

Yanukovych Will Ignore Russian Espionage Against Ukraine

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The election of the Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovych as Ukraine's president presents a fundamental shift in the country's national security culture as outlined by his three presidential predecessors. The most important revision will be Yanukovych's, and the Party of Regions, view of Russia as not constituting a threat to Ukraine's national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. There are no national security experts advising Yanukovych of the caliber of Volodymyr Horbulin and Yevhen Marchuk, who headed the National Security and Defense Council (NRBO) from 1994-1999 and 1999-2003 respectively, under President Leonid Kuchma. Horbulin is the co-author of numerous legislative acts pertaining to Ukraine's national security that are pro-NATO and see Russia as a potential threat, including the 2003 law "On Fundamentals of National Security of Ukraine." Following the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, Horbulin continued to warn about the growing Russian threat to Ukraine, threats which Yanukovych and Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov dismiss. The two approaches reflect different regional political cultures (Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk respectively), social classes and educational levels (Soviet nomenklatura, working class) and competing ethno-cultural allegiances (Ukrainian, neo-Soviet). One case in point is their different approaches to Russian espionage and subversion in Ukraine. CIS agreements in 1992 banned conducting espionage between member states, an agreement, like most CIS agreements, that is not adhered to. Unlike Ukraine's three former presidents, Yanukovych and Azarov will likely downplay and ignore Russian espionage activities. An additional factor is Russian military bases. Former President, Viktor Yushchenko, unequivocally saw the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) as a source of destabilization in Ukraine (Ukrayinska Pravda, December 1, 2009). In 2005, Yushchenko and Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, sought negotiations with Russia to prepare for the withdrawal of the BSF

in 2017 (EDM, April 19, 2005). A recent espionage scandal in Ukraine, and the expulsion of two Russian diplomats last summer (EDM, July 31, August 17, 2009), proved Yushchenko's point and as the Ukrainian newspaper Chas Rukhu noted, it "should lead us to think again about whether it is prudent to have Russian military forces on the territory of Ukraine" (Chas Rukhu, February 23). Yanukovych and Azarov do not view the BSF as a source of destabilization, and Yanukovych has repeatedly said over the past five years that he supports the extension of the BSF base in Sevastopol. That this would contradict his 2010 election program of seeking Ukraine's neutrality is presumably, like with Russia infringing CIS agreements, nothing new as Yanukovych's foreign policy has always been duplicitous (EDM, November 12, 2004). Implementing stricter security policies ordered by Yushchenko, the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) began adopting a tougher approach towards Russian intelligence activities in the Crimea and Sevastopol. Responding to these clandestine activities in southern Ukraine, the Federal Security Service (FSB) in the BSF was ordered to leave Ukraine by December 2009, an order with which they complied (EDM, July 14, 2009). Moscow has demanded that the new Ukrainian president re-admit the FSB back to the BSF and "end all cooperation with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)" (Kommersant Vlast, February 22). Russian intelligence activities against Ukraine have continued from bases located near Ukraine's borders. On January 27, four FSB officers were detained in Odessa by the SBU after they attempted to obtain secret military information from a Ukrainian citizen. Another three FSB officers provided support to the operation, while a fourth was an officer from the Operational Group of Russian Forces in Moldova (OGRF). One FSB officer was subsequently charged with espionage, while the remainder were deported on January 30 (www.sbu.gov.ua, February 3). The Ukrainian citizen was an undercover officer in Ukrainian military intelligence ("Ruslan Pylypenko") who was forcibly recruited during an October 29, 2009 visit to Tiraspol in the Trans-Dniester enclave where the FSB claimed he had been undertaking an intelligence mission. "Pylypenko" was illegally arrested, hooded and taken to a Russian base where his life was threatened in order to compel his cooperation with the FSB (www.ukranews.com, February 3). The threat was accompanied by "Pylypenko" being shown FSB

photographs of his family and himself in Odessa taken by Russian intelligence. "Pylypenko," an officer of Ukrainian military intelligence, had played along and arranged a meeting in Odessa on January 27 to hand over secret materials of Ukrainian intelligence operations against Russia (Radio Ukraine, February 3). How seriously Moscow considered the operation was evident when it dispatched the head of the FSB in the OGRV, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, to personally oversee the Odessa operation. After the SBU arrested the Russian officers, he fled to the Trans-Dniestr. Another senior FSB officer, "Vladimir Alexandrov," had flown in from Moscow to help coordinate the operation. During the arrest the SBU found 'a whole arsenal of espionage equipment' that included digital microphones, a mini video camera built inside a pen, a miniature container for storing digital data with instructions for "Pylypenko," a holder for flash drives, and \$2,000 (Infotag, February 4). A mobile telephone memory card belonging to FSB Lieutenant Andriy Khort contained photocopies of classified Russian instructions for informants. The reaction of the Party of Regions to the espionage scandal was the same as when President Dmitry Medvedev sent an inflammatory letter to Yushchenko in August 2009; on both occasions it supported Russia and blamed the Ukrainian side. Prime Minister Azarov accused President Yushchenko of provoking the scandal and thereby adding to the already poor state of Ukrainian-Russian relations (Ukrayinska Pravda, February 2, 4). "We categorically condemn such unfounded accusations," Azarov said (www.proua.com, February 3). The deported FSB officers were banned from entering Ukraine for five years. This followed the practice of placing civilian Russians, such as Moscow's Mayor, Yury Luzkov, banned from entering Ukraine since May 2008, on blacklists because of their subversive activities directed against Ukraine's territorial integrity. Senior Party of Regions deputy, Aleksandr Yefremov, described this as a "stupid practice" and vouched for Luzkov as someone whom "I respect very much" (www.ukranews.com, February 17). Luzkov has been the most vocal Russian supporter of Russian sovereignty over Sevastopol and he attended and gave a keynote speech in support of Eastern Ukrainian separatism at a rally organized by presidential candidate Yanukovich in Severodonetsk in November 2004 (EDM, November 29, 2004 and June 24, 2005). Yanukovich's election signifies a fundamental revision of how Ukraine defines

its national security. An unwillingness to see Russia as any form of threat will have profound implications for Ukraine's foreign policy and could undermine its territorial integrity.