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Yanukovych hasn't delivered yet

Yesterday at 11:43 | Taras Kuzio

In two opinion articles in the Kyiv Post ([April 14: "Viktor II takes Washington"](#); [May 28: "Fear and loathing on the post-campaign trail"](#)), together with an earlier highly optimistic opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal published a day after the second round, Adrian Karatnycky -- senior fellow with the Atlantic Council of the United States and managing partner of Myrmidon Group LLC-- makes optimistic, but wrong, claims.

* President Viktor Yanukovych's establishment of a coalition was a "tour de force." Or, was it an infringement of the Constitution and an outcome of political corruption that the Razumkov Center, Ukraine's premier think tank, believes is the biggest threat to Ukraine's democracy?

* Refers to "the divisive cultural and linguistic agenda being pursued by some in the current government." This policy is not being pursued by only "some" cabinet members but is central to the ideological identity of the Party of Regions and Yanukovych administration. There is no other explanation for the revival of Soviet-era denunciations of "nationalism" that Adrian and myself both remember when the U.S.S.R. existed. In a recent Ukrayinska Pravda report of a meeting between the administration and foreign journalists, Deputy Prime Minister Borys Kolesnikov described Yushchenko and his team in Soviet ideological parlance as "nationalist bandits" -- and Kolesnikov is reportedly part of the "pragmatic" wing of the Party of Regions.

* Claims the administration has not adopted a viewpoint decrying the famine. The Yanukovych administration has not only opposed use of the term "genocide" to describe the Holodomor, which killed millions of Ukrainians in 1932-33, but has also adopted the Russian viewpoint that the famine was a phenomenon that was not directed exclusively against Ukraine. This position not only undermines the work of the last three presidents (Leonid Kuchma was the first Ukrainian president to describe the famine as a genocide in 2003) but also goes against nearly three decades of work by the Ukrainian diaspora and

academic institutions such as Harvard University.

* Recent restrictions on the media are dismissed through banal comparisons to the Viktor Yushchenko era. Two wrongs – even if the comparisons were justified (which they are not) – do not make a right. One unfortunate episode from Tymoshenko's decade-long career in politics is not the same as a systematic presidential policy of seeking to introduce censorship, first in Donetsk and now in Ukraine. As Ukrayinska Pravda reporter Serhiy Leshchenko wrote: 'An eloquent illustration of the optimal model for their relations is the Donetsk region where the Party of Regions has a similar level of popularity to Unified Russia and where alternative views to the authorities are marginalized'. Where does Tymoshenko control a region of Ukraine and seek to impose censorship? No NGO such as Stop Censhrship!, formed on May 21 and signed by over 300 journalists, was formed during the Yushchenko era. Any comparison of the current growing threat of censorship in Ukraine to a one off episode by Tymoshenko cannot be taken seriously as two Tymoshenko governments never dreamt of instituting censorship and BYuT has not issued temnyky. The video clip of Tymoshenko when she said off cue 'Vse propalo' was shown on every television channel. In contrast, most television channels ignored the clip of the collapsing wreath on Yanukovich after being asked not to show it by the presidential administration.

* Yanukovich is guided by the pragmatists in the Party of Regions. This regularly repeated mantra is wrong as it misunderstands the Party of Regions which evolved in the post-Kuchma era into an ideological political party that speaks on behalf of, and claims to defend, the Eastern Slavic, Russophone and neo-Soviet identities of Eastern-Southern Ukrainians. The Party of Regions is supported by a large number of ex-communist voters, has gone into coalitions twice with the communists and has established coalitions in the Crimean parliament with Russian nationalist-separatists (Sojuz party) and the national-bolshevik Vitrenko bloc. The Yanukovich administrations Russophile and sovietophile domestic policies are central to the ideological identity of the Party of Regions. Yanukovich's elections changed Ukraine 180 degrees from an attempt by Yushchenko to build a national identity based on Galicia and to conduct a single vector pro-Western foreign policy to today's also flawed attempt to build a national identity on Donetsk and a single vector pro-Russian foreign policy.

* A belief in the reformist potential of the Mykola Azarov government is out of place with most analyses. The government consists of former Kuchma era officials, often discredited, whose average age in their late 50s and low 60s means their formative career years were in the Leonid Brezhnev 'era of stagnation'. The government is the first of seventeen with not a single woman whose place, according to Yanukovich is 'in the kitchen' not in politics. Opposition leader Yanukovich promised a 'team of professionals' and a reform program but he has failed to deliver either of these in his first 100 days in office.

* Yanukovich seeks to "maintain a balance in Ukraine's relationship with Europe, the U.S. and Russia." This mistakenly believes that Yanukovich is "Kuchma-2." Kuchma was a pragmatist and ideologically amorphous, willing to balance Ukraine's domestic and foreign policy interests but on the whole Kuchma, together with his close adviser Volodymyr Horbulin, pursued a pro-Western multi-vector foreign policy. Yanukovich is the ideological alternative to Yushchenko's presidency - not the return of Kuchma-era pragmatism. The first 100 days of Yanukovich's presidency show him to be pursuing a pro-Russian single vector foreign policy, not a Kuchma era 'balanced' foreign policy.

* Yanukovich has "impressive accomplishment" in foreign affairs. Western policymakers and analysts believe him to have moved too close to Russia and every analysis is highly critical of the "cheap gas" for Black Sea Fleet deal, both for the undemocratic and unconstitutional manner in which it was adopted and the agreement itself. The gas lobby, with its links to the former opaque RosUkrEnergo gas intermediary, is in control of the presidential administration, Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and Foreign Ministry. In effect, RosUkrEnergo is in charge of Ukraine's foreign and security policy and how they perceive the country's national interests will have little affinity with European values.

* Yanukovich will "move the country toward the aim of eventual membership in the European Union." For this to happen would require the administration to pursue democratic policies at home. The Kuchma era showed that Ukraine cannot integrate into the European Union if it pursues Eurasian domestic policies that are inconsistent with European values, such as media censorship, use of the SBU against the opposition, restrictions on democratic rights and other undemocratic policies

*In opposition, the leader of the Party of Regions promised three things he has failed to deliver in his first 100 days in office: reforms, stability and national unity. If he had delivered them, Yanukovych would have been subjected to far less criticism on the pages of the Kyiv Post and elsewhere. Adrian is right to call for more balanced coverage of Ukraine and the Yanukovych administration. Unfortunately, his own analysis does not conform to his own requirements of others and comes perilously close to being apologetic. There is certainly a need for more multi-vector analyses.

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