

Dmitry Rogozin's Clan: Visionaries and Executors Behind Aggression Towards Ukraine

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Researching the role, actions and interests of various most powerful officials of the Russian government can provide a glimpse into something more than just the state's decision-making mechanism.

It also allows to at least make assumptions about how aggression against Ukraine was initiated, why it is so "unusual", and why the Kremlin's actions often seem illogical at first glance.

Starting from deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin is a natural choice because, based on a number of facts, this extremely influential power player can reasonably be titled the main visionary and executor behind aggression towards Ukraine.

Title is not everything

In the last essay, which reviewed all the current structures of the Russian government, we have already noted that official positions in Putin's system do not necessarily reflect their holders' true power.

Rogozin's (born in Moscow in 1963) official title is a really influential one. He is the **deputy prime minister in charge of the military industrial complex, nuclear power, shipbuilding, aviation and radio electronics industry, even of the border policy**. Last summer, he was assigned to oversee a number

of state programs related to force structures, so some even started calling him the curator of all the force structures in Russia. Though he is hardly that powerful, his actual influence is pretty well reflected by the title of deputy prime minister that he holds.

On the other hand, there are seven deputy prime ministers in the Russian government. One - Igor Shuvalov - is the first Deputy Prime Minister. But can you say that Rogozin's influence is less than that of Shuvalov who, as mentioned in the previous essay, can be called one of the power centres of the "liberal" wing?

Or maybe Rogozin's powers are just as potent as any other deputy prime minister's? Maybe even comparable to other ministers'? In July's rankings of Russia's most influential politicians, traditionally held by the "Nezavisimaja gazeta" newspaper, Rogozin ranked lower than other Government members: Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (second spot), Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu (seventh place), Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov and First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov. Rogozin was ranked only 14th.

It is difficult to assess the methodology of this popular ranking, but I believe that it does not reflect the true influence of Rogozin and most other players. The reason behind it might be the

fact that this ranking takes into account only the official powers of various individuals without considering their off-the-record influence in various power clans. In the Russian government system, the “shadow influence” can be even more important than the official one. In recent years, Rogozin has strengthened his position significantly.

The power of the “Izborsk club”

The informal influence of Rogozin is well reflected by several formal structures. First of all, Rogozin is the leader of the so-called informal “Izborsk club” which helped unite a big part of influential Russian nationalists.

Truth be told, you won't find Rogozin's name among the club members. He was there at the very beginning of the club, but apparently decided to remain behind the scenes. Even the “Evrazia” portal, which is directly related to Alexander Dugin, one of the leaders of the Izborsk club and nationalist ideologist, wrote after the club's inaugural meeting on 8 September 2012: “The club united such Russian patriots as Alexander Prokhanov, Mikhail Leontyev, Mikhail Shevchenka, Alexander Dugin, Nikolay Starikov, Vitaly Averyanov and **Dmitry Rogozin.**”

On the other hand, the Izborsk club brought together more than just the members of Rogozin's clan. For example, one of its true members is Mikhail Leontyev, vice president of “Rosneft” and PR general at a rival clan, the very powerful group of Igor Sechin. Leontyev still calls himself a journalist.

However, at least half of the Izborsk club member can be considered members of Rogozin's clan or at least his companions. Furthermore, the club's main ideologists, editors of the ultranationalist paper “Zavtra” Alexander Prokhanov and Alexander Dugin, are Rogozin's old comrades from the very early days of the “Rodina” party. And the real founder of the Izborsk club is Sergey Glazyev, a presidential

advisor who is yet another of Rogozin's colleagues and current companions.

The fact that this structure is called a “club” should not confuse one. It is more than just a “think tank” (so common in the Western world) because it has a much greater direct influence on government decisions. Formal or informal representatives of the Izborsk club in the presidential administration include the above-mentioned Glazyev and Putin's assistant Igor Shchyogolev. Apart from Rogozin, the club's ideas are also supported in the government by Vladimir Medinski, the Minister of Culture.

The Izborsk club develops and publishes a wide variety of state development strategies - from defence to economic or social issues. The highlight of the club's presence can be considered the Russian president's infamous “conservative doctrine” that was presented in his address to the Federal Assembly in December 2013. This language was generally written by the Izborsk club, or at least directly influenced by its ideas.

The Izborsk club has also provided the ideological basis for Russia's aggression in Ukraine with their manifesto “Saving Ukraine”, published on 13 February this year (more than a week before the revolution victory in Kiev). The main thesis of the manifesto became part of the public rhetoric of many Russian politicians and diplomats from the outset of the aggression. But we will return to that later.

Return to the power Olympus

The most interesting and eloquent is the fact that Rogozin is like a risen phoenix in the State's political scene. It was Putin's own order (Rogozin has openly complained about it to numerous Lithuanian representatives) to break up and disperse Rogozin's clan less than a decade ago which significantly reduced the clan's influence. And in 2008, Rogozin was sent to political exile when he was appointed as Russia's ambassador to NATO.

Putin's balancing policy in 2011 showed the need of Rogozin's impact on the nationalist wing and the military-industrial complex. As you may recall, after Putin and Medvedev announced that they were "swapping posts" (Putin becoming the president again), an unprecedented wave of protests swept across Russia.

Putin, however, was not threatened by those tens or even hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets of the country's most populous cities. He saw a much greater danger - at the time, the nationalist forces began to work hand-in-hand and coordinate their actions with the protesters that demanded democratic change. And such a union could in fact be potentially dangerous.

That is why, to everyone's surprise, in December 2011 Rogozin was recalled from political exile straight to the post of deputy prime minister. His main task was to rally nationalist forces under Putin's flag. Rogozin's efforts were fruitful and he significantly strengthened his position.

It is important to note that Rogozin's return from exile straight to the post of deputy prime minister could seem surprising only at the first glance. Rogozin was already preparing for his return to the political arena - his comrades were directly (while he himself indirectly) related to the origins of the "All-Russia People's Front". Creating such an organization was suggested by Putin himself back in May 2011. Many speculated as to the need of such an alternative to the ruling "United Russia" party.

Be that as it may, Rogozin (informally at first, and then publicly), supported Putin and the "All-Russia People's Front" in September's remedial meeting of the "Rodina" party. Moreover, Rogozin (who could hardly be called Medvedev's proponent) and a couple of his companions joined the Committee of the Russian president's public sponsors. And according to the quota of the "All-Russia People's Front", he managed to "push" some of

his comrades to the State Duma during December's elections. Some of Rogozin's other companions were elected as representatives of other political parties.

As a result, Rogozin now has a number of influential supporters in Parliament. Among them are Equity Committee Chairman **Sergey Gavrilov** (Russian Communist Party fraction), First Vice-President of the Committee of Defence **Sergei Zhigarev** (Russian Liberal Democratic Party fraction), "Rodina's" Chairman **Alexei Zhuravlyov** ("United Russia"), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the chairman of Duma's legal support for developing military-industrial complex organizations, the Russian president's special envoy for relations with compatriots abroad **Alexander Babakov**, Deputy Chairman of Communal and Religious Organizations Committee **Mikhail Markelov** ("United Russia"), First Vice-President at the Nationality Affairs Committee **Mikhail Starshinov** ("United Russia"), and Deputy Chairman at the Labour, Social and Veteran Affairs Committee **Mikhail Moiseyev** ("United Russia").

Supported by generals

Apart from the aforementioned Minister of Culture, Medinski, Rogozin even has a family-related supporter in the Government. Education and Science Minister **Dmitry Livanov** is the son of Rogozin's brother-in-law Viktor Livanov who died last May and who was once a vice-minister of Russia's military industry and recently held the position of the CEO at Ilushin's Aviation Complex.

Livanon, like many other representatives of Russia's military-industrial complex, has been Rogozin's supporter for a long time. The influence the current deputy prime minister exerts on the military-industrial complex dates back to his **father Oleg Rogozin**. This lieutenant general, military engineer, professor and doctor of technical sciences held a high position in the Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union, and was in charge of the Army.

The truth is that Rogozin is forced to constantly compete for his power over the military-industrial complex, and sometimes literally fight with Sergey Chemezov, another extremely influential leader of a Russian government clan and head of the Russian state corporation “Rostech”.

Therefore, immediately after returning to the power Olympus, Rogozin started to strengthen his position in this area. Using the “All-Russia People's Front”, he created one more very important pillar of his personal influence – the **Special-purpose voluntary movement for supporting the army, the fleet and the military-industrial complex**.

A public relations campaign immediately labelled this movement the “special forces of President Putin”, however, the fact that a very similar organization already exists in Russia for quite some time shows that Rogozin only created it to advance his personal interests, i.e., strengthen his influence.

The movement for supporting the army, the defence industry and military sciences is managed by Vladimir Komoyedov, chairman of the Duma Defence Committee. However, this structure did not work for Rogozin. He created his own and extended this influence not only over the military-industrial complex, but also the army. For example, the Union of Russian Paratroopers now became close allies of Rogozin.

Cossacks and the history of war

Two other important structures to beef up Rogozin's powers in the military or paramilitary field are the **Russian Military-Historical Community** and the **Cossack Affairs Council under the Russian President**. In the first structure, Rogozin was elected the chairman of the board of trustees, while in the second one he is a deputy chairman.

Although Russia's military-historical community might not appear particularly

influential at first glance, the impression can be quickly modified by the list of Russia's military organizations that are official partners of the community. Among its strategic partners are such organizations as the **Russian Military Commanders Club**, and even the **DOSAAF** (Voluntary Society for the Army, Air Force and Navy support) that dates back to the Soviet times. Therefore, it is in fact a crucial tool for expanding Rogozin's powers.

However, in the context of aggression in Ukraine, Russia's military-historical community should grab attention for yet another reason. It is no secret that the leading commander of Russian-sent saboteurs in Ukraine - Igor Girkin (Strelkov) - is not only a former high-ranking officer of the FSB anti-terrorist unit, but also an active participant of the military-historical reconstructions. No need to mention that the Russian military-historical community stages re-enactments of former battles.

Rogozin was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Cossack Affairs Council under the Russian President in February 2012, and in April 2012, he launched a massive validation process for Cossack paramilitary structures. Rogozin's name is linked to the initiative to create a Cossack security service that would patrol with the police and protect public places and even the Russian border.

Many of these initiatives are already legally-established and formally launched. In addition to this, as it is known, Cossacks are among Russian saboteurs warring in the Donbass region.

Much broader influence

All the aforementioned structures illustrate perfectly Rogozin's influence to military and industrial structures or paramilitary groups. However, the influence of Rogozin's clan reaches far beyond these limits.

As noted above, the Izborsk club and the ideology of **Alexander Dugin** and **Alexander**

Prokhanov basically defined Putin's "conservative doctrine". **Glazyev, Mikhail Delyagin** and other economists of the Izborsk club, or at least the ones close to it, try to have a significant impact on Russia's economic policy. The recently retired deputy minister of economic development **Andrei Klepach** is considered to be Rogozin's man. The Ministers of Education and Culture, **Medinski** and **Livanov**, have titles that accurately reflect their influence in those fields.

Rogozin is especially active in the science field. Recently, he proposed that the entire field of science and technology in the country be controlled by the State Committee for Science and Technology, based on the Soviet Union's example. Remembering **Livanov's** previous long struggle against the Russian Academy of Sciences, this proposal does not seem like an impossible dream. Especially having in mind that Rogozin's already had a similar proposal implemented - to create a Russian Military Research Projects Agency (analogous to DARPA) based on the US example. The **Russian Special Research Fund** not only works, but has Rogozin as the chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Even the energy field (which is of exceptional importance to Russia), where the clan of "Rosneft" leader and Deputy Prime Minister **Igor Sechin** competes with **Arkady Dvorkovich's** clan, has a man who is close to Rogozin. That man is Deputy Minister of Energy **Yuri Sentyurin**.

Rogozin's influence is also strong in the regions. Close to him are the governor of Nizhny Novgorod **Valery Shantsev**, Samara leader **Nikolay Merkushkin**, Volgograd Governor **Andrei Bokharov**, Voronezh leader **Alexei Gordeyev**, Chelyabinsk Governor **Boris Dubrovsky**, Kurgan leader **Alexei Kokorin** and others. Among Rogozin's supporters is the president's authorized representative in the Ural federal district **Igor Kholmanskikh**.

Moreover, the Russian president's special envoy to Transnistria **Rogozin** is sometimes referred to, tout court, as the "governor-general". And it perhaps best reflects his influence in an unrecognized territory. It was recently reported that Rogozin met with Transnistrian leaders in Crimea to discuss the collaboration between Transnistria and the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republic (particularly support for them). The structures of the "**Russian Community Congress**" (predecessor of the "Rodina" party) in the post-Soviet space allows Rogozin to retain considerable influence on Russia's policy in this region.

Deep footprints of the KGB

How did Rogozin obtain such power? Some publicly-known facts from his biography can help answer not only this question about the current deputy prime minister of Russia, but also provide a glance at the development of the so-called "siloviki" clans in this country.

It has already been mentioned that Rogozin's father was a high-ranking official at the USSR Ministry of Defence. The biography of the current deputy prime minister could also raise suspicions, especially the fact that he started his career from cooperation with the KGB during the stagnation years, because he became a student in 1981 when **Mikhail Gorbachev's** reforms had not been launched yet.

In fact, Rogozin himself has only talked about his KGB past in vague hints. Allegedly, during his fourth year as international journalism student in Moscow State University, he was recruited by KGB head-hunters. He took the job but informed his recruiter about a long business trip to Cuba. And in Cuba, it is alleged, he was not contacted by anyone.

Rogozin has also acknowledged that, during his work in the Youth Organizations Committee, he had to work closely with representatives of special services, but the KGB is not mentioned anywhere in Rogozin's official biography. Nevertheless, witnesses say that at the very

beginning of his career, many thought that he was working “under cover”. Many publicly available facts support such suspicions.

Moreover, it is important to mention in this context Rogozin’s wife Tatyana, because her father **Genady Serebryakov** was the colonel of the first Board of the KGB (foreign intelligence). However, the clearest and almost undeniable evidence of Rogozin’s connection with the Soviet special service clans is his vice-president position in the so-called **Russian-American University** that he got in August 1990. Oleg Grechenevski, one of the investigators of KGB clans, has aptly called this institution a “chekist-patriotic” organization in his study “The Origins of Our Democratic Movement”.

When reviewing the list of the founders of this so-called University, one gets the impression that many of them are KGB foreign intelligence agents, “under cover” diplomats or servicemen. I will mention only a few. Firstly, the chargé d’affaires in Ivan Silayev’s government, assistant of former vice president Alexander Rutskoy, KGB major general – Alexander Sterligov. By the way, it looks like the entire Russian-American University worked for Rutskoy, at least at the beginning. Apart from Rogozin, Aleksei Bolshov (a colonel at the KGB counter-terrorism units) was also a deputy for the Russian-American University president Alexei Podberyozkin whose official biography also raises many suspicions about his close relations with the KGB.

To this day Rogozin counts among his comrades Andrei Zhukov (“Rodina’s” deputy in the State Duma, employee of the Russian-American University and officer at the first Board of the KGB) and others.

The openness of one mysterious colonel

Many revelations about the development of those clans came to light during the scandalous investigation and trial of the extremist nationalist organization “Northern

Brotherhood”. In January 2014, former KGB colonel **Valery Vdovenko** (who was among the first employees of the Russian-American University) was sentenced to 2.5 years of imprisonment.

Knowing that Vdovenko, according to the prosecution, was suspected not only of creating an extremist organization but also planning a revolution in Russia and a government takeover, the punishment is ridiculously lenient. But the most interesting aspect is the biography that Vdovenko himself presented to the interrogators. This former KGB agent is a son of Zakhar Vdovenko, the former assistant to the chairman of the Soviet KGB, who decided to follow his father’s footsteps and work for the KGB’s first board. However, in 1990, the KGB sent him to the Russian-American University.

In 2003, according to the Vdovenko, it was he who picked his old acquaintances Rogozin and Sergei Glazyev to be the leaders of the **Russian Regional Party**. The founding of this party, as claimed by Vdovenko, was personally overseen by the then-deputy director of the FSB, Vladimir Shults. However, in 2005, Vdovenko admitted to having contributed to the operation of Rogozin’s suspension from the party (which by the time had already been renamed to “Rodina”).

Later Vdovenko created “The Truthful Russia”, which essentially lured away Rogozin’s comrades, many of whom, by the way, are now returning to the camp of the current deputy prime minister. Later Vdovenko allegedly retired from politics. He denies he is the founder of the “Northern Brotherhood”, but Pyotr Khomyakov (who is Rogozin’s former deputy in “Rodina”), the ideologue of the aforementioned extremist organization, claimed that Vdovenko took care of the “Northern Brotherhood’s” funding and promotion.

It is interesting to note that, during the interrogation, Vdovenko kept on naming people who were or still are close to Rogozin at one or another point in his career.

By the way, in this regard, his testimony was at least partially reiterated by Khomyakov. Even **father Vsevolod Chaplin**, the priest and head of the Church and Society Cooperation Department, who became a priest essentially to support “Rodina” and the special-purpose voluntary movement to support the army, fleet and the military-industrial complex, was already visible in Vdovenko’s entourage back then. Bearing in mind the old and close ties between the Russian Orthodox Church and the KGB, those testimonies do not seem implausible.

Consistent ideology

Footprints of Vdovenko and Khomyakov in Rogozin’s biography are also important when it comes to his ideology. True, Rogozin has long been considered a “moderate nationalist”, which might lead to thinking that the turn of former comrades towards extremist nationalistic activities does not reflect Rogozin’s own ideology.

Moreover, some Lithuanian politicians and diplomats, who have interacted with Rogozin during negotiations on transit to Kaliningrad or when he was the ambassador to NATO, seem to have the so-called George W. Bush syndrome. Just like Bush, who once said that he “looked into the soul” of Putin and saw that it was possible to cooperate with him, many Lithuanians also believe that Rogozin, a charismatic Russian nationalist, can be a reliable partner.

Even now, when Rogozin has publicly come out as the leader of the so-called “war party” in Kremlin, there are people in Lithuania who think that this is an unexpected role for him. But looking more closely, it must be admitted that Rogozin’s ideology has always been consistent. It can be called aggressive nationalism.

During the 1990s, Rogozin’s “Congress of Russian Communities” took care of the rights of Russian speakers in the entire former Soviet Union using methods that were not entirely innocent. Rogozin, together with former

companion general **Alexander Lebed**, had an important role in detaching Transnistria from Moldova. With this in mind, Rogozin’s activities and rhetoric should not come as a surprise. For example, he posted a Facebook message saying he wanted to “give up all his posts in exchange for the happiness to be in the trenches with Slavyansk defenders”.

Similar ideology can be perceived in the “Russian Doctrine” which, according to Rogozin, was published back in 2005 by Izborsk club members **Andrei Kobayakov**, **Vitaly Averyanov** and **Vladimir Kucherenko** (better known as **Maxim Kalashnikov**). Knowing that they are all Dugin’s followers, we can draw a conclusion that the standpoint of this ideologue behind Evrasia, Russian nationalism and conflicts with the US was always similar to Rogozin’s views.

Stay tuned for the next chapter which will uncover the real architects behind events in Ukraine and why Putin’s actions often appeared controversial.