



Ukraine is heading for a civil war. Ukrainian political scientist Yuriy Romanenko in an interview for DespiteBorders.

Juraj Marušiak | 14.10.2008

Ukrainian journalist and political scientist Yuriy Romanenko is the Director of the Political Analysis Centre Stratagema and the head of special projects of the centre [Glavred](#). He's at the same time the editor-in-chief of the internet portal [Polité](#). In an interview for DespiteBorders, he speaks of one of the possible alternatives to Ukrainian future.

Why have BYuT and People's Union – Our Ukraine proved to be incapable of forming a coalition of democratic forces for the second time, although they acted as allies during the “Orange Revolution”?

They are rivals in their quest for power. They have been competing for presidential post. It was clear from the very beginning and therefore no peace can be between them.

President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko accuse each other of being involved in early elections. Who actually wants these elections, which will be the third in the course of last three years?

Objectively, nobody needs early elections in the current situation. Yushchenko hasn't got political power which would guarantee him an acceptable result. Our Ukraine will obtain 4 – 6 per cent, which is two times less than in previous elections. Furthermore, a part of its membership has defected to Tymoshenko, for instance, the Interior



Minister Yuriy Lucenko. New political projects, for example, the Speaker of Parliament Arseniy Yaceniuk's party or United Centre headed by the chief of vice-president's office Viktor Balog etc., haven't been developed so far. That's why Yushchenko risks that owing to early elections he will have lower representation in the Supreme Council than nowadays.

Tymoshenko faces two situations. On the one hand she may lose her post of prime minister and enfeeble her positions on the eve of presidential elections in the aftermath of early elections, but on the other hand Ukraine has been awaiting a massive economic crisis which will have implications for all spheres in 2009. It means that a considerable share of responsibility will be born right by Tymoshenko, which may affect her chances to become a president.

To put it simply, Tymoshenko comprehends that she cannot lose a year. At present, she has chance of winning parliamentary as well as presidential elections and therefore she wants that they're held simultaneously.

Party of Regions is in a tricky situation. They followed Tymoshenko because they haven't any clarified strategy. They often prefer to follow more experienced political partners. This was the case of Oleksandr Moroz and Konstantin Symonenko in 2006. Today, it's Tymoshenko's turn. However, they really risk that Tymoshenko destroys them as a political party if she gains absolute influence on executive power. That's why the supposed scheme, according to which Tymoshenko would hold the office of prime minister and Yanukovych the office of the Speaker of Parliament, amounts to a trap for them in principle, but the leadership of Party of Regions cannot understand this. The most important sponsor of the party and concurrently its top representative Rinat Akhmetov isn't willing to collaborate with Tymoshenko. Nonetheless, on 2nd



September, 2008, his people upheld laws by means of which presidential competences were restricted. Thus Akhmetov pursued the weakening of Yushchenko in order to obtain stronger positions when negotiating with him. All in all, if Tymoshenkova grows stronger the party may disband. They haven't a strategy, they aren't united and they will dissolve immediately after Tymoshenko wins the fight for power.

Yushchenko cannot expect that thanks to the popularity, which he has been enjoying nowadays, he will be elected for his second term of office in presidential elections. He even cannot count on the participation in the second round of elections. What could change his situation? How will he pursue his re-election?

Yushchenko has two options. The first one is to conduct a coup d'état through the dissolution of the Parliament, the arrest of Tymoshenko and her adherents and their conviction and imprisonment. Early parliamentary and presidential elections would be held concurrently. The destabilisation of the situation in Crimea in the aftermath of terrorist attacks may be an impulse. This isn't a fantasy but a completely real scenario which has been discussed in presidential palace. It was discussed in many Ukrainian media as well.

The second variant is the appointment of successor. The only potential candidate capable of winning presidential elections is the former Defence Minister Anatoliy Hrycenko, but he's on bad terms with Yushchenko. Nevertheless, he's supported by the US, which press Yushchenko to back his candidacy and accept responsibility for all failures during his rule. Yushchenko has been refusing it meanwhile.



In your opinion, is the return of the Party of Regions along with Yanukovych as the prime minister or the president conceivable?

Most probably not. Tymoshenko has been currently playing the first fiddle and she won't surrender the executive power to Yanukovych. Yushchenko will accede to this neither because there's no point in strengthening a rival in presidential elections. There's no logic in it.

What is Russia's role in the current crisis? To what extent are accusations that Tymoshenko is Russian ally and that she forges close ties with former presidential office chief during Leonid Kuchma's era Viktor Medvedchuk, who pushed through close cooperation with Russia, trustworthy?

Accusations of collaboration with Medvedchuk attest to the fact that people around Yushchenko have lost contact with reality because most of people don't care at all who is linked to whom. Everyone is tired of chaos. Russia's role is the same like the one of the US. It tries to control Ukraine from outside via loyal political forces. The fact that it has staked on Tymoshenko is real and logical. Party of Regions hasn't accomplished its mission and Tymoshenko is the most real potential victor. That's why the Russians strived to get a head start. They know very well that Tymoshenko will abandon them after the victory, but they don't expect either that she will abide by agreements. It will be sufficient if she destroys the most odious figures. This pertains particularly to Yushchenko and Yanukovych, so that a new generation of pro-Russian politicians can go into orbit around Ukrainian politics.

Apart from the Communist Party of Ukraine, no left party exists in Ukraine at present, although Ukraine was the only state of the Commonwealth of



Independent States in which a socio-democratic party was represented in the Parliament. Following the failure of the Socialist Party of Ukraine in the last elections, is there a chance of forming a new left-centre party?

Economic crisis will cause that new forces with leftist and nationalist orientation enter the scene. The crisis will lead to position radicalisation and therefore the time for leftist and rightist radicals is coming up. Their time is yet to come. Big parties and blocs formed yet during Kuchma's era will take centre stage in the course of next one and a half year. However, their time is nearing the end. Their inability to react flexibly to challenges, which have become up-to-date at disastrous speed, have directed Ukraine towards the edge of an abyss. It reminds of Spain in 1936 – 1939 to some extent and unfortunately, Ukrainian politicians have forgotten about the Spanish lesson.

We are very likely to experience the battle of authoritarian projects that will include ideological components in their programs. That's why leftist parties are sure to enter the scene. These won't be classic leftist parties without real prospects, but such ones with nationalist tone. It's evident that at present, when the country's destiny has been decided on with such urgency like never before, it's necessary to react to the national question. External frameworks marked by global economic crisis and the escalation of geopolitical battle lead to self-determination. It's an either-or situation - we will decide on self-determination, we will decide on who we are and why we live in this territory and what our mission is or Ukraine will lose its subjectivity and stronger players will divide it among them.



Is it possible to divide Ukraine into western and south-eastern part? Can the recognition of the Russian language as the second state language prevent this?

It's possible and it depends on external factors to a large degree. If Ukraine isn't able to stabilise innerpolitical situation, sooner or later stronger neighbours, i.e. Russia and the EU, will make decision on state division. Germany and Russia have often proved that they can find a compromise as for the question of the sphere of influence division in Eastern Europe. One has also to take into account US efforts to prevent the origin of continental alliance between Germany and Russia. Therefore Washington considers it a priority that Eastern Europe remains a buffer zone between the EU and Russia. That's why the US will try to play their game in Ukraine whose task within the "divided Europe" project remains pivotal. This will spark countermeasures of Russian side, which perceives Ukrainian change into American ally to be fatal danger. If Russia and the US don't reach agreement, the war for Ukraine will be under way in the hardest and most radical shape. It means that both sides will pursue the radicalisation of the situation in Ukraine via their players. Therefore the question of Ukrainian division is connected with Ukrainian elite's capabilities of consolidating own ranks and taking responsibility for the country and creating an efficient state, also with authoritarian features in current stage if necessary, as well as with the necessity for an agreement between global players, i.e. the US and Russia. This agreement is a must because the battle for Ukraine may lead the world to a nuclear war. I'm not dramatising the situation because one has to grasp that for the US and Russia, the moment of truth has come. The US has to keep on advancing into Eurasia in order to preserve hegemony, whereas Russia mustn't allow the Americans into this room in order to survive. This has nothing in common with ideology, this is rank geopolity.



The question of language has an operational character in this situation particularly when we consider the conditions of a great economic crisis where millions of people have been losing their jobs. It is state government problems which take first place and not official language problems. The language issue is to be solved if the Ukrainian language preserves the status of a state language and the Russian one isn't limited, which the Yushchenko administration attempts. Many people are aware that language disputes and similar questions serve solely for provoking conflicts which are supposed to conceal stealing, corruption and inefficient government. The crisis discloses the whole of these problems. In 2009, Ukraine will have to pay 60 billion dollars. Furthermore, metallurgical production has been suspended and construction industry as well as the entire country faces financial and technological collapse. What language do we want to talk about now when Ukrainian existence itself is at stake?

How will the current political crisis in Ukraine end up according to you?

There will be a civil war in the course of next three or four years. The war will stand for a reaction to the elite's incapability of surmounting system difficulties sharpened in the aftermath of global depression. Tymoshenko is most likely to win presidential elections and sweep aside useless figures like Yushchenko and Yanukovych. However, she isn't a builder but a destroyer. Therefore the problems will grow more severe in the context of the disputes between the US and Russia. Subsequently, non-systemic radical political forces will rise to the surface escalating the situation in the country. The probability of a civil war will reach 80 per cent in the medium term.



Have you got any notion how to avoid the pending civil war?

By the arrival of new players in Ukrainian policy, ideally one player. In other words, we are sure to buckle under the conditions of new world division if there's double rule in Ukraine. Strong capital failed to optimise the rule over the country. On the contrary, oligarchs, who weren't able to come to an agreement, have led the country to an eternal spiral of self-destructing fight.

The existence of a single power centre, which would restore quickly the work of the effective vertical and stabilise the country, is needed. Ideally, such a force should be a political party since other institutions, which would be capable of fulfilling the task of a stabiliser, like the army in Turkey, don't exist. In other words, Ukraine is in need of its Franco, Kemal or Salazar at the moment in order to stop the process of state decay. In fact, it's about the establishment of a new state – the third republic, which will be rid of the deficiencies and traumas of contemporary Ukrainian state. This party must gain popularity quickly and after it obtains 51 per cent, it has to conduct a restart of the state. Present constitution must be abolished and a new one constituted via the Crisis Act. This would transform Ukraine into a presidential republic in which the head of state bears all responsibility for executive power. He or she should constitute the government, answer for foreign policy etc. The president is supposed to act as a sovereign who harmonises relations among diverse social groups, or rather, financial and industrial groups.

The Parliament is to transform into a two chamber one and also regions will be enlarged. Thus the influence of regional barons will be enfeebled and the governability of the country improved. Following the adoption of new constitution, any amendments to it will be banned for ten or fifteen years. Concurrently, the reform of



administrative and criminal law will be conducted and also punishments will be made considerably stricter. Since corruption is a key problem, by establishing a special census, the death penalty is to be imposed for this crime when committed in large extent. Aside from this, flexible punishments in the form of community service would be imposed. This would enable to include thieves and public order transgressors in infrastructure reconstruction.

It's necessary to apply neo-Keynesian reforms in economic area. The objective is to establish a strong home market that would facilitate the restart of economy. Therefore it's needed to carry out new demanding projects, for example, the construction of a new capital town, the reconstruction and development of the whole infrastructure and the re-armament of the army, which would fit in with the active neutrality concept. There are sources for these projects mainly due to the fact that Ukraine has been losing external markets under the conditions of the crisis. That's why oligarchs show interest in upholding such a regime.

In your opinion, how should the country's foreign policy look like under the conditions of global rivalry which Ukraine is the subject of?

NATO integration is to be rejected in terms of foreign policy. Ukraine shouldn't be a hostage of the conflict between Russia and the US. Since NATO represents the most thorny issue for Russia, it's to be stamped out and Russia must be enabled to solve the dispute with the Americans in other places in Eurasia, for instance in Caucasus and Central Asia. May them fight in territories where they're successful, but not in our territory. This variant is fully acceptable for Russia because it facilitates cost optimisation for the increase of defensiveness as Russian sources are more than limited at present. Europe approves of similar variant too since the question of



Russian conflict won't be topical any longer, but the US will hold similar scenario back because it's interested in tension growth on Russian borders.

The focal role of Ukrainian foreign policy under the circumstances is to avert its involvement in a big war. Ukraine should take part in this war only if it is necessary and not prior to its second stage, like Romania in 1916.

The massive re-armament is supposed to deflect the threat of any attack. Ukraine is able to produce missiles and not only those. We're capable of producing nuclear weapons as well if such a political decision is made. Anyway, Ukraine can pose a forbidding threat, which can be ignored neither by Russia nor by the EU, also without nuclear weapons. Gas pipelines, nuclear power plants and other strategic objects lie in its territory. Should the threat of an attack arise, Ukraine may blackmail Russia as well as Europe.