



Tony Soprano is a fictional crime boss on the HBO television drama series The Sopranos; Taras Kuzio thinks Victor Yanukovych's leadership style resembles Soprano's.

So it was Yanukovych and the Party of Regions who were the autocrats after all?

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Never underestimate the role of stupidity and Soviet political culture in Ukrainian politics.

Victor Yanukovych could have had a coalition if he had approached the issue not as he usually does, that is, Tony Soprano style. He did not disappoint.

The Party of Regions undemocratically and unconstitutionally cancelled local elections. They voted for new regulations in parliament that were unconstitutional. Yanukovych turned away Our Ukraine potential coalition partners by his wish to be blessed by Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill. As Kyiv Mohyla-Academy Professor Olexiy Haran wrote in his Ukrayinska Pravda blog: "Kirill's blessing ahead of the inauguration was a demonstrative, political spit in the direction of half of the country's population."

Plus, despite optimistic comments by Western journalists and commentators that he would ignore his most radical election promises, Yanukovych is going full steam ahead in his support for implementing his election promises. These include making Russian a state language, establishing a gas consortium, turning Sevastopol into a permanent Russian naval base, rejecting NATO membership and many others.

I do not believe there will be a new coalition formed, so either Yulia Tymoshenko returns as prime minister with a larger coalition if no coalition is established within 30 days. Or, even better, there will be new parliamentary and localelections to clear parliament of the likes of Volodymyr Lytvyn and others in Our Ukraine who belong to the oldest profession in the world.

A dead souls, individual-based deputies coalition would be a recipe for political instability and would severely damage Yanukovych's reputation at home and abroad. Tymoshenko cannot believe her fortune as this is a repeat of Yanukovych's clumsy and undemocratic tactics in winter 2006-07.

If Yanukovich seeks to install Nikolai Azarov as prime minister this would totally ruin any claim by the president to be a reformer as Azarov is a relic from the former Soviet Gosplan and represents the link to former Communist voters in the Party of Regions. Azarov speaks no word of the state language Ukrainian, meaning he would be prime minister illegally, and his reputation is tarnished when he used the tax inspectorate as a punitive organ under President Leonid Kuchma.

Only 25 Our Ukraine have signed up to a list to agree to take part in talks for a grand coalition. This is only to take part in negotiations. Only 15 of them voted for the March 3 no confidence motion in the Tymoshenko government.

Both of these numbers are small and confirm they do not have a minimum of 37 for a majority to vote to join a new coalition. The 25 include the worst of the Our Ukraine deputies: Victor Baloga's United Center, gas magnate Petro Yushchenko (who sees Tymoshenko as someone who cut his illicit source of income from RosUkrEnergO), Ivan Pliushch (who refused to sign his name in December 2007 to the Orange coalition), and other who have long disliked Tymoshenko for personal, financial or ideological reasons.

I also did not see much enthusiasm from Arseniy Yatseniuk to be a kamikaze prime minister. He must be thinking: Why not sit it out and reenter parliament with my own faction, either this year (if there are pre-term elections) or in 2012?

What is also interesting is that Sergiy Tigipko and Yatseniuk condemned the rule changes that would permit individual deputies to join a coalition. The latter (and even Our Ukraine) said they would never join an unconstitutional coalition.

Yanukovich has done it again and proudly maintained his reputation as Ukraine's Tony Soprano.

Taras Kuzio is a senior fellow in the chair of Ukrainian studies at the University of Toronto and adjunct research professor in the Institute for European and Russian Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. He edits Ukraine Analyst. He can be reached at tkuzio@rogers.com