

Ukraine's Old-New Siloviki

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The 2006 constitution, like its 1996 predecessor, gives the president the right to appoint the Foreign and Defense Ministers, Chairman of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), Prosecutor-General, and the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council (NRBO). Candidates for the first four posts are subsequently approved by parliament.

The Tymoshenko governments had no deputy prime minister tasked with coordinating the siloviki, unlike the second Viktor Yanukovich and Nikolai Azarov governments. Volodymyr Sivkovich reportedly “has close ties to Russian intelligence services,” claimed Anatoliy Grytsenko, the head of the parliamentary committee on national security and defense (www.glavred.info, March 23). Sivkovich excelled in 2004 and 2008-2009 in heading parliamentary investigations that concluded there was no poisoning of Yushchenko and that suggestions to this effect were part of the “US conspiracy” behind the Orange Revolution.

Four of the siloviki have remained in place from the Yushchenko era. Oleksandr Medvedko, with his career beginning in Donetsk, has been a long serving but completely ineffectual Prosecutor-General –and therefore will be left in his post by the new administration. As Peter Byrne observed in the Kyiv Post (25 March), ‘the Prosecutor-General’s office in Ukraine is where criminal cases go to linger and die, rather than being solved.’”

Raisa Bohatyriova, was appointed as NRBO Secretary in December 2007, only four days after parliament voted for Yulia Tymoshenko’s candidacy as prime minister. The timing was no coincidence as Yushchenko sought to again misuse the NRBO as a counter-weight to the government. Bohatyriova had headed the Party of Regions faction and was expelled from it for disagreeing with Yanukovich’s support for separatism in Georgia (EDM, September 1, 2008). Bohatyriova is aligned with the pragmatic-oligarch wing of the Party of Regions. The administration and government are dominated instead by ideologically anti-Orange individuals, (Azarov) and gas lobbies (presidential head Serhiy Liovochkin). The former seeks revenge for betrayal and personal humiliation in the Orange Revolution (Yanukovich still believes he won the 2004 elections in a free and fair vote).

Meanwhile, the latter seek two steps. First, a return to the 2002-2008 era when opaque gas intermediaries (Eural-Trans Gas, RosUkrEnergo) netted massive and corrupt annual profits. Second, RUE co-owner, Dmytro Firtash, seeks compensation through shares in the proposed gas consortium for confiscated gas estimated at \$2 billion. The domination of these two wings of the Party of Regions is leading to a return to the authorities-opposition conflict lines in Kuchma’s second term.

The Yanukovich-Azarov administration will be tougher towards the opposition, and more willing to use force than was Kuchma. Herein lies the importance of the SBU and interior

ministry (MVS).

The SBU's new Chairman, Valery Khoroshkovsky, is another survivor from the Yushchenko era whose appointment was opposed by six out of ten members of the parliamentary committee on national security and defense. It had opposed Khoroshkovsky's appointment as first deputy chairman, which was seen as a personal affront by Yushchenko (www.glavred.info, March 23). One of the first political steps Khoroshkovsky took was to send SBU Alpha Spetsnaz, to raid Naftohaz Ukrainy in March 2009, in support of Firtash's claim over confiscated gas.

As the Natsionalna Bezpeka i Oborona highlighted, this was the first of two interventions by the SBU into politics during the Yushchenko era (EDM, March 18). The second was the preparation by the deputy head of the presidential secretariat, Andriy Kyslynskyi, of a 300-page dossier on Tymoshenko's alleged "treason." The dossier provided no evidence of "treason," but it had two major ramifications.

First, it was released in early August 2008, and undermined the ability of the democratic coalition to forge a united front on the Russian invasion of Georgia that month, which in turn led to the collapse of the coalition the following month. Second, it sowed seeds of mistrust among the nationalist electorate of Galicia in Tymoshenko. In the 2010 elections, Yushchenko called upon Ukrainians not to vote for Tymoshenko or Yanukovich in the second round, because they were both "Moscow projects," which indirectly led to Yanukovich's victory. Some of Yushchenko's 5 percent vote heeded his call and Tymoshenko was defeated by only 3.48 percent (www.cvk.gov.ua).

As with Khoroshkovsky, Kyslynskyi was promoted to deputy SBU chairman, but lasted only a few months after a scandal erupted over his forged university degrees, showing he had no higher education. Kyslynsky's positions in the secretariat and SBU showed that political appointments require no security vetting.

Interior Minister, Anatoliy Mohylyov, originates from Donetsk, as do ten of the 29 ministers, and headed the Crimean Yanukovich election campaign. His three year term in the Crimea includes insider privatization and land corruption scandals, as well as conflict with the Tatar community. Mohylyov spoke in support of the 1944 deportation of Crimean Tatars, which resulted in a court case on incitement of ethnic hatred initiated by the Tatar Majlis leader, Mustafa Dzhemilyev.

Oleksandr Kuzmuk, a discredited former defense minister, was the favorite for this post, which instead went to Mikhail Yezhel (also a survivor from the Yushchenko era). Grytsenko believes that 57-year old Yezhel, will not bring "strategic thinking" to the defense ministry (MO) or conduct reforms: "Yezhel's business interests will most likely prevail over his task of reforming the armed forces" (*Zerkalo Nedeli/Tyzhnia*, March 13).

Yezhel served as deputy defense minister in 1996-2001, and commander of the Ukrainian navy, but was dismissed by Kuchma in 2003 following a scandal over embezzled assets, and poor living and working conditions for naval personnel (*Zerkalo Nedeli/Tyzhnia*, March 13). In February 2008, Defense Minister, Yuriy Yekhanurov, a Yushchenko loyalist, appointed Yezhel as chief inspector of the MO.

Yezhel's appointment will aim to "rally public support for the extension of the lease for the Russian Crimea-based Black Sea Fleet beyond 2017," due to his close ties to the fleet and support for joint collaboration with the Ukrainian navy (*Zerkalo Nedeli/Tyzhnia*, March 13). Yezhel's appointment, like Foreign Minister, Kostiantyn Hryshchenko, was lobbied by Moscow (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, March 13).

The Ukrainian siloviki includes four from the Yushchenko era (NRBO, Prosecutor-General, SBU, MO) and three who were lobbied by Russia (MO, foreign ministry, and Sivkovych). Russian intelligence influence over the siloviki through ideological, business, and personal ties is extensive, constituting a threat to the continuance of Ukrainian cooperation with NATO and a negative impact on security reform.