

Aggression in Ukraine: What Consequences Await Its Architects?

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In the first article about Dmitry Rogozin's clan, I discussed how this clan developed and gained strength. However, in the context of aggression against Ukraine it is crucial to focus attention not just on Rogozin and his clan's ideology or rhetoric.

There is plenty of publicly-available information that allows one to make an assumption that this particular clan of Russian government was the main axis of executors and visionaries behind the aggression towards Ukraine.

All strands lead to one point

Let's start with the fact that aggression in Crimea started not at the end of February when it was all over the news, but in the beginning of February. Zhuravlev, the deputy of Duma and "Rodina's" leader who was seen as Rogozin's second-hand, established the "Slavic anti-fascist front" in Crimea. It is important to stress that this movement was created with none other than Sergey Axyonov, the leader of region's "Russian Unity" party who came to power after the Crimean revolution.

Zhuravlev did not even try to mask his plans. According to him, the battle groups were created right away to "fight the fascist gunmen". He also made an announcement about the Parliament's group that would review the decision to give Crimea to Ukraine that was

signed back in 1954 by USSR leader Nikita Khrushchev.

To make it clearer, Russian Parliament did not reject the possibility of Ukraine's disunity: "If Ukraine's government only looks to the West, then the Southeast regions can go their own way". It might allegedly happen that the Western Ukraine joins the EU while the Eastern and Southeast Ukraine joins the Russian-led Customs union. It is known that Zhuravlev tried to apply the same scenario to Odessa and other areas in Ukraine, but did not succeed.

In this context the chronology of Axyonov's "bringing to power" in Crimea is also very eloquent. On February 25 Zhuravlev made a public announcement about the general "anti-fascist reserve" mobilization for protecting Sevastopol and other Crimean cities. Supposedly there was a threat of "Maidan mobsters" seizing the government.

On the same day Zhuravlev flew to Crimea, and on the night from February 26 to 27 the armed men invaded Crimean Parliament and government. After a few hours Axyonov showed up in the Parliament and (supervised by armed gunmen) started inviting its members to a meeting where the Crimean parliament deposed the government of the former frontmen Yanukovich, and Axyonov was appointed a new prime minister.

As stated by Simon Shuster, the “Times” journalist who was observing the situation in Sevastopol and investigating Axyonov’s coming to power, until recently Axyonov had not been seen as a powerful figure in Crimea, yet suddenly he controlled the army of thousands of troops and could be called a “warlord”.

It is now known that the army was directly supervised by Girkin, the same man who was at least theoretically close to Rogozin regarding Russia’s military-historical community. He later became publicly known as the leader of Russian saboteurs in Donbass, and then was appointed the Axyonov’s deputy for security.

Independent observers in Crimea state that Parliament and government buildings were occupied by the Girkin’s so-called “self-defense squads”, and Russian army troops came to help much later - just ahead of the so-called referendum on Crimea’s accession to Russia.

It is also worth remembering that Axyonov’s father was the leader of the “Russian community” party in Moldova and the active instigator of the Transnistrian separatism. He personally participated in all the events in Transnistria. A then-young Russian politician Rogozin, as mentioned, was not only famous for his support for the “Russian communities” in all the former Soviet republics, but together with General Lebed had a significant impact on region’s separation from Moldova. It can therefore be assumed that Rogozin has long been personally acquainted with Axyonov’s father, if not the Axyonov himself.

Alexander Borodai, who was the prime minister of the so-called People’s Republic of Donetsk and the former advisor of Crimean prime minister Axyonov, and who resigned in early August and was deeply involved in all the aggression not only in Donbass together with Girkin, is an old comrade of Rogozin’s clan member, “Zavtra’s” editor Prochanov, the author of the magazine and the partner in various other projects. Moreover, Borodai is

officially mentioned among the experts of “Russian doctrine” that was prepared according to Rogozin’s request.

Ukraine's Security Services has no doubt that at least part of the Russian aggression against Ukraine was financed and organized by the Orthodox billionaire Konstantin Malofeyev. At the beginning of the bloody battles in Donbass they even recorded and published Malofeyev’s phone conversation with Girkin where they discussed the course of aggression.

It is alleged that after the withdrawal (some say it was not completely voluntary) from the Federal Security Service anti-terrorist units, Girkin found shelter under the wing of Malofeyev’s security structures. Borodai also worked for Malofeyev - it was confirmed by the Russian oligarch himself. And the “Orthodox billionaire” himself is not only Dugin’s ideological follower, but also the sponsor of his activities - at least the ones overseas. At the beginning of May, it was Malofeyev who funded the congress of Dugin and various European radicals (from the President of the French National Front Marine Le Pen to the Austrian Freedom Party leader Heinz Christian Strache and other similar figures) in Vienna. Malofeyev is one of the biggest sponsors of Father Tichon (who seems to be close to Putin), the real member of the Izborsk club.

On March 12 this year (before the so-called referendum) daily newspaper “Kommersant” reported that Crimea is funded through three Russian funds. One of them is managed by Malofeyev, other - by the CEO of Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin, and the third is generally referred to as an inter-regional public organization “Veche”. When one looks at “Veche’s” founders, it is clear that the organization is closely related to people who are close to Rogozin’s clan - the co-owner of “Rostelmash” and other related business units Konstantin Babkin, Mikhail Delyagin and Maxim Kalashnikov. Later the relation between these funds and Crimean funding was confirmed by other sources as well, although

their managers and owners kept on insisting that the funding was for humanitarian and charity purposes only.

Malofeyev's longtime partner is Schiogolev, Putin's assistant who is close to "Izborsk club". In addition, it is known that Malofeyev has been associated with Sergey Ivanov, the son of the head of President's administration, and a leader of yet another influential Russian government clan that is close to Rogozin.

In the high-profile scandal regarding the purchase of Rostelekom two names resonated loudly - Malofeyev and Ivanov Jr., who was then one of the "Gazprombank" managers. But some sources stated that the scandalous transaction was generally conducted not in favor of Malofeyev or Ivanov Jr., but the head of the current presidential administration - Ivanov Sr.

Some sources say that at the beginning of Crimean aggression Rogozin presented Ivan Demidov (who also works in President's administration, and is a former TV reporter) as the direct curator of the operation.

Positions separated after Crimea

Although there is enough data that allows to assume that Rogozin's clan was the main architect and executor behind the aggression towards Ukraine, almost all other powerful "siloviki" clans joined the subject of Crimean annexation. First was the clan of yet another military-industrial complex representative Chemezov, then the clans of Russian Railways CEO Vladimir Yakunin (his comrade is Sevastopol's "people's mayor" Alexey Chaly) and former Prime Minister, current Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Head of Foreign Intelligence Yevgeny Primakov, the group of Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu, the clan of the Head of the Presidential Administration Sergey Ivanov, and even Sechin's (CEO of "Rosneft") clan that is often regarded as the most influential.

Due to the potentially too high economic price of Crimean annexation, the so-called liberal clans did not approve such actions from the very beginning. However, they did not protest too much in the light of Crimean events. But it looks like only Chemezov's and Ivanov's groups supported Rogozin's desire to occupy the whole Eastern Ukraine. All other "siloviki" groups at least partially joined the "liberals" who were loudly demanding not to get involved in this adventure in Donbass that is costly in all senses.

It can be assumed that Putin's position started to change clearly because Rogozin's comrades were fighting in Donbass. He recognized the newly elected president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, called separatists not to hold a referendum on the status of the region and did not (unlike the Crimea) recognize its results, and started the peace talks.

It can be assumed that this is why Dugin, the main promoter of public key military intervention in Ukraine, was removed from the post in Moscow State University, and his supporters as well as himself are now rarely invited to Russian TV channels. Perhaps this is why Girkin's discredit campaign has been launched, and it started to seem like Russia was supporting the terrorists with one hand, and fighting them with the other.

After a terrible shoot down of Malaysian liner these trends were particularly highlighted. Both Ukraine and Russia began to loudly discuss the possibility that Kremlin might have ordered the liquidation of all of the key terrorist leaders who arrived from Russia. Coincidentally (or so it seemed), shortly after that, they all retired from official posts, and gave way to the locals - Donetsk and Lugansk separatists.

Can a clan weaken again?

The logic of the existence of Russian government clans dictates that in the future it can be expected that Putin will gradually weaken Rogozin's clan, especially having in

mind that the competing clans will undoubtedly strive for that.

Truth be told, even the very influential Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu fails to cut off a piece of cake on Rogozin's account. Last autumn Shoigu tried unsuccessfully to become the First Deputy Prime Minister that would directly supervise Rogozin, and in May he proposed to eliminate "Rosoboronzakaz" which is an important power component of Rogozin's influence on the military-industrial complex. But the attempts have not been successful yet.

It can be assumed that the plans of Shoigu who, by the way, has bigger personal Putin's trust than Rogozin, fails to succeed because of the union between Rogozin and Ivanov (his power especially emerged in recent years). This association probably formed from Rogozin's, Ivanov's and Chemezov's common battle against the former defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov. Although Putin has long defended this particularly unpopular minister, the aforementioned trio eventually provoked a scandal which left Putin no choice but to dismiss Serdyukov.

Truth is, Chemezov should be seen more as Rogozin's competitor than companion, despite the fact that he is another representative of the military industrial complex. Current Deputy Prime Minister constantly encroaches to Chemezov's influence spheres.

Lately Yakunin's clan has grappled a lot with Rogozin regarding the models of Russia's future developments since "Izborsk club" together with Igor Cholmanskich's (Putin's authorised representative in the Ural federal district) "Tagil club" announced the idea that all further development of Russia must be based on the military-industrial complex development. Yakunin responded with his "project" - all further development of Russia, he said, should be based on the infrastructure development of the Eurasian space. None of these grandiose plans would satisfy Sechin, who, of course, is very pleased with the country's current dependence on energy.

And the so-called "liberal" clans that initially warned about a high price of the military adventures in Ukraine will definitely try to take advantage of Putin's pragmatism. Now that the economic and political price is emerging after the horrific Malaysian airplane shoot down (and it will have to be paid by Russia's oligarchs and the aforementioned clans), the "liberal" power should strengthen - at least theoretically.

However, sudden breaks are not to be expected. The fight is far from over.