

Inferiorities, complexes and conspiracies

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This ability to see oneself as equal to the West seems to be impossible for eastern Slavs - with the exception perhaps of western Ukrainians. Since the 18th century, eastern Slavs have been embroiled by internal conflicts between Westernizers and Slavophiles.

In Russia the Slavophiles came to power in 2000 with Vladimir Putin. In Ukraine they won the 2010 elections a decade later with Viktor Yanukovich. In the last two decades the two most popular parties in Ukraine have been Slavophile – the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) until 2002 and the Party of Regions since 2006.

Slavophiles, whether Ukrainian or Russian, fear and loathe the West, especially the US and Germany. Russian nationalists in 1918 believed Germans and Austrians were conspiring to establish an independent Ukrainian state. Eastern Ukrainians and Russians saw coloured revolutions, including the Orange Revolution, as a US backed conspiracy.

These inferiority complexes can be found in the writings of even young generation “political experts” such as Kost Bondarenko. Bondarenko was deputy leader of the Silna Ukraina party that positioned itself as a party of Ukraine’s emerging middle class. Most of Deputy Prime Minister Sergiy Tigipko’s 13 percent’s voters in the 2010 elections were middle class urban professionals and businesspersons.

Silna Ukraina is set to merge with the neo-Soviet and oligarch-populist Party of Regions.

Writing in the Kyiv Post, ([Dec. 1 "German power"](#)), Bondarenko seems to believe there is a German conspiracy against Ukraine and that Germans see Ukraine as an “American creation.”

Bondarenko is convinced the level of corruption is not higher in Ukraine than in some EU countries. Ukraine dropped 18 places this year in Transparency International's annual rankings to 152nd and now stands below Russia and even Azerbaijan (both 143rd) and alongside Congo, the Central African Republic and Tajikistan.

Georgia – not Ukraine – is close to European Union member states in her low levels of corruption. In 2011 Transparency International ranked Georgia 64th (compared to Ukraine's 152nd). Georgia is ranked better than old EU members Italy (69) and Greece (80) and new EU members Romania (75) and Bulgaria (86) and sits alongside Slovakia (66) and Hungary (54).

Could Bondarenko please tell us which EU country has worse rates of corruption than Ukraine?

Inferiority complexes such as these are deeply rooted in the psychologies of “political experts” and political leaders from Russia and eastern Ukraine. They feel a need to angrily reply to Western criticism of human rights abuses by denying there is corruption, political repression, media censorship or election fraud in Ukraine or Russia. Yanukovich, for example, has always claimed there was no election fraud in 2004.

Bruce Jackson, a Washington-based political consultant for the Yanukovich administration, explained the psychological relationship of Yanukovich and the Party of Regions to the West:

“What Yanukovich, personally, and the Party of Regions, want is legitimacy and the recognition of equality. Particularly, because they are from the east. They feel like everybody treats them like European Negroes. That they are second-class citizens, that Europeans count them as less, that their culture is less worthy, their institutions and the word of Ukraine in international politics is less worthy than everybody else's.”

Jackson continues:

“I think Yanukovich told me more today than I heard before. He said that even com-

pared to Slovakia or Slovenia, the Ukrainians' rights are denied to Ukraine by prejudice, by racial discrimination, as Poles and Russians did. It's hugely important for him. Symbolic things are very important...He wants symbols that show Ukraine is a normal state, that people in the East of the country are not morally less worthy than the people in the West. And that's really important to him. It's self-image, it's self-respect. It's all about respect (Interview with Bruce Jackson in Den, 8 February 2011)."

At the same time, while seeking Western respect, domestic policies undertaken by Slavophiles undermine their image in the West. Yanukovich's image is already very poor in the West.

Bondarenko should stop denouncing Western criticism and promote policies and reforms that would lead to Ukraine's Europeanization. It is time to overcome neo-Soviet inferiority complexes that only serve to push Ukraine further into international isolation and marginalisation from European affairs.

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