



A supporter of jailed opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko carries a symbolic prison bar during a rally of the opposition in Kyiv on April 27. Taras Kuzio argues that the time has come for radical action by Ukraine's opposition to ensure democracy. AFP PHOTO/ SERGEI SUPINSKY

A call to radical action by Ukraine's opposition

Today at 10:27 | Taras Kuzio

After the failure of the Viktor Yushchenko presidency and the onslaught against democracy, national identity and a European future under Viktor Yanukovich, it is time for Ukrainian citizens to understand three factors.

First, Ukrainian politicians will never propose, let alone, undertake policies that are of benefit to Ukraine and society. This means that Ukrainian citizens and civil society should take the lead and undertake “command and control” over politicians, rather than waiting for politicians to propose populist utopias they never intend to fulfill.

Ukrainian politicians never ask tough questions as to why they have lost elections, or why their popularity is not growing after them, or what their personal responsibilities are for bad policies.

Second, following on from this, Ukrainian citizens and civil society need to make the next democratic president undertake a radical course of action across a wide range of long outstanding issues.

Third, there needs to be greater intellectual input by Western experts from academia, think tanks and international organizations into the policymaking process in Ukraine. Ukraine's political elites are provincial, most speak no English, and they are not integrated into European and Western intellectual elites. They remain in essence provincial Eurasians.

Opposition voters should be understood as those who support a forward-looking vision for the country as a democratic, market economy, with the rule of law and integrated into Europe. Four to five years of negotiations on the association agreement with the EU have been frozen because of a banal desire for revenge and fear of Tymoshenko and this is a golden opportunity for European Ukrainians to present a democratic, pro-European

alternative to Yanukovych.

Ukrainian citizens and civil society should make the opposition include in their program a wide set of radical policies that undertake two tasks.

The first is defensive, to prevent another counter-revolution under Yanukovych-2 in the future.

The second is offensive, to ensure the changes that are undertaken by a democratic president are irreversible.

Here are eight radical policies that need to be introduced.

First, democratize and Europeanize law enforcement, remembering Ukrainians will never be supporters of democracy and European integration if they associate state institutions with crime, corruption and injustice.

We need to abolish and replace the neo-Soviet prosecutor's office with a totally new European office. The prosecutor's office is a source of corruption and political repression unconcerned with the rule of law which should not be surprising as in the last decade the office has been controlled by four (!) Donetsk prosecutor generals. Introduce Georgian style reforms with the help of the Council of Europe Venice Commission in the judicial system and undertake a thorough screening and replacement of judges.

We need to dramatically reduce the size of the Security Service of Ukraine, or SBU, which with 30,000 personnel is six times the size of British intelligence domestic and external agencies by reducing it to a more efficient organization that is divided into domestic and external organizations. Ukraine has talked for a decade of creating an FBI-style organization and now is the time.

The Interior Ministry requires the most radical overhaul of all law enforcement structures as currently its police officers do not solve crimes. Amnesty International and the Council of Europe have recently condemned the inflicting of Soviet-era style inhumane torture on inmates. Ukraine should seek Amnesty International and the Council of Europe assistance in humanizing Ukraine's prisons.

A democracy should not have internal troops created by Josef Stalin to fight internal enemies and these need to be returned to a National Guard that existed in the first decade of Ukraine's independence modeled on Italy's elite Carabinieri. Internal troops guarding prisons and colonies should be transferred to the Ministry of Justice and reformed into a prison police service.

And finally, but no less important, change the name from militsia to police - there are no European countries with Soviet militsia.

Second, craft a democratic and European political system, by moving to a parliamentary system at the end of a five-year term of the next democratic president. Change the constitution so that it makes it extremely difficult and severely punishable to introduce constitution reforms.

The number of people working in Ukraine's presidential administration and National Security

and Defense Council are proportionately similar to the number working in the US president's office and National Security Council - and yet Ukraine has one eighth the size of the US population. Employees of the presidential administration and NRBO should be all released from employment and new people should be hired with Western education no older than 35 years of age. They would work for two new smaller presidential staff and NRBO modeled along European and American institutions and have far clearer operating guidelines.

DUS (Derzhavne Upravlinnya Spravamy) is a Soviet institution and source of high level corruption and should be totally abolished. It is time for Ukraine's elites to live like European -- not Soviet elites -- and for those living in state dachas in elite enclaves near Kyiv to pay full market rent. The Mezhyryya palace should be nationalized and returned to the Ukrainian state.

Prime ministers should be technocrats - not political party leaders - with Western higher education and proficiency in the English language.

Abolish the institution of governors, who are sources of corruption and election fraud and duplicate local government (and at the same increase local government powers). Ensure election legislation is changed from a mixed system to open proportional lists and gives voters the ability to recall deputies to halt widespread political prostitution.

The new domestic intelligence service should have responsibility to check the backgrounds of all people who are candidates for office and prevent those with corrupt or criminal pasts from standing.

Political parties that continue to deny that mass crimes against humanity took place in Ukraine should be banned - as Nazi political parties are banned in Germany and Austria. Political parties that have committed treason by destroying and corrupting Ukraine's democratic system and selling out the country's interests to foreign powers should be banned.

Ukraine's talented women are prevented from fully participating in the country's ruling elites as seen in the current parliament where out of 450 deputies only 36 are women - one of the lowest proportions not only in Europe but in Eurasia. In the government there was only until recently not a single woman.

A democratic president should provide affirmative support to women. This could include reserving half of the positions in the presidential secretariat and government for women and supporting changes to legislation requiring political parties to provide a third to a half of places on their election lists to women. Ukraine as a country, as a democracy and as a European country would only benefit from this.

Third, oligarchs and elites, demand they pay one big profit windfall tax to the state and cut back monopolies controlled by oligarchs – it is inconceivable that Russian President Vladimir Putin or any other country would permit one individual to control a quarter of the economy.

We need to end loopholes allowing mass flight of capital to offshore zones and demand EU member states halt their hypocrisy on corruption (especially Cyprus, Britain as well as the Virgin Islands and Belize), Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, Switzerland) by introducing US-style controls over money laundering.

Ukraine's shadow economy of 40-50 percent of gross domestic product has remained constant for two decades – it is time it was reduced to at least Italian style proportions of 25 percent or the European average of 10-15 percent.

A democratic president should understand that he or she can show that he they are truly committed to fighting corruption only when they are ready to support criminal charges against their own people – as well as the opposition. In this way they can prevent accusations of a 'selective use of justice.' Corruption is corruption regardless of who undertakes it.

Fourth, support the middle class, by increasing the contribution of small-medium businesses from 16 percent of GDP to the norm in Europe of over 50 percent. In the last two decades all Ukrainian governments have given preference to big business and oligarchs. It is time a government focused entirely on small and medium businesses and introduced a range of policies to bring about a larger and more self confident middle class. The middle class is the foundation of every democracy, market economy and national identity in European countries.

Fifth, English as a second state language, should be compulsory and taught in all schools, higher education and state institutions, demanding politicians learn English in their first three months in power. It is time to overcome Ukraine's Eurasian provincialism and integrate into European and global intellectual, technical and economic processes.

Sixth, end media censorship, by taking away oligarch control over television channels and with the assistance of NGOs such as Reporters without Frontiers introduce safeguards to prevent a revival of censorship in the event of a Yanukovich-2.

Seventh, integrate Ukraine, by rejecting Yushchenko and Yanukovich's ethnic Ukrainian and Russian and Soviet nationalism. Ukraine has three futures: either a dysfunctional state lacking in national unity, if policies such as those pursued in the last decade persist; to pursue policies that seek a compromise between eastern and western Ukraine or to split the country. We need to pursue nation-building policies that unite, not divide, Ukraine and this requires compromises on both sides of the Dnipro River.

Eighth, pursue European integration, by complying with all the demands of international organizations and European governments, such as freeing political prisoners, so the association agreement will be signed and ratified by the EU. Prove to Europe that Ukraine is committed to full membership of the EU by fulfilling the above radical policies. Hold a referendum at the end of a five-year term of a democratic president on NATO membership.

The Kharkiv Accords were railroaded through parliament and therefore have no legitimacy and should be annulled, returning Ukraine's relationship with the Black Sea Fleet to the 1997 20-year treaty. Any future act overturning the February 2007 law on the gas pipelines that transfers them to Russian control, as in Belarus, should be annulled. A gas consortium with the purpose of the modernization of the gas pipelines should only be created in line with the March 2009 agreement with the EU.

All of these policies touch Ukrainians in different areas because they are radical and are needed to defend against a Yanukovich-2 and to ensure the permanence of Ukraine's integration into Europe. The next democratic president should be a transition president committed over his or her five year term in office to change Ukraine permanently for the better.

The time for radical action is now.

Ukraine and Ukrainians have had enough talk and lies.

Make the politicians listen to YOU, the citizens of the country.

If you agree with the call to radical action in part or entirely sign it and distribute it further.

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