



Soviet conspiracy theories and political culture in Ukraine: Understanding Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions

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ABSTRACT

Conspiracy theories in Ukraine draw on inherited Soviet political culture and political technology imported from Russia where such ideas had gained ascendancy under President Vladimir Putin. Eastern Ukrainian and Russian elites believed that the US was behind the 2000 Serbian Bulldozer, 2003 Georgian Rose and 2004 Orange democratic revolutions. The Kuchmagate crisis, impending succession crisis, 2004 presidential elections and Orange Revolution – all of which took up most of Leonid Kuchma's second term in office – were the first significant domestic threats to Ukraine's new, post-communist ruling elites and in response Ukraine's elites revived Soviet style theories of conspiracies and ideological tirades against the US and Ukrainian nationalism. Opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko became the focal point against which the conspiracies and tirades were launched because his support base lay in 'nationalist' Western Ukraine and he has a Ukrainian-American spouse. The revival of Soviet style conspiracy theories has become important since Viktor Yanukovich's election as Ukrainian president in 2010 because this political culture permeates his administration, government and Party of Regions determining their worldview and influencing their domestic and foreign policies.

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The election of Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovich in February 2010 brought to power in Ukraine the most neo-Soviet political leader since the USSR disintegrated. Soviet political culture and conspiracy theories permeate the Yanukovich administration, government led by (since March 2010) Party of Regions leader and Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov, and parliament where the Party of Regions dominates the Stability and Reforms coalition. In turn, Soviet political culture and conspiracy theories provide a worldview and point of reference for the Yanukovich administration and therefore determines the domestic and foreign policies that emanate from these institutions. The May 2011 riots between Ukrainian and Russian nationalists in Lviv came after parliament voted for the first time in two decades of independence to legalize the use of the Soviet flag alongside the Ukrainian in victory celebrations of the 'Great Patriotic War,' a term the Yanukovich administration returned to after dropping use of 'World War II' (see [Kuzio, 2011](#)).

Soviet political culture and generation are inter-related in the Yanukovich administration because it consists of officials who made their careers in Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and Soviet Ukrainian Communist leader Volodymyr Shcherbytsky 'era of stagnation' during the last three decades of the USSR. The Penta Center for Political Studies found, '8 out of 29 Ministers of the new Cabinet were born in Donetsk or Donetsk region, whereas three more began their professional careers in the region. Furthermore, 16 members of the Government, including Azarov himself, belong to Leonid Kuchma's close surrounding. Therefore, the core staff of Azarov's Cabinet has a Donetsk origin and Kuchma's upbringing. This is the first government in modern Ukrainian history without a woman. Four Members of the Cabinet including Prime Minister and one of the Vice-Prime Ministers are of retirement age; 15 are at the age of 50–59. Only 2 Ministers are in their 40s. Thus, Azarov's Cabinet is conservative in terms of age and managerial experience' ([Analytical report the First Month of Viktor Yanukovich's Presidency](#)).

President Yanukovich views the outside world through Soviet political culture believing, for example, that the Czech government was bribed into giving political asylum to former Economics Minister Bohdan Danylyshyn. Two Czech diplomats were expelled publicly for 'espionage' in May 2011 in retaliation for the granting of asylum. Yanukovich is convinced that Western criticism of his administration is undertaken by journalists who are commissioned to write such stories. The Party of Regions regularly uses Soviet style rhetoric lambasting Western criticism along the lines of 'don't lecture us' (see Don't teach Ukraine how to live: Romasiuk, 2011). Pro-presidential journalist Vyacheslav Pikhovshek described the designation of Yanukovich by two media NGO's as 'enemy no. 1' of media freedom in Ukraine as a 'special operation' conducted by Western sponsored NGO's (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/05/4/6160701/>).

The 2010–2011 Arab revolt in northern Africa again raised fears that a conspiracy was behind them and that this would spread to Ukraine. Speaking to the January 2011 Davos summit, Yanukovich lambasted the democratic revolution that had taken place that month in Tunisia because it had ruined the country's 'stability'. *Ukrayinska Pravda* (January 28, 2010) asked, did this mean that for Yanukovich 23 years of dictatorship lying behind Tunisia's 'stability' was preferable to a democratic breakthrough? Prime Minister Azarov warned that 'radical opposition forces' acting as 'Adventurers are trying to take advantage of developments in North Africa' to overthrow the Azeri leadership (Kazimova and Sindelar, 2011).

Hostile attitudes toward democratic revolution permeate the entire Yanukovich administration. Presidential administration head Serhiy Levochkin, formerly a senior adviser to President Leonid Kuchma, continues to believe the Orange Revolution was a 'technology and the "maydan" was a grab for power'. President Yanukovich belittled the Orange Revolution as a deceit of voters and 'manipulation of societal views.' First Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Kluyev believed the Orange Revolution was 'organised' and asked sardonically, 'Or, do you really believe that it happened just like that?' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, July 3, 2008). During an April 2010 political discussion show Party of Regions deputy Mikhail Chechetov described democratic revolutions as 'well rehearsed and financed political cataclysms' (*TRK Ukrayina*, April 9, 2010).

Education and Science Minister Dmytro Tabachnyk has been a leading proponent of conspiracy theories lying behind democratic revolutions and together with Zhylytsov (2006) praised Central Asian hardliners, such as Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, who had used force against pro-democracy protestors. Tabachnyk and Zhylytsov (2006) wrote: 'Unlike Ukraine and Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan refused to play in accordance with American rules and to give up their power to 'democrats' appointed by Washington.' Tabachnyk brings together three important components of this Soviet political culture: a conspiratorial mindset, anti-Americanism and the equating of Ukrainian nationalism with Nazism. Tabachnyk and Zhylytsov (2006) draw on traditional Soviet discourse to describe the orange camp as 'national-radicals' and 'nationalists' rather than 'democrats' and 'patriots', and rejected the term 'national democrat' as a contradiction in terms, 'a euphemism, like 'national socialism', which masks the 'core-nationalistic' substance of this trend'. Tabachnyk (2008) believes the 2005–2010 Yushchenko administration received its orders from the US embassy continuing the conspiracy theory of the 2004 elections where Yushchenko was depicted as a US satrap (on anti-Americanism in the 2004 elections see Kuzio, 2004). A new school textbook by Deputy Education Minister Yevhen Sulima cites Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and Osama bin Laden to back criticism of the US (Onyshkiv, 2011).

Soviet conspiracy theories lead to spy-mania and fear of encirclement by enemies. In July 2010, the detention at Kyiv airport on suspicion of espionage of Nico Lange, director of the Ukraine office of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, shows the continued depth of suspicion of Western foundations (Motyl and Kuzio, 2010). Security Service (SBU) Chairman Valeriy Khoroshkovsky, who ordered Lange's detention, believes that criticism of the SBU's return to KGB tactics against the opposition, journalists, academics and civil society activists has been 'pre-ordered' and is an 'organized public campaign' (Oleshko, 2010, http://archive.segodnya.ua/pdf/10_138/100629_SEG_KIE_04.pdf).

The election of Yanukovich enabled the Party of Regions to return to anti-Western policies that they had supported on the eve of the 2004 elections. In 2003 Ukraine initiated before Russia draft legislation to prevent Western assistance to NGO's and similar legislation is again being discussed. As the case of Lange shows, Western funded NGO's are assumed to be coordinated by Western intelligence agencies (Lange was formerly in the German military). As in 2004, the goal of anti-Western funding legislation seeks to undermine the opposition and prevent them from coming to power. Those that are believed to have 'betrayed' Yanukovich, such as Kuchma in 2004 (see later), or dealt a serious blow to the Party of Regions financing from the 'gas lobby' through the removal of the RosUkrEnergo gas intermediary in the 2009 Ukrainian-Russian gas contract with Russia, such as Yulia Tymoshenko, are placed on trial. Western governments and international organizations and NGO's have repeatedly condemned 'selective use of justice' by the Yanukovich administration against the opposition.

Conspiracy theories are common throughout the former USSR and, Hans von Zon, a scholar of Ukrainian political culture, reminds us, they, 'are quite common in Ukraine' (von Zon, 2000: 154). Conspiracy theories and spy-mania grew in Ukraine in the aftermath of the 2000–2001 Kuchmagate scandal, when the Party of Regions first emerged as a political force, the 2003 Georgian Rose Revolution, the approach to the 2004 Ukrainian succession crisis and elections and during the 2004 Orange Revolution. During the November–December 2004 political crisis, Prime Minister and presidential candidate Yanukovich believed that the West had conspired against him and he had been subsequently betrayed by President Kuchma and Ukraine's Kyiv-based elites. After his defeat the Yanukovich team and the Party of Regions were convinced that the Orange Revolution was not a popular protest but a conspiracy and such views continue to permeate the Yanukovich administration.

The article is divided into four sections. The first provides a comparative study of how Soviet political culture has influenced Eastern Ukrainian elites and political parties under Kuchma and Yanukovich and their attitudes to U.S. democracy promotion programs and democratic revolutions (see McFaul, 2005). The second and third sections discuss two traditional targets of Soviet political culture – the US (as seen through anti-Americanism) and Ukrainian nationalism. The fourth section

discusses how Yanukovich, the presidential candidate of the authorities, rationalised his defeat by blaming two conspiracies: the first was external in the form of U.S. democracy promotion as a 'special operation' by US intelligence services and the second internal when the central authorities negotiated a backroom deal with opposition candidate Yushchenko that overturned what Yanukovich continues to believe was his election as President in a freely fought contest.

Soviet Political Culture, Conspiracy Theories and Democratic Revolutions

Surveys of regional identities in Ukraine have shown that Soviet identity is strongest in the Donbas and the Crimea, the Party of Regions two strongholds. Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (which together make up the Donbas) have 430 streets named after Soviet communist leader Vladimir Lenin, the largest number in Ukraine. A survey of Ukraine's national identities by the Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies found Donetsk *oblast* had the highest proportion of people who claimed to hold an allegiance to Soviet identity of all Ukraine's regions with 37.1% identifying their 'cultural traditions' as Soviet (and only 25.8% Ukrainian and 22.5% Russian). The Crimea came a close second with 32.2% declaring allegiance to Soviet identity, 30% Russian and only 19% Ukrainian. In contrast, popular allegiance to Soviet cultural traditions in Western Ukraine are very low, ranging from the highest 15.7% in Volyn *oblast* to as little as 0.3–1.5% in the three *oblasts* of Galicia (*Natsionalna Bezpeka i Oborona*, 2007).

The Party of Regions, established in Donetsk in 2001, has always had close ties to the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) whose strongholds are also in the Donbas and the Crimea. In April 2001, the KPU joined with pro-Kuchma 'centrist' factions to vote no confidence in the Yushchenko government – despite its success in reducing wage and pension arrears and reducing corruption. The KPU's professed antagonism to capitalism has not prevented it from twice entering governments (2006–2007, 2010–2012) dominated by the Party of Regions, the Ukrainian political party most closely associated in the public eye with oligarchs and corruption. A large number of current Party of Regions voters voted for the KPU until the 2002 elections, the last good election result received by the Communists, but then switched their allegiance to the Party of Regions leading to support for the KPU declining from 20% in the 2002 elections to less than 5 in subsequent elections. The Party of Regions reliance on a large constituency of ex-KPU voters in the same hardcore two regional bases as the Communist Party translates into programmatic support for social-populist programs thereby freezing the influence of Soviet political culture. Unlike Kuchma, who fought the Communists throughout the 1990s and defeated KPU leader Petro Symonenko in the 1999 elections, Yanukovich and the Party of Regions draw upon them and their political culture for political support in parliament and votes in elections.

One important aspect of Soviet political culture inherited by the Party of Regions from its Communist antecedents are conspiracy theories which re-surfaced during Kuchma's second term in office in 1999–2004 when the Party of Regions was established and have been revived under Yanukovich. Ukrainian voters divided into two groups in how they saw the Rose Revolution with 27.4% of voters, primarily KPU, Party of Regions and Socialist Party (SPU) supporters, believing the official view put forward by the authorities that it was a state *coup d'état*. 29.1 percent, primarily Our Ukraine and Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (BYuT) voters, viewed the Rose Revolution positively as an 'extraordinary change in power.'

Blaming foreign conspiracies for the Kuchmagate crisis deflected responsibility away from ruling elites to a foreign 'Other' and domestic critics of the authorities could be depicted as un-patriotic and agents of a foreign power (*Freeland*, 2009). The Ukrainian opposition in the Kuchma and Yanukovich presidencies have been similarly depicted as 'American stooges' and accomplices of the West. Similar tirades are now heard about Tymoshenko being a pawn of the European Peoples Party, the center-right political group in the European Parliament which the Batkivshchina (Fatherland) party she leads is an associate member of. The Communist Party of the Soviet Unions regularly launched ideological tirades against dissidents and nationalists who were depicted as 'CIA' and 'Zionist' spies and 'bourgeois nationalists' with links to Ukrainian emigres who harbored Nazi war criminals (*Farmer*, 1980; *Solchanyk*, 1983). Such views of domestic opponents and the outside world re-surfaced following the election of Yanukovich.

Democratic revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine confirmed that a US conspiracy existed in the minds of Russian and Ukrainian conspiracy theorists. Russian FSB (Federal Security Service) Chairman Nikolai Patrushev accused the US of backing democratic revolutions in the CIS and warned the Russian State Duma that, 'Our opponents are steadily and persistently trying to weaken Russian influence in the CIS and the international arena as a whole. The latest events in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan unambiguously confirm this' (*Blagov*, 2005). SBU Chairman Ihor Smeshko, who portrayed himself as a hero of the Orange Revolution because of his attempts to thwart violence, believed that NGO's often acted no differently to intelligence agencies by undertaking 'informative-analytical work' (*Smeshko*, 2004). Such a view was not dissimilar to that of former Ukrainian deputy parliamentary speaker and KPU member Adam Martyniuk who said, 'The absolute majority of these funds lobby those states whom they serve through NGO's that are funded from abroad' (i.e. the West) (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, May 17, 2004). Similar views dominate the Yanukovich administration.

The Party of Regions and its allies regarded the 2000 and 2003 democratic revolutions in Serbia and Georgia, and the growth of a pro-Western opposition movement in Ukraine, as part of a single chain of Western, specifically US, covert support for pro-Western political forces. These fears were compounded when Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili visited Kyiv after winning the presidential elections on January 4, 2004 where he voiced strong support for an opposition victory in Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections. Saakashvili was the only foreign President who was not met at Kyiv's international airport by President Kuchma (*Ukrayina Moloda*, April 28, 2004).

The Kuchmagate crisis became fertile ground for Soviet style conspiracy theories to re-appear in Ukraine. Former President Kuchma told a Russian newspaper that, 'One can easily see that the roots of this campaign are not just Ukraine. If this campaign were exclusively Ukrainian, it would have ended a long-time ago,' a view that belittles the ability of Ukrainian citizens to defend their rights without the support of Western intelligence agencies. Kuchma was convinced that, 'definite interests are behind this campaign' and, 'The anti-presidential campaign is not spontaneous but is being guided by definite forces inside and outside Ukraine' (*Trud and Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, April 18, 2001). Kuchma was never able to pinpoint exactly who were allegedly directing the anti-Kuchma protests but he believed that the opposition, 'are receiving money or are doing it on the orders of the Americans'. President Kuchma complained that protests in the Kuchmagate crisis were a, 'well planned campaign' that provide, 'clear and precise evidence of roots that are not only Ukrainian. If they were only Ukrainian they would have petered out.' The protests are not spontaneous but carried out by 'not only Ukrainian forces' (*Trud and Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, April 18, 2001). Such views were testament to the continued influence of Soviet ideology and culture that had traditionally linked dissidents to foreign intelligence agencies as well as an innate inability to accept responsibility for any misdeeds.

The Ukrainian authorities could not comprehend that US government funded Radio Liberty, which broadcast excerpts to Ukrainian listeners from tapes illicitly made in Kuchma's office by presidential guard Mykiola Melnychenko, could be editorially independent from the George Bush administration.¹ Soviet views of Western radio stations such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as subversive entities linked to US intelligence were revived during the anti-Western rhetoric that emerged during the Kuchmagate crisis. Kuchma accused Radio Liberty of, 'implementing a political order. You were never objective!' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, April 28, 2004). Kuchma threatened Radio Liberty with the closure of its Kyiv office unless the head of the Ukrainian service, Roman Kupchinsky, was replaced. The US-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) were denied registration by the Ministry of Justice until 2003 in retaliation for radio broadcasts of the tapes. Some members of the Kuchma elite lobbied to prevent their registration until after the 2004 elections in order to hamper their activities. Such SBU surveillance and intimidation of foreign-sponsored NGO's has been revived by the Yanukovych administration.

The 2006 Russian law on NGO's restricting foreign funding that links foreign funding to control by Western (especially US) intelligence agencies is deeply grounded in Soviet political culture. Ukraine beat Russia into seeking to introduce similar legislation banning foreign support for NGO's on December 11, 2003 when the Ukrainian parliament established a parliamentary commission, and in 2010 the Party of Regions revived draft legislation to this effect (see Kuzio, 2011). Parliament's 2003 vote to create a temporary investigative commission of eleven deputies to investigate Western funding of civil society, NGOs and independent media in Ukraine was based on an earlier parliamentary resolution claiming that external financing of NGOs had, 'reached mass proportions, and amounts to direct interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine' (www.rada.gov.ua, November 27, 2004). This, it was claimed, required an examination of the activities of foreign-sponsored groups that might influence the upcoming 2004 presidential elections. The US and the EU dominate assistance to Ukrainian civil society, NGOs and independent media which tended to be critical of the Kuchma regime's authoritarian policies and thus supporters of the regime perceived this external financing as allegedly selectively supporting the opposition – not free elections or democratic development (Stepanenko, 2006).

Although the Misiura parliamentary commission never concluded its report because commission members from the opposition refused to endorse it, the State Tax Administration (DPI) increased its investigations of NGO's that received Western funding on the eve of the 2004 elections.² Similar draft legislation was re-introduced by Party of Regions deputies Vadym Kolesnichenko and Olena Bondarenko in 2010–2011. With a rubber-stamp parliament in place for the first time in Ukraine, Yanukovych will be more successful in pushing through legislation restricting Western funding of NGO's on the eve of the 2012 parliamentary and 2015 presidential elections (see Kuzio, 2011).

Xenophobia and spy-mania are part and parcel of Soviet conspiracy theories that have re-surfaced in Russia and Ukraine, as they were in the former USSR, Western NGO's are accused of subversion against the state and are therefore 'un-patriotic.' The FSB and SBU are reviving KGB-style tactics and rhetoric to defeat this alleged conspiracy (Weir, 2005; Motyl and Kuzio, 2010). *The Economist* (May 24, 2007) pointed out that in Russia, 'In the eyes of the Kremlin, any NGO receiving foreign cash is an agent of foreign intelligence.' 'A constant theme of conspiracy theories has been that "outside forces" sponsor all protests in the country', another commentator stated (Yasman, 2007). Such views are highly prevalent in the Yanukovych administration and Party of Regions. Tabachnyk and Interior Minister Anatoliy Mogiliov have blamed foreign funding of NGO's for student and nationalist protests while deputy Inna Bohuslovska said that NGO's funded by the U.S. State Department lead to these groups 'promoting the interests of their donors in their home countries' (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/05/14/6196150/>, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/05/25/6238700/>, Kyiv Post, October 1, 2010).

The philanthropist George Soros became an additional target of criticism by Russian and Ukrainian conspiracy theorists in 2003–2004 and again in 2010 following the Arab spring (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/04/13/6103372/>), <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/04/13/6102293/>). The Soros fund had trained youth NGO's such as the Georgian youth Kmara (Enough) NGO which played an important role in the Rose Revolution. Ukrainian conspiracy theorists alleged that Kmara was reincarnated as the Pora (Its Time) NGO in Ukraine (www.temnik.com.ua, June 4, 2004). Soros's spring 2004 visit

¹ Presidential guard Mykola Melnychenko fled abroad in November 2000, first going to Prague and then seeking asylum in the US in April 2001.

² Current Prime Minister Azarov headed the DPI from 1996 to 2002 when such practices of using the DPI police against the opposition began.

to the Crimea was dogged by protests from *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood), a pro-Kuchma nationalist group that reportedly had links to the Social Democratic United Party (SDPUo) and was then a member of the Eurasian Movement (Soros, April 3 and April 5, 2004, Kuzio, 2003).³ Soros's visit to the Crimea was claimed to be the launch of a conspiracy which could begin with the training of nationalist and Tatar paramilitaries to support a 'Chestnut revolution' in Kyiv (*Wall Street Journal*, February 11, 2004). Tatars and nationalists would allegedly, 'create conditions for direct foreign intervention' in Kyiv (Samar, March 27 and April 3, 2004). Seven years later, Party of Regions parliamentary faction leader Oleksandr Efremov believed Soros was behind the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions as preparatory stages for Ukraine that would be applied 'according to the northern Africa variant' (<http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/04/13/6102293> and <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/04/13/6103372/>).

Western training of youth NGO's has been a particular bugbear for the authorities (Kuzio, 2006). US organisations, such as the Freedom House human rights advocacy think tank, did use Serbian, Georgian and Belarusian veterans to train youth activists in Ukraine but this practice was overtly, not covertly, undertaken and is quite common in democracy assistance programmes around the world. The two wings of Pora (It's Time) youth NGOs were in fact treated differently by the US: the more radical black (named after the color of its symbols) Pora received no US support while assistance for yellow Pora was distributed through the Freedom of Choice NGO funded by Freedom House for the purpose of monitoring the conduct of Ukraine's 2004 election. Election monitoring was crucial in the October 2010 local elections by OPORA (successor to 'black' Pora), the first to be held under Yanukovich and condemned by international organizations as not meeting democratic standards. With Ukraine facing democratic regression under Yanukovich, election monitoring will be crucial in the 2012 and 2015 elections.

Although Western financial support to the opposition and NGO's has been targeted extensive Russian financial and political support to Yanukovich and the Party of Regions during and since the 2004 elections has been ignored by parliamentary commissions established to review 'foreign funding' of NGO's. Russian support has been extensive in the 2004 elections and since 2005 when the Party of Regions signed a cooperation agreement with the Unified Russia party. Gleb Pavlovsky, a Russian political technologist with close ties to the Russian leadership, was on secondment to the Yanukovich campaign in the 2004 elections (Kuzio, 2005). Pavlovsky began operating in Ukraine in the 1999 elections through cooperative ventures with the SDPUo and the main focus of his 'political technology' were pro-Western politicians such as Yushchenko and the Our Ukraine bloc, BYuT and the SPU. Russian political technologists, such as Pavlovsky, imported specific conspiracy theories into Ukraine such as the so-called 'Brzezinski plan' (see next section).

The Kuchma authorities and Party of Regions focused on the former gray cardinal of the Borys Yeltsin administration, exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky. In December 2004, at the first EU-brokered round-table, Kuchma accused Russian exiled tycoon Berezovskiy and Soros of financing the Orange Revolution (Wilson, 2005: 140). Following Yushchenko's election the opposition Party of Regions sought to revive parliamentary investigations launched in 2003–2004 into the financing of NGO's by enlarging the commissions remit to that of Western financing of the Orange Revolution. Yanukovich and KPU leader Symonenko both called in December 2004 for a parliamentary commission to investigate US financing of the opposition. 'The United States' meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs is obvious,' Yanukovich said, using language commonly heard in Russia under Putin (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, December 13, 2004). The parliamentary opposition established a commission to investigate allegations that Berezovsky had financed the Orange Revolution; not surprisingly, the commission never chose to investigate extensive Russian funding of the Yanukovich campaign (Varfolomeyev, 2005). This was a last ditch attempt by former Kuchma centrist parties and the KPU to remove Yushchenko by impeaching him using allegations of illegal foreign funding of his campaign. The myth of Berezovskiy's continued alleged manipulation of Ukrainian domestic politics continues to remain influential in the Yanukovich administration. Prime Minister Azarov described Tymoshenko's 'provocations' as having been assisted by Berezovskiy, a 'dirty technology which BYuT is using on instructions from abroad' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, May 27, 2010).

Berezovsky contributed to conspiracy theories of external financing of the Orange Revolution by claiming he had donated millions of dollars to finance it (Berezovsky, 2007). Earlier Berezovsky had financed the transcribing of the Melnychenko tapes in the hope of finding some *kompromat* on Putin (Varfolomeyev, 2005). Berezovskiy was a long-time ally of Ukrainian oligarch Oleksandr Volkov who had become bitter at having been marginalised during Kuchma's second term in office after he had assisted Kuchma's re-election in 1999. In 2003 Volkov was approached by Davyd Zhvannia, Roman Besmertnyi and Oleksandr Tretyakov, three prominent businessmen in Our Ukraine and the Yushchenko election campaign, for a financial donation to the 2004 election campaign (Berezovsky, 2006). Berezovsky alleged that they had visited him in London to discuss support for Yushchenko's election (Reuters, September 16, 2005).

Senior Yushchenko aides counter attacked Berezovskiy's claims by alleging that it was Tymoshenko who had collaborated with Berezovsky in the 2004 election campaign. Although denying collaboration with Berezovsky, Besmertnyi admitted that there were occasions during the 2004 elections and Orange Revolution, 'when I was indifferent as to who would give money for the heating of tents' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, November 1, 2005). The unwillingness of the Yushchenko campaign to acknowledge the existence of the funds was, Berezovsky believed, because they were used, 'for the personal enrichment of members of Yushchenko's headquarters' (Guzhba et al., 2005). Berezovsky was never consistent on his support for

³ *Bratstvo* is a splinter group with funding from the SDPUo and pro-Russian, Eurasian nationalists that broke from the Ukrainian National Assembly (UNA) which supported the anti-Kuchma protests. Dmytro Korchyński, who formerly headed the UNA, established *Bratstvo*.

Yushchenko or the amount he allegedly sent to finance the Orange Revolution claiming he had donated US \$50 million to assist the Orange Revolution, a figure that was denied by Yushchenko's senior aides through whom the alleged funds were distributed (Gray, 2007). At other times, the amounts he claimed he had sent to 'develop democratic institutions' in Ukraine ranged between US \$15, US \$21 million and US \$31 million (McFaul, 2007; Wilson, 2006).

In addition to financial resources, Russian political technologists worked directly for Yanukovich's election campaign as part of a Ukrainian-Russian agreement (Pavlovsky, 2007), President Putin visited Ukraine on the eve of the first and second rounds of the 2004 elections to endorse Yanukovich and congratulated him on his election victory a day before the Central Election Commission announced the official results. Russian political technologists, because of close Soviet and eastern Slavic ties to Ukrainians, were never considered to be 'foreign' interference in the same manner as that of Americans or Europeans.

Anti-Americanism

Much of the rhetoric against Western sponsorship of NGO's had its roots in Soviet anti-Americanism which grew during the Kuchmagate crisis and crystalized in a Soviet style anti-American campaign in the 2004 elections (see Kuzio, 2004). Yanukovich's anti-Americanism is evident in being the first Ukrainian president who is opposed to NATO membership, a goal he removed as a foreign policy priority in legislation adopted in July 2010 that defined Ukraine as a 'non-bloc' state.

Anti-American discourse in Ukraine was duplicitous as it was launched at the same time as Ukraine officially declared its intention seeking NATO Membership (July 2002), its attempt to obtain NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP) in 2002 and 2004 at NATO congresses in Prague and Istanbul and when Ukrainian troops were stationed in Iraq between 2003 and 2005. That the anti-American campaign directly contradicted Ukraine's declared foreign policy of seeking NATO membership was merely a product of the deep internal contradictions found inside Yanukovich's and the Party of Regions Soviet political culture. Anti-American posters, with slogans such as 'Yankee Go Home!', were put up when Ukraine had the third largest military contingent (and largest non-NATO contingent) in Iraq.

The KPU and Minister of Education Tabachnyk (2008) believed Yushchenko and Our Ukraine was directed from the US Embassy in Kyiv. The *Segodnya* (March 9, 2004) newspaper, owned by Party of Regions oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, quoted Central Election Commission chairman Sergei Kivalov as recalling how the US Ambassador had demanded that the 2002 election results be the same as results found in exit polls (a not unusual requirement). Exit polls were extensively used in the 2000 Serbian, 2003 Georgian and 2004 Ukrainian elections to provide independent vote counts and were seen as more trustworthy by voters. Albright (2004) was seen as lecturing Ukrainians for whom to vote.

Russian political technologist Sergei Markov, who headed the analytical department of the pro-Yanukovich Russian Club established in Kyiv during the 2004 Ukrainian elections, believed that Yushchenko, 'is surrounded by these crazy people with a cold War mentality who hate Russia' (Finn, 2004). Yushchenko was portrayed as similar to President Bush whose administration was also viewed by Moscow and the Party of Regions as 'anti-Russian.'

The Russian Club was opened in August 2004 by Russian Ambassador Viktor Cherymyrdin and Dmitriy Medvedev, then head of the Russian presidential administration who was elected Russian president four years later. The Russian Club was led by organised crime leader ('Mad Max') Maksim Kurochkin who was assassinated in March 2007 after leaving a Kyiv court house (Parfitt, 2007). The mass distribution of overtly hostile anti-American posters, reminiscent of the worst period of pre-detente era Soviet anti-American propaganda, suggested that, 'The authorities have come to realize that they will lose the elections,' according to Yushchenko's election campaign. 'This is the work of those who only yesterday called for the holding of a free presidential election campaign,' it continued (www.razom.org.ua, October 4, 2004).

Anti-Americanism was revived in Ukraine following the rise of an anti-Kuchma and later orange opposition and became particularly virulent on State Channel 1, 1 Plus 1, and Inter television channels. Anti-American discourse in Ukraine attacked the alleged US interference in Ukraine and portrayed US policies as racist, xenophobic, militaristic and imperialist. Books depicting Yushchenko as unfit to be Ukraine's president and a US satrap were published and widely circulated in the 2004 elections (Lan, 2004) as was the mass printing of anti-American posters and leaflets linking Yushchenko to the CIA, the Bush administration and US foreign policy.

Ukrainian Nationalism

The origins of the venomous language used by the Yanukovich and Communist camps against their orange opponents is to be found in Soviet political culture that was hostile to the alleged 'nationalist' ideology of Western Ukrainians and the Ukrainian diaspora. These two tenets conveniently came together in opposition candidate Yushchenko whose political support lay in Western Ukraine.

Election rhetoric playing off Western against Eastern Ukraine, which was developed by Russian political technologists working for the Yanukovich campaign, drew on Soviet era ideological tirades against 'bourgeois nationalism' and deeply entrenched negative stereotypes of 'nationalist' Galicia and Western Ukraine. Russian political technologist Pavlovsky (2004) argued that Yushchenko's election would be a, 'victory for Western Ukraine over Eastern Ukraine, something that is dangerous for the country itself.'

The use of such strategies to mobilize the Eastern Ukrainian vote has a long pedigree but has become the mainstay of Yanukovich and the Party of Regions since the 2004 elections – as seen in the May 2011 provocations in Lviv (Kuzio, 2011). In

the 1994 elections Kuchma had used moderate strategies in comparison to a decade later to mobilize Russoph one Eastern and Southern Ukraine against the re-election of the allegedly 'nationalist' President Leonid Kravchuk.

The extensive use of East versus West strategies since 2004 has encouraged negative voting; that is, citizens who vote *against* rather than in support of a candidate or party/bloc. Donetsk and Crimea have the highest rates of negative voting and Party of Regions voters are especially prone to voting negatively with one-third of its supporters voting for its candidate or the party while another third voting *against* party/blocs or candidates (such as Yushchenko and Our Ukraine). The average number of negative voters across Ukraine is 28% of Ukrainians who vote with the lowest number in Western Ukraine (12.2%) and the highest in the Donbas and Crimea (42.8%). The highest number of negative voters is in the Crimea where it is an outstandingly high 73% (*Politychnyi Portret*, 2007). Negative voting mobilizes voters against 'nationalists', 'American lackeys' and 'orangists' equating Our Ukraine and Yushchenko with Nazism. The Party of Regions and Yanukovich are portrayed as the defenders of Eastern Ukrainians against 'nationalists' (see *Kuzio*, 2011).

Campaigns against 'Ukrainian nationalism' sought to reduce the popularity of Yushchenko and Our Ukraine in Russophone Eastern and Southern Ukraine by encouraging negative voting against them in favor of Yanukovich and the Party of Regions (see earlier). Our Ukraine was depicted as '*Nashist*,' a play on *Nasha Ukrayina* (Our Ukraine) to confuse voters with 'Nazi.' During Our Ukraine's October 31, 2003 congress in the city of Donetsk it was inundated with billboards showing Yushchenko giving a Nazi salute. During the elections in Luhansk *oblast* local television showed Yushchenko marching alongside Nazi symbols and an advert was aired on all 24 cable channels in the *oblast* ending with words of foreboding: 'Let us do the right choice!... Nashism will not prevail!' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, November 8, 2004).

An internal leaked memorandum from the Yanukovich campaign laid out instructions to its election staff to portray Yushchenko in the media as linked to 'nationalist, oligarch and extremist circles' who are 'one team of thieves' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, November 8, 2004). Yanukovich's representative in the US, Alex Kiselev, attempted to turn Jewish-American groups against Yushchenko by portraying him as anti-Semitic and supported by the Ukrainian diaspora which had an alleged record of Nazi collaborationism in World War II (www.washingtonjewishweek.com, October 28, 2004, *Krawchenko*, 2004). The degree to which this 'Nazi' hysteria had been built up against Yushchenko could be seen in the words of a petrified pensioner who was adamant that, 'If Yushchenko wins, the Nazis will return. I was in the west of Ukraine recently and saw columns of foreign troops, fascists. If war comes, I will fight until the last cartridge' (*Barnett*, 2004). Such insinuations were most prevalent in Donetsk and Crimea, two strongholds of the Yanukovich campaign, where underlying Soviet culture remains deeply entrenched. In February 2007, Donetsk *oblast* council, dominated by the Party of Regions, issued a statement accusing Western Ukraine of collaborating with the Nazis in World War II (*Korduban*, 2007) and in April 2010, a Donetsk court over-turned two presidential decrees issued by Yushchenko honoring Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist leaders Yuriy Shukhevych and Stepan Bandera.

Anti-nationalist tirades were developed during Yanukovich's September 24, 2004 visit to the Western Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk where he fell down after being hit by an egg thrown by a student. The incident was immediately used to condemn Yushchenko and his Western Ukrainian supporters as 'extremists' who practiced 'political terrorism,' two charges that were laid out in a pre-prepared government statement charging Yushchenko as having organised the 'terrorist' attack. A statement by the Party of Regions was even more adamant that the student was allegedly from 'a group of extremist-inclined young nationalists who were shouting 'Yes Yushchenko!'' Yanukovich's press secretary, Hanna Herman, now head of humanities policies in the presidential administration, blamed the thrown egg on, 'radically oriented representatives of Our Ukraine who were acting so aggressively that the premier's security detail were forced to defend him' (www.temnik.com.ua, September 24, 2004). Party of Regions deputy Mykola Kruhlov went further, describing the incident as Ukraine's first 'terrorist attack' while the SDPUo was even blunter in its dire warnings to Yushchenko: 'Provocative, extremist, and destabilising actions on the part of the supporters of *nashism* will, if the need arises, be rebuffed forcibly and severely' (www.sdpuo.org.ua, September 25, 2004).

How the egg could be considered a 'terrorist' object was never explained as well as the fact that Yanukovich's, who is a tall, well built and a formidable-looking individual, fall looked highly stage-managed (www.ukrpravda.com/archive/2004/september/24/video.shtml). The pre-planned nature of the media campaign against Yushchenko became obvious when his supporters were immediately accused of being 'terrorists' before the authorities had realised that he had been felled by an egg, not by a blank bullet, which was supposed to have been shot from the crowds at Yanukovich who was wearing a bullet proof vest under his coat (see *Kuzio*, 2010). The alleged 'terrorist' incident was exaggerated to deflect attention from the attempted poisoning of Yushchenko earlier that month and was part of the campaign to portray Yushchenko as an 'extremist' and 'nationalist.' The campaign was accompanied by warnings in the media to not vote for Yushchenko because his election would lead to civil war and inter-ethnic conflict.

Russian and CIS election observers, as well as the Yanukovich campaign, turned around claims of election fraud by the opposition by arguing that most fraud had taken place in Western, not Eastern, Ukraine by Yushchenko's supporters (*Finn*, 2004; *Zimmer*, 2005). The Yanukovich campaign claimed to have a list of 350,000 Western Ukrainians working abroad who, they argued, had no right to vote in the elections. The opposition pointed out that using this data was illegal as it infringed the law 'On Information' that outlines such data as 'confidential.' Yanukovich's official campaign chief Sergei Tigipko (Deputy Prime Minister in the 2010–2012 Azarov government) said, 'We will know that those who voted were passports and not people' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, November 10, 2004).

An organized Ukrainian and Russian campaign that demonized Western Ukraine could be seen in *temnyky*, secret documents sent to television stations by the presidential administration that instructed the media to exaggerate election fraud in Western Ukraine while downplaying any mention of fraud in Eastern Ukraine. *Temnyky* instructed Ukrainian television to show violations in Eastern Ukraine as being only committed by Yushchenko supporters, ordered Ukrainian television

to portray Eastern Ukraine as an oasis of stability and calm with high voter activity while Western Ukraine was a centre of instability (www.temnyk.com.ua, November 9, 2004). *Temnyky* ordered Ukrainian television to show: 'mass violation of voters rights and the law organized by V. Yushchenko supporters who are directly manipulating the result by double voting, using packets of passports, agitation on election day with officials of the election commission and voters, infringements in the conduct of exit polls, in the first place as a means of agitation, the location of countless Yushchenko symbols alongside polling stations' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, October 31, 2004).

In the 2006 and September 2007 pre-term elections the Yanukovych government again demonized Western Ukrainians by attempting to change voting regulations to make it difficult for Ukrainians working abroad to vote, the assumption being that most of them would vote for 'orange' parties. The Party of Regions organized 1500 observers so that traditionally higher voter turnout would be undertaken by voters and not allegedly by 'passports' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, September 5, 2007).

Anti-nationalism continues to be an important bedrock of the Yanukovych administration. Deputy Prime Minister Borys Kolesnikov described his then orange opponents as 'nationalist bandits' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, May 27, 2010). Such language is a throwback to Soviet views of nationalist partisans who operated in Western Ukraine in the 1940s. Education Minister Tabachnyk is the most hard line proponent of the new 'anti-nationalism,' and his concept for school textbooks would radically depart from those introduced under Ukraine's first three presidents, returning Ukraine to the Soviet view of Ukrainian nationalists as 'murderers' and 'Nazi collaborators' (*Tabachnyk*, 2010). Tabachnyk forcibly asserted that: 'Stepan Bandera and Yuriy Shukhevych will remain in history as nationalists, and organizers of mass murder and they will forever be stained by the brush of collaborationism.' (*Tabachnyk*, 2010).

Conspiracies against Yanukovych: rationalising his defeat

Belief in the Orange Revolution as a Western-backed conspiracy has two components. The first, discussed earlier, was a belief, widely shared in Eastern Ukraine and Russia, that it was part of a US-backed, Western conspiracy. The second component, discussed in this section, is the view that Kuchma had 'betrayed' Yanukovych during round-table negotiations. Yanukovych has never accepted that he lost the 2004 election or that there had been fraud and harranged Western diplomats for supporting the 'American coup,' according to cables from the US Embassy in Kyiv leaked by Wikileaks. A year after the Orange Revolution, Yanukovych said to Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus: 'You let yourself be used by Kuchma in his machinations. As a result, your work will have a negative impact on relations between Lithuania and Ukraine in the future' (<http://zik.com.ua>, December 4, 2010).

Yanukovych's desire for revenge has been a powerful motivating factor in his actions since his 2004 defeat. The election defeat of Yanukovych was a 'psychological shock' to Donetsk as it had believed the victory of its candidate would be inevitable because elections are never lost by the authorities when economies were growing by 12%. His defeat produced a widespread sense of injustice in Eastern Ukraine amid feelings that conspiracy's had taken place to steal Yanukovych's victory (*Kipen and Pasko*, 2006). The myth that Yanukovych's (2004) election victory had been 'stolen' was widely believed in Donetsk (*Osipan and Osipan*, 2006).

Still angry at the alleged 'theft' of his election victory Yanukovych mobilised Party of Regions voters in the 2006 elections by appealing to them, 'to free our land from the orange occupants' who he described as 'mutants and freaks' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, March 23, 2006). Yanukovych portrayed the orange camp as 'occupiers' of Ukraine because of their alleged links to the West. Yanukovych sought revenge through the 2006–2007 Anti-Crisis parliamentary coalition and government that he led and President Yushchenko complained that his policies, 'can be based only on emotions and the desire for some primitive revenge' (*Associated Press*, February 28, 2007). Relations between Yanukovych and Kuchma continued to remain strained after Yushchenko's election⁴ and in the 2006 elections Kuchma voted for the SDPUo election bloc *Ne Tak!* (Not Like This!), not for the Party of Regions (*Tabachnyk and Zhylytsov*, 2006). Yanukovych refused to establish a coalition with Medvedchuk's SDPUo in the 2006 or 2007 elections.

After the Orange Revolution, Yanukovych did not send traditional greetings to former President Kuchma on his birthday, unlike Yushchenko, Lytvyn and Medvedchuk. When asked a year after the Orange Revolution if he had met Kuchma, Yanukovych sternly replied, 'No, I have not met him, I have not had any conversations and no meetings with him. And I have no desire to do so' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, May 13, 2005). In 2002–2004 Prime Minister Yanukovych had sent Kuchma birthday greetings (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, May 13, 2005). After Yushchenko's election, Medvedchuk and Lytvyn continued to have good relations with Kuchma who is a godfather to Lytvyn's daughter (*Levochkin*, 2006). During Yushchenko's five year presidency he never once criticized Kuchma.

A desire for revenge have manifested themselves under the Yanukovych administration in two ways. The first are criminal charges against Tymoshenko and Kuchma. The majority of Ukrainian experts believe that criminal charges against Kuchma in March 2011 had less to do with the charge of 'abuse of office' over his involvement in the murder of journalist Georgi Gongadze (which led to the Kuchmagate crisis) (*Koshiw*, 2003) than revenge for Kuchma's 'betrayal' of Yanukovych in the Orange Revolution. The second are the July 2010 judicial reforms which marginalised the power of the Supreme Court whose December 3, 2004 resolution over-turned his election in the second round.

The 'betrayal' was allegedly whereby Kuchma agreed to the holding of a repeat of the second round, which it was thought Yushchenko would inevitably win, in exchange for Kuchma's immunity from prosecution and constitutional reforms coming

⁴ In the January 2010 presidential elections Kuchma and Pinchuk supported Yatseniuk, Medvedchuk backed Tymoshenko and Tigipko ran independently.

into effect in 2006 that reduced the presidents powers (Levochkin, 2006). Chornovil (2009) believes that it was impossible for Yanukovych to win the repeat of the second round when Tigipko and Russian political technologists deserted Yanukovych in the Orange Revolution (Pogrebynsky, 2005; Pifer, 2005).

Yanukovych and the Party of Regions believed, not without some justification, that Kuchma, Lytvyn, Levochkin, Medvedchuk and Tigipko⁵ either conspired against Yanukovych being elected or worked toward Yanukovych's election in a half-hearted manner. In the approach to the repeat of round two of the elections, Yanukovych believed that a 'united group' was standing against him composed of central elites who had deserted him and were working toward a Yushchenko victory (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, December 9, 2004). During the second election television debate Yanukovych accused Kuchma of having united with 'orange putschists' to adopt illegal decisions against him.

Ukrainian political technologist Pogrebynsky believed an inter-related conspiracy; namely, that Kuchma did not want Yushchenko or Yanukovych to win the 2004 elections and if forced to choose would pick the 'lesser of two evils' – Yanukovych (Pogrebynsky, 2006, <http://glavred.info>, April 5, 2005, Guzhba et al., 2005). Herman, Yanukovych's press secretary pointed the finger at Tigipko as 'executing somebody's will' (Herman, 2005). Yanukovych's main problem, Herman said, was not Yushchenko but, 'the third person who did not abandon hopes of being the rescuer of the nation' (a cryptic reference to Kuchma). The Constitutional Court had ruled in December 2003 that Kuchma could stand in the 2004 elections as he had taken office in 1994 before the adoption of the constitution two years later making the 2000–2004 term his alleged 'first' term in office. Then deputy head of the presidential administration Vasyl Baziv believes Kuchma, Medvedchuk and Tigipko preferred a third term for Kuchma or complete new elections the following year with Tigipko standing as the authorities candidate (Baziv, 2006).

In the re-run second round Yanukovych distanced himself from Kuchma in whom he expressed 'deep disappointment' for the manner in which he had handled the political crisis (that is, had not backed him to the end in becoming president). Such views go toward explaining criminal charges against Kuchma in 2011. In the repeat second round Yanukovych said, 'I am not campaigning as a candidate from the shameful authorities that have given up their positions' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, December 9, 2004). Yanukovych's description of himself as in 'opposition' to Kuchma reflected less an attempt at positioning himself as an oppositionist than in portraying himself as a 'outsider' politician from Eastern Ukraine who had been betrayed by Ukraine's central authorities.

Yanukovych went further by ridiculing Yushchenko's claim to be an 'opposition' leader pointing out to him and his team that they had been in power under Kuchma during the 1990s (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, November 13, 2004), ignoring the fact that both Yanukovych and Yushchenko had been faithful allies of Kuchma throughout the 1990s. Yanukovych's transition into an alleged 'oppositionist' to Kuchma reflected his belief that he had been betrayed by his own team: 'I'm very disappointed that I trusted cowards and traitors who I worked with for these past two years' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, December 10, 2004; Krushelnicky, 2006: 326).

Yanukovych's alleged drawbacks, in Kuchma's eyes, were that he was uneducated and had no backbone. Yanukovych was reinforced in his view of himself as a working class, ex-convict 'outsider' by his treatment from Kuchma and Putin. Although Kuchma (2005) claimed he had not known his full biography this is not the case. On November 22, 2004, the first day that crowds began to gather in Kyiv after the second round of the elections, Kuchma telephoned Putin, then on an official visit to Brazil, to ask for advice as to how to respond to the protests that would grow into the Orange Revolution. Putin replied that the choice Kuchma was faced with was either to impose a state of emergency or transfer power to Yanukovych. Kuchma's response was indicative: 'How can I transfer power to him, Vladimir Vladimirovych? He is a Donetsk criminal!' (Guzhba et al., 2005; Wilson, 2005) Kuchma had little faith in Yanukovych's intellectual potential, was uneasy about his links to oligarchs and organized crime, and saw him more as a decoy to counter the opposition and as a vehicle to railroad through constitutional reforms that had failed to be adopted in spring 2004. Putin holds a similar negative view of Yanukovych as seen in a 2009 US Embassy cable leaked by Wikileaks. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Ukrainian Ambassador to Russia under Yushchenko and Foreign Minister in the Azarov government, told the US Ambassador to Ukraine that Putin has a low personal regard for Yanukovych (<http://cablesearch.org/cable/view.php?id=09KYIV208&hl=UKRAINE>).

Relations between Kuchma and Yanukovych began to go sour after November 24, 2004 when the Central Election Commission declared Yanukovych elected President. Hardliners Yanukovych, Medvedchuk, Interior minister Mykola Bilokin, Sumy and Odesa governors Volodymyr Shcherban and Ruslan Bodelan lobbied the central authorities to enforce the results and when this drastic step was attempted four days later the operation failed (see Kuzio, 2010). A day earlier at a meeting of the National Security and Defence Council held near Kyiv, Yanukovych had demanded that Kuchma act decisively by imposing a state of emergency, holding his inauguration and sending security forces to unblock the cabinet of ministers (Chivers, 2005). Kuchma and Yanukovych traded accusations as to who would give the order to use force and Kuchma taunted Yanukovych if he was brave enough to give the order by challenging him to telephone Bilokin. Yanukovych threw down his pen and stormed out of the meeting and from that moment Yanukovych refused to recognise Kuchma as Ukraine's President as he felt he had 'betrayed' him during the 'orange putsch' (Krushelnicky, 2006: 308, 326, 344). Kuchma was willing, Pogrebynsky claims, to transfer power to Yanukovych who then had the authority to launch a crackdown but, Yanukovych refused to take this responsibility and had demanded that Kuchma order security forces to suppress Orange Revolution protestors.

⁵ Three of those accused of having 'betrayed' Yanukovych in 2004 were accepted back into the Yanukovych team in 2006 (Levochkin) and 2010 (Tigipko, Lytvyn).

Yanukovych did bring his supporters to Kyiv on November 24, including coalminers, but he proved unwilling to order them to descend on downtown Kyiv. This indecisiveness was quite different to Romanian President Ion Iliescu's willingness to use coalminers to suppress his democratic opposition on three occasions during the 1990s (Gledhill, 2005). Russian political technologist Markov wrongly believed, 'The coalminers would be more than happy to descend on Kiev to 'beat up the Western Ukrainian nationalists' (Markov, 2004). In fact any contact between Orange Revolution protestors and Yanukovych voters ended peacefully (Ukrayina, 2004).

In November–December 2004 Ukraine's elites switched sides and abandoned Yanukovych because they remained convinced that the West would not accept a Yanukovych victory (unlike in the 2010 elections when a Yanukovych victory was seen in some Western quarters as not only acceptable but desirable over the chaotic and quarrelsome orange candidates (Financial Times, January 10, 2010). A compromise solution accepted by EU intermediaries at round-table negotiations was that the Ukrainian authorities would not block Yushchenko's election in exchange for him agreeing to constitutional reforms transforming Ukraine from a semi-presidential into a semi-parliamentary system (Guzhba et al., 2005). A presidential administration official said, 'no one in the presidential administration wanted to make him (Yanukovych) president. All of us are working on political reform and the transformation of the president into an "English Queen"' (Guzhba et al., 2005).

The introduction of constitutional reforms in 2006 satisfied Our Ukraine's long standing demand that they would not be introduced immediately following the 2004 elections as the Kuchma camp and left had attempted to push through in 2003–2004. The risk to Kuchma and the ruling elites of Yushchenko having one year of executive powers under the 1996 presidential constitution would be ameliorated by the granting of informal (rather than legally sanctioned) immunity to Kuchma and his entourage. This deal was 'guaranteed' by the return of Prosecutor Svyatoslav Piskun on December 9, 2004, a day after the parliamentary vote to support the compromise package that included constitutional reforms and changes to election laws to reduce the possibility of election fraud (thereby making Yushchenko's election inevitable later that month). One document shows the Yushchenko campaign sought the support of Ukraine's business elites in exchange for immunity granted to members of the elites and governors and a promise to not undertake re-privatizations. The document, vouched as genuine by former Sumy Governor Shcherban who fled to the US in 2005 but returned to Ukraine the following year, was published by *Ukrayinska Pravda* (August 27, 2007).

The only parliamentary force that voted against the compromise package was BYuT whose leader Tymoshenko had been excluded from the round-table negotiations. Pliushch, who participated in the negotiations, represented the pragmatic wing of Our Ukraine that preferred a grand coalition with the Party of Regions to any alliance with Tymoshenko. Pliushch was one of sixty opposition deputies who defected to the pro-Yanukovych Stability and Reforms coalition in 2010.

Conclusion

In Ukraine conspiracy theories re-surfaced during Kuchma's second term in office following the Kuchmagate crisis and have been reinforced since by the emergence of the Party of Regions as the country's best organized political force and by Russian influence, particularly since its heavy handed interference in the 2004 elections. Conspiracy theories, xenophobia and spy-mania are important to our understanding of the domestic and foreign policies of Ukrainian administrations whose political base is the more Sovietized Eastern Ukraine.

The Kuchma and Yanukovych administrations response was to fall back on two traditional Soviet ideological weapons: anti-Americanism and hostility to Ukrainian nationalism. Under Yanukovych, anti-Americanism is evident in opposition to NATO membership and cooperation with anti-American leaders such as Venezuela's Hugo Chavez while anti-Ukrainian nationalism is used to mobilize the East versus the West, as most vividly seen in the May 2011 provocations in Lviv (Kuzio, 2011).

From the 2004 Orange Revolution to his election as president six years later, Yanukovych refused to accept that he had been defeated or that there had been election fraud. His anger at having been 'betrayed' by a Western conspiracy and central elites has fed into a desire for revenge, as seen in the trials of Tymoshenko and Kuchma. Yanukovych came to the conclusion that Kuchma, 'defended his own interests and the interests of his own family' (*Ukrayinska Pravda*, December 13, but 2004). In leaving office Kuchma had succeeded in becoming loathed on both banks of Ukraine's Dnipro river but it was Yanukovych – not Yushchenko – who sought revenge by tearing up the December 2004 immunity deal.

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