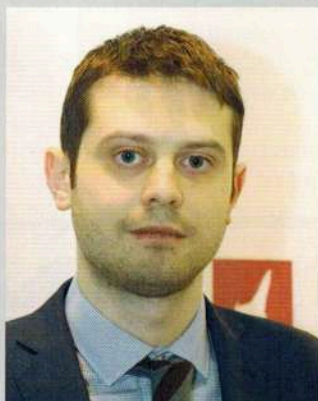


# Viewpoint from Kiev



## Ukraine Takes another Step Forward to Reform the Intelligence Sector

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Last September, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) passed a bill No. 2412-d "On Intelligence" intending to put in order the legislation regarding the intelligence bodies, clarifying the oversight over the intelligence agencies, and excluding the Leviathan-like Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) from the "intelligence bodies". This legislation is necessary for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and crucial for reforming Soviet-inherited intelligence services.

A year after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Verkhovna Rada decided to establish the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) that de facto became the successor of the omnipotent KGB since inherited the means and structure of the Soviet secret service.

Unlike Soviet military intelligence – better known as the GRU – the Ukrainian GUR MO is a subdivision of the Ministry of Defence, not the General Staff of the Armed Forces. The GUR MO, also known as Unit 0515 or the "Island", was established mainly out of Kyiv, Odessa, and Carpathian Military Districts, as well as the Air Defence Forces, the 17th Air Army, and parts of the Black Sea Fleet staff.

In October 2004, to reduce the role of the all-powerful SBU on the one hand, and to balance the intelligence services' activities on the other, the new intelligence body – the Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) – was established. This new agency was born out of the Main Intelligence Directorate "R" of the Security Service of Ukraine with 4,350 staff, including 4,010 military officers.

Despite the construction of Ukraine's intelligence sector, the ties with Russia on official and personal levels remained close. But the 2014 Russian aggression and annexation of Crimea brought new security realities and brought Kyiv to decrease the cooperation with Moscow, albeit gradually.

The de facto intelligence cooperation between Kyiv and Moscow ceased in 2014. However, it was only in 2018 that President Poroshenko declared an official end, denouncing the agreement on intelligence cooperation with the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Despite the efforts, the Ukrainian intelligence apparatus remains associated in people's minds with the Russians. Last summer, a new Head of the SZRU was appointed by President Zelensky, filling the void left by the previous administration. The appointment of the intelligence heavyweight Valery Kondratyuk may suggest that the Bankova (Presidential Office) expects, on



Photo: President.gov.ua

**In 2018, the Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service began pulling out of the post-Soviet CIS Intelligence Services Cooperation Agreement of 1992.**

the one hand, the agency to yield better results, and on the other hand, to establish the SZRU as the leading intelligence agency.

The new bill "On Intelligence" was signed by President Zelensky into law on 21 October 2020. According to this law, only the "intelligence body of the Ministry of Defence", in other words, the GUR MO, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the "intelligence body of the State Border Guard Service", have the right to carry out intelligence activities.

At the same time, according to this law, the Security Service of Ukraine remains under a relatively new term for Ukrainian legislation as an "intelligence community" and sees its duties reduced mainly to counter-intelligence activities. However, the new bill "On the Security Service of Ukraine", that intends to replace the current law regulating the SBU that dates back to 1992, would be challenging to adopt, taking into account the divergence of positions and other, controversial aspects.

Even though it is obvious that Kyiv is struggling to find balance and to overhaul its Soviet legacy in the intelligence sphere, the process will take more time. It will be difficult for the SBU to see its powers, its staff and the field of operation reduced.

Another challenge that Ukraine has yet to overcome is continuing the process of "cleaning the Augean stables" within the intelligence community. This work is crucial not only for Ukraine's national security but also to secure the trust of their Western colleagues that would lead to better cooperation.