presidentially appointed governors.

CONCLUSION: Hrytsenko represents a new generation of pro-Western politicians who supported the 'Orange Revolution', but are disillusioned with the political establishment. Hrytsenko's civil society strategy will be more successful than that of building another political party, and his desire for a strong, democratic executive authority will prove popular after years of political inefficacy, persistent crises and the collapse of the Ukrainian economy.

[Return to top of article](#)

Keywords: RUCIS, Ukraine, NATO, United States, Western Europe, **politics**, **social**, **constitution**, **defence**,