

# Mythmaking and Its Discontents in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Campaign

OLENA YATSUNSKA

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the phenomenon of how myths were inculcated into the Ukrainian electorate's conscience during the 2004 presidential campaign. The study of electoral myths makes it possible to formulate mechanisms to neutralize them.

**Key words:** electoral myths, manipulative techniques, presidential campaign, Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, Viktor Yushchenko

## Introduction

The phenomenon of the Orange Revolution will remain the object of analysis for political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and others for a long time. Were the events of fall–winter 2004 the spontaneous expression of the will of Ukrainians, or was it a carefully prepared action? What types of myths were exploited during the presidential campaign in Ukraine and how did they affect the electorate's choice? What mechanisms were used to implement the myths? Why did one type of myth take root among the people while others did not? What was the mass media's role and the level of their manipulation? Why did the regime's candidate, Viktor Yanukovich, who dominated most of the media, especially TV, lose this election?

Analysis of the role of electoral myths and the scale of their application in the 2004 presidential campaign in Ukraine will allow not only a better understanding of the situation in Ukraine during the election, but it will also help determine why millions of Ukrainians went out into streets to protest fraudulent election results.

Modern election campaigns are based on a particular myth or a system of myths, which, being a powerful means of influence, help determine particular values and regulations as well as structure the public's vision of the present and future.<sup>1</sup> There are many kinds of electoral myths and they all have different goals, which makes it possible to influence, with the help of one or more myths, almost all layers of society.

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Olena Yatsunska is an associate professor at the National University of Shipbuilding (Mykolayiv, Ukraine). She has a PhD in political science. Copyright © 2006 Heldref Publications

The mass media is a powerful means of inculcating myths into the public's conscience. Myths make it possible to simplify reality and reduce many of the existing contradictions to the primitive formula of the struggle between good and evil. They practically answer the following question: what is right and wrong? Moreover, myths give politicians a hero complex. Myths use images, which make them recognizable, retainable, and whole. Myths are irrational; their environment are human feelings and emotions, mostly want of love and approval, feelings of safety, duty and justice, a fear of uncertainty, and a sense of guilt. If there are no emotions, there is no identification with the hero, no shared feeling.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, myths always meet the expectations of the public and political environment. Myths help create a particular image of a candidate that perfectly suits a particular group of voters. The most typical myths used in election campaigns are the following:

1. Image myths—aimed at creating and/or reinforcing a candidate's positive image as well as tarnishing his/her rival's image
2. Technological myths—created for the realization of the immediate political tasks
3. Eternal myths—actualized at certain moments of an election campaign<sup>3</sup>

All these types of myths were used during the 2004 presidential campaign. Moreover, their inculcating into the public's conscience was determined by the so-called key events of the electoral campaign (see table 1).

**TABLE 1. Chronology of Myths Used**

Period	Time Limits of the Period and the Limiting Events	The Type of Electoral Mythology Used	Dominating Myth(s)
1	July 3–September 6–13, 2004 The official start of the election campaign Yushchenko's illness	Image mythology	Image myths
2	September 18–October 13, 2004 Yushchenko's speech on <i>Yevropeyska Ploshcha</i> Marich's deportation	Technological mythology/ "Eternal" mythology	Compromising and attacking myths/ Russian integration vector myth
3	October 13–October 31, 2004 Pustovoytenko's claim of a possible "Chestnut coup" Presidential elections in Ukraine	Technological mythology	Terrorism threat myth
4	November 1–November 21, 2004 The situation in Ukraine ahead of the runoff	"Eternal" mythology	West versus East myth

### Image Myths

Image forms began to form at the official start of the election campaign in Ukraine. These types of myths were used for creating and/or reinforcing a candidate's positive image as well as tarnishing his/her rival's image. It is worth noting that Ukrainians adapted a very typical American political culture myth—the American dream. Its message is “I'm one of you, but I took pains and succeeded.”<sup>4</sup>

During the Ukrainian presidential campaign, voters were presented with a slightly revised version of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's biography, the basis of which was the American dream myth. Russian political operatives managed to create an image of a humanitarian who had worked his way up from humble beginnings, despite the fact that he has a criminal record. Yanukovich was charged with robbery in 1967 and with assault in 1970.

In all developed countries, a criminal record would preclude an individual from being elected president. Moreover, this fact would simply destroy an individual's political career.

However, in Ukraine the sob story of a boy who lived with his grandmother, walked five kilometers to school everyday, held out against the merciless regime, and has proved a real fighter and warrior, was promoted in the books *The Mystery of Viktor Yanukovich* by Valentyn Chemerys<sup>5</sup> and *Touch the Fate* by Vera Nikolaeva.<sup>6</sup> Yanukovich's election team also distributed a pamphlet titled “A Hundred Questions to PM,” in which Yanukovich was compared to Václav Havel, who spent five years in prison. But this was an incorrect comparison because Havel was a prisoner of conscience.

The real know-how of the presidential campaign was the involvement of so-called “technical” (dummy) candidates whose appearance in the mass media served one goal—to present the opposition leader, Viktor Yushchenko, as evil, while simultaneously presenting Yanukovich as a noble and decent person.

To ruin his image, political ads on the state TV channel UT-1, which broadcasts to 97 percent of the country's territory and provides official information on the situation in the country and the authorities' activities, were broadcast in a proper succession. First, the leader of Ukrainian nationalists, Roman Kozak, claimed that he was as ardent a nationalist as Yushchenko, but at the same time warned the Ukrainian people that Yushchenko's wife had American citizenship, which is a threat to Ukraine. Next was a “Yes! Yushchenko for President!” ad followed by patriotic appeals of Oleksandr Yakovenko, leader of the Communist Party of Workers and Peasants, to say “No!” to American dictatorship to which Yushchenko's victory, in his opinion, would lead.

### Compromising and Attacking Myths

Technological myths were also used during the 2004 presidential campaign. These myths were used for political purposes. They transformed Yushchenko's mysterious, poison-related illness story into a farce. Yanukovich's election team tried to create a myth to discredit Yushchenko.

On the night of September 6, 2004, after an appearance in Chernihiv, Yushchenko felt unwell (presumably, after having dinner with the head of the Security Service of Ukraine [SBU]). Ukrainian doctors diagnosed the illness as the flu. However, on September 9, 2004, Yushchenko's condition worsened, so he flew to the Rudolfinerhause Clinic in Austria for treatment and stayed there for a week. His symptoms suggested poisoning. The substance that caused it remained undetected. According to Austrian doctors, it could have been a biological agent, but they did not discount the possibility of food poisoning. They also confirmed that Yushchenko was in very critical condition and that if he had turned for help several hours later, there was an 80 percent chance he would have died.

On September 17, 2004, Oleksandr Zinchenko, vice speaker of the Verkhovna Rada and a member of Yushchenko's staff, made the Rudolfinerhause Clinic's diagnosis public. It stated that the deterioration of Yushchenko's health "was caused by serious virus infection and chemical substances that are not part of food products."<sup>7</sup> Zinchenko alleged that there was evidence of an assassination attempt.

The turning point of the campaign was, in the opinion of many analysts, Yushchenko's appearance at the "We'll Win Together" mass meeting on September 18, 2004, at *Yevropeyska Ploshcha* (European Square) in Kyiv. His words were "My special compliments to the authorities: you won't poison us!"<sup>8</sup> Several days later an opposition leader in Parliament alleged that "there is a political kitchen in Ukraine where assassinations are ordered."<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the very appearance of Yushchenko in the Verkhovna Rada, his face disfigured almost beyond recognition, became a convincing argument both for politicians and the electorate that he had been poisoned. As a result, 425 deputies approved the resolution on creating a Parliament Investigation Committee to investigate Yushchenko's poisoning. Volodymyr Syvkovych was appointed to head the committee.

On September 22, 2004, the General Prosecutor's Office began investigating a possible assassination attempt.<sup>10</sup> Later, however, the case was transferred to the SBU, but it was returned to the General Prosecutor's Office. On September 28, 2004, Reuters ran a story, allegedly based on Rudolfinerhause Clinic reports, that "claims about poisoning of the candidate for president of Ukraine Yushchenko are absolutely groundless from medical viewpoint."<sup>11</sup> This story caused a lot of speculation in the media about Yushchenko's health and the causes of his illness. However, Rudolfinerhause's director, Michael Zimpfer, declared that the press release had not been issued by his clinic, therefore, it was false.<sup>12</sup>

A preliminary resolution of the temporary investigation committee made public by Syvkovych on October 7, 2004, confused the situation further, as it did not provide any answers and vaguely concluded that there was no evidence either to prove or disprove a possible assassination attempt. Moreover, Syvkovych doubted the competence of Rudolfinerhause's doctors.

This resolution caused a heated discussion. People's Deputy Grygory Omelchenko claimed that the document had not been submitted to the committee for approval. Moreover, in his opinion, Syvkovych was not even the author of the document (Syvkovych later discounted this claim).<sup>13</sup> As for the members of

the committee, their opinions were contradictory. One of the experts the committee turned to for consultation was Yanukovich's private doctor.<sup>14</sup>

Vice Speaker Zynchenko read an inquiry from Austrian doctors in Parliament asking for Yushchenko's permission to consult with army specialists because, presumably, Yushchenko was poisoned by some specific substances that could have belonged to a biological weapon.<sup>15</sup> This report was not welcomed by Ukrainian medical experts, who concluded that a herpetic infection, not poisoning, caused Yushchenko's illness. The Head of Expert Committee, Professor Yuri Shupik, is known to have provided false information in the Heorhiy Gongadze case.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, on October 22, 2004, the General Prosecutor's Office dropped their assassination investigation for lack of evidence. Was Yushchenko's illness the result of an assassination attempt? If so, who ordered it? We are not likely to get answers to these questions soon. It is not surprising, as there are precedents in the history of Ukraine. Almost all cases of alleged poisoning remain unsolved.

For example, in February 1957, the son of the last Hetman of Ukraine and the leader of the Ukrainian Monarch Movement, Danylo Skoropadsky, died suddenly in London. He is still believed to have been poisoned in a café by poison added into a saltcellar. However, the circumstances of his death remain obscure. The deaths of the Union of Ukrainian Nationalists leaders Lev Rebet (1957) and Stepan Bandera (1959) are just as mysterious. Experts detected poison in their systems, but the name of the assassin became known only in 1961, when KGB agent Bohdan Stashynsky surrendered to West German authorities and pleaded guilty. A more recent example is the mysterious death in 2002 of Oleh Oleksenko, a people's deputy and member of Nasha Ukraina (Our Ukraine), who was hospitalized by a pancreatic attack (the same diagnosis as in Yushchenko's case) and died three days later after two operations. The media reported that doctors were unable to save his life.<sup>17</sup>

Yushchenko's illness brought him into the limelight. There was intensive speculation by the media about his ailment and its possible causes. The state-controlled media tried to turn the alleged poisoning into a farce by portraying him as a liar. Despite these attempts, Yushchenko's popularity rating increased. According to a Ukrainian Sociological Service survey conducted during October 1–5, 2004, 40.3 percent of the 2,339 respondents were willing to vote for Yushchenko and 34.6 percent for Yanukovich. Moreover, 46 percent of the respondents were sure that there was an attempted poisoning and only 10 percent believed it was election propaganda from Yushchenko's headquarters.<sup>18</sup>

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The poisoning scandal resulted in increased popularity for Yushchenko, which was not good for Yanukovich. Yanukovich's advisers decided their candidate could also benefit from the victim image. They used the method known as "myth robbery," which was first termed and described by the well-known French researcher Roland Barthes.<sup>19</sup>

On September 24, 2004, in Ivano-Frankivsk (one of the alleged centers of national extremists) someone threw an egg that struck Yanukovich on the breast. After a brief, but telling pause, he fainted and fell over. He was taken to a hospital and put on intravenous fluids for some time; however, by the end of the day he was back in Kyiv. The General Prosecutor's Office began investigating a possible assassination attempt.

Yanukovich's supporters and campaign staff were not unanimous in rendering the event. For example, Ganna Stetsyv-German, Yanukovich's press secretary (who was not present at the incident), and Chief of Staff Serhiy Tyhypko confirmed that two objects (sharp and obtuse) were thrown at Yanukovich simultaneously. Taras Chornovil, a Yanukovich adviser, was sure that several stones were thrown and that one hit Yanukovich on his temple. According to the testimony of Ivano-Frankivsk's governor, Mykhaylo Vyshyvanyuk, who witnessed the incident, there were two stones. Oleksandr Ternavsky, a representative of the state press service, saw a camera battery. However, a recording of the incident shows that nothing but an egg was thrown.

The incident made it possible for Yanukovich's staff to portray him as a victim of national extremists. Yanukovich accused Yushchenko and his team of instigating such actions. Yanukovich's supporters adopted the "political extremism" myth. The Ivano-Frankivsk incident was called a terrorist act against democracy by the authorities. The event aroused a wave of "spontaneous" meetings. Hundreds of letters from indignant citizens, in the spirit of late-Brezhnevism, were sent to the Cabinet of Ministers' Web site. People accused "radical-yushchenkovtsy" of being responsible for this incident and expressed concern for Yanukovich, who suffered for the truth and for the people.

But, to the great disappointment of Yanukovich's team, the scheme did not work. The majority of voters did not take the incident seriously; it backfired and became the source of a series of jokes.

The myth concerning the assassination attempt on Yanukovich was doomed from the beginning. His team should have taken into consideration that throwing eggs is a traditional act of protest. The list of those who are "victims" of this form of protest (but did not make a big problem of it) includes prominent figures such as Gerhard Schröder, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Helmut Kohl, Bill Gates, and others.

The opposition responded to the accusations by creating a secondary myth, which satirized the "political extremism" myth. First, people's deputy and a Nasha Ukraina (Our Ukraine) member, Yuri Karmazyn, proposed creating a Temporary Investigation Committee to investigate the attack on Yanukovich. The Committee was to find out whether the Ivano-Frankivsk event was an assassination attempt or a terrorist attack against a statesman; to clarify which eggs had been used: a quail's, hen's, goose's, or ostrich's; to decide whether these eggs

were fresh, rotten, or boiled; to calculate what the power of the blow could depend on; and to find out the reason why the prime minister fainted.<sup>20</sup> Another opposition figure, People's Deputy Serhiy Teryokhin, proposed another resolution, which banned throwing eggs, fresh or boiled, at any presidential candidate. The leader of the Yabluko Party, Mykhaylo Brodsky, a presidential candidate close to the opposition, demanded an immediate medical examination of Yanukovych. Moreover, he turned all the versions of the "object" used in the attempt into a farce by stating that: "[the] Yabluko Party has evidence that Yanukovych was really hit by the battery but not camera battery, as the Prime Minister's staff claims. It was a tank battery. And it was thrown not from the crowd but from the helicopter hired by individuals close to the well-known financier George Soros."<sup>21</sup>

It is quite natural that Yanukovych's team did their best to save their myth. First, the parliamentary majority rejected Karmazyn's resolution as "senseless and irrelevant." Next, Yanukovych's representative in the Central Election Committee (CEC), Stepan Havrysh, suggested that Yanukovych had been hit with two or three "heavy objects," presumably a stone and a ball bearing that had been catapulted and this is the reason they were invisible on the tape. A week after the event, a stone five centimeters in diameter and an iron ball one centimeter in diameter were found at the location of the alleged assassination attempt. The "terrorist act" investigation was over.

Consequently, Yanukovych's team destroyed its own myth concerning "political extremism" by exaggerating it. Too much attention to Yanukovych's health; accusations of nationalism and terrorism; subsequent transformations of an egg into a stone, battery, and a ball bearing had, in the long run, ruined the image of a strong, courageous person. As a result, it was Yushchenko, with his disfigured face, who got sympathies while Yanukovych, who fainted after being hit by an egg, looked ridiculous.

The complete failure of the "political extremism" myth is proved by the results of a telephone survey conducted by the sociological service of the Oleksandr Razumkov Center on September 28 and 29, 2004, in Kyiv, Donetsk, and Ivano-Frankivsk with 610, 600, and 626 respondents, respectively. The majority of the respondents were aware of the incident but only 2 percent in Kyiv, 8 percent in Donetsk, and 3 percent in Ivano-Frankivsk believed it was an assassination attempt. Forty-one percent of the respondents in Kyiv, 29 percent in Donetsk, and 26 percent in Ivano-Frankivsk considered it a criminal offense (the sociological service counted the percentage of the number of those who knew about the incident). Ten percent in Kyiv, 37 percent in Donetsk, and 6 percent in Ivano-Frankivsk thought it was a provocation against Yanukovych. Ten percent of the respondents in Kyiv, 2 percent in Donetsk, and 24 percent in Ivano-Frankivsk called it a provocation against the opposition. Sixteen percent, 7 percent, and 22 percent of the respondents, respectively, were convinced that the egg attack was a public relations stunt propagated by the authorities, while 2 percent, 3 percent, and 2 percent, respectively, believed it was a public relations stunt propagated by the opposition. The rest of the respondents were uncertain or gave their own explanation.<sup>22</sup>

### **Russian Integration Vector Myth**

On September 27, 2004, at a meeting with the Russian mass media managers, Yanukovich advocated allowing dual citizenship and making Russian an official language.<sup>23</sup> He also proposed a “new structure of European security,” with both Ukraine and Russia as participants.<sup>24</sup>

These initiatives were a great surprise, as they completely contradicted Yanukovich’s previous statements and his election platform. The outgoing president, Leonid Kuchma, strongly criticized the Yanukovich’s statements, insisting that they were empty election promises that were impossible to fulfill. He also maintained that the Constitution is like the Lord’s Prayer, and could not be ignored while considering dual citizenship and official language issues.<sup>25</sup>

Trying to dispel the so-called Russian Integration Vector myth, the opposition pointed to the various negative consequences that would result from the loss of Ukrainian identity, the split of the nation into “Ukrainians” and “Ukrainian-Russians,” and the prospect of Ukrainians serving in the Russian army, which means they would have to participate in military conflicts on Russian territory.<sup>26</sup>

Russia, however, welcomed the idea of making Russian the second official language in Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin made it clear that he favored this myth when he visited Ukraine several days before the first round of elections. The first place he visited was the Kyiv TV Center, where he participated in an interactive TV show, answering dozens of phone calls from Ukrainian viewers. This was an unprecedented event. Never before had the president of another country addressed the Ukrainian people on the eve of an election. Although Putin did not directly call on the Ukrainian people to vote for Yanukovich, his “presents” were commensurate with Yanukovich’s proposed initiatives. For example, Putin promised that Ukrainians would not need visas to come to Russia (unlike citizens of other CIS countries). Moreover, he guaranteed that the temporary registration requirement for Ukrainian citizens in Russia would be extended from three days to three months. As for dual citizenship, Putin pledged that he would put this issue on the agenda in the Duma.<sup>27</sup>

In the opinion of many analysts, Putin’s visit on the eve of the election and his indirect, yet clear support of Yanukovich ensured that Russians and Russian-speaking voters, residing mainly in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, would support Yanukovich, which was later proved by the results of the first round of the election.

### **Terrorism Threat Myth**

When Nazi Germany was close to defeat in World War II, Hitler organized “Werewolf” detachments—gangs composed of teenagers meant to harass enemy armies. However, the Werewolf Movement did not really exist. The Werewolves heroic actions were broadcast from a radio station in a Berlin suburb. Joseph Goebbels was the “author” of the Werewolves heroic deeds. When told directly that the Werewolf news was false, Goebbels retorted that it was news that was needed. The principle of Goebbels’s propaganda was to present something that did not exist as reality to eventually make it a fait accompli.<sup>28</sup> Goebbels’s method

was applied by Yanukovych's spin doctors during the third period of Ukrainian election campaign, the period of the terrorism myths.

On October 12, 2004, border guards at Boryspil International Airport in Kyiv detained Aleksandar Marić, a Serbian national who traveled to Ukraine as a Freedom House representative to support nonpartisan voter education activities in preparation for the October 31, 2004, presidential election. It should be noted that Marić possessed a valid, one-year multientry Ukrainian visa. The Ukrainian authorities offered no explanation for Marić's deportation. He was detained in a holding cell for eleven hours before being sent back to Serbia.<sup>29</sup>

The most probable reason for Marić's deportation was his active participation in the Otpor (Resistance) organization, which played a key role in ousting Slobodan Milošević from power. Moreover, Marić had been a consultant for the Georgia-based Kmara organization, which took the lead in the Rose Revolution. The Ukrainian authorities apparently decided it would be safer to have an Otpor activist as far from Ukraine as possible on the eve of the election. Many Ukrainian analysts believed that officials could have possibly regarded Marić as an "instructor on carrying out revolutions."<sup>30</sup> The Ukrainian authorities were apprehensive of civil unrest. This was indirectly proved several hours after Marić left the country, when the pro-regime organization, the Coordination Council of Democratic Forces, who supported Yanukovych's candidacy, called for the prevention of a Chestnut Revolution (these trees are a symbol of Kyiv) on election day.

The Council painted a disturbing picture of a Chestnut coup to be launched by the opposition on the night of November 1, 2004, should the results of the elections be unfavorable for Yushchenko. National Democratic Party leader Valery Pustovoytenko, chairman of the meeting, warned: "Opposition forces are plotting a Ukrainian version of civil discord and the ouster of the presidents in Serbia and Georgia."<sup>31</sup> The Council urged the authorities to take every measure to prevent a destabilizing political situation.

These two events—Marić's deportation and the threat of the Chestnut Revolution—became a starting point for inculcating a new myth into the electorate's conscience—the terrorist threat myth. It is worth noting that the realization of this myth allowed Kuchma and Yanukovych to launch a legal fight against the opposition under the pretense of fighting terrorism.

On October 15, 2004, an unauthorized search was conducted in the Kyiv office of the oppositional youth organization Pora (It's Time). The police officers refused to give their names or show identification. They found explosive devices and printed materials critical of Yanukovych. These findings became the basis for starting an investigation of the activists in the Pora organization. The mass media aggravated the situation by labeling the opposition as terrorists. They alleged that terrorist groups were being formed to carry out terrorist acts to destabilize the situation in the country on the eve of the elections. An activist in the Ukrainian People's Party (a member of the Nasha Ukraina bloc), Yaroslav Godunok, was detained.

For several days after October 15, SBU agents conducted searches in almost all of the opposition organizations' offices that were somehow involved in the upcom-

ing elections (Pora, Svoboda Vyboru [Freedom of Choice], Ukrayinska khvylya [Ukrainian Wave], Znayu! [I Know], and Studentske Bratstvo Lvivshyny [Fraternity of the Lviv Region]), as well as the apartments of their leaders and activists.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the protests, the SBU claimed that it carried out the searches because explosive devices were being kept illegally. Vasyl Baziv, deputy head of the presidential office, added that the main aim of the searches was to restore order: "To vote with grenades in hands is too serious a case. Nobody must doubt the ability of the state to maintain order in the country and to provide law observance during the elections."<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, according to the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Center during October 20–23, 2004,

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throughout all the regions in Ukraine (2,016 respondents over eighteen years old in 122 settlements, with a 2.3 percent margin of error) found that 47 percent of the respondents believed that the charges against Pora were the result of the authorities' efforts to discredit the opposition, 10 per-

cent believed that the charges were baseless, and 16 percent believed that they were likely to have some grounds.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear that the purpose of the law-enforcement agencies' actions, which were backed by the authorities, was to propagate the image that terrorists supported Yushchenko's campaign and to intimidate Yushchenko's sympathizers. The events of October 23, 2004, sustained the terrorist threat myth.

At a mass meeting in his support, Yushchenko accused the CEC of intending to rig the election. He urged the Commission to put its activity "under people's control." The meeting went ahead without any problems; however, when the people dispersed, some young people broke windows in the CEC building and several minutes later smoke-boxes were thrown into the crowd. People treated this act as a provocation.<sup>35</sup>

The CEC was considering the issue of additional ballots for voting in Russia. Opposition deputies had been trying to prevent electoral fraud in Russia. That was the reason the meeting's participants were asked to stay after Yushchenko's speech to demonstrate "people's power." However, at 11 p.m. the protestors were attacked with hammers and bottles by a group of young people. Eight people were seriously injured. Three attackers were detained. Their documents indicated that they were police officers.

When Yushchenko and members of his staff, who were at the CEC meeting, attempted to come out to the people, they were barred by a ring of OMON officers. According to the police reports, it was *yushchenkovtsy* who were responsible for the "massacre."

A CEC resolution that created forty-one polling stations in Russia caused the fight. The resolution was adopted while the opposition was regulating relations with the OMON. When they tried to join the CEC meeting, the proauthority majority stopped them from entering. Nasha Ukraina members could not stand the offense and knocked down the closed door, which caused a fight.

The next day the state-controlled media reported that the actions of Yushchenko's supporters was a dress rehearsal for the November 1 assault on the CEC building.

On the eve of the election, Yanukovich addressed the Ukrainian people, stating there was a threat of a possible coup. He said that Yushchenko and his supporters were ready to seize power at any cost, and he urged Ukrainians to be on the alert and not respond to any provocations.

Claims of planned bombings at polling stations in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odesa, and other cities; information about army forces being called up to Kyiv; rumors of miners who would come vote in Kyiv; and rumors of criminal gangs being formed to act according to a "Mukachevo scenario" increased the tension. It is worth noting that during the election of the Mukachevo City Council's head, which took place on April 18, 2004, the authorities crashed polling stations, propagated violence, and burnt the opposition's ballots.

Leonid Kuchma, the "guarantor of stability" destabilized the situation further by asking law-enforcement agencies not to react to provocations, which, he was sure, would take place.<sup>36</sup> However, Kuchma did not specify who the provocateurs would be. Thus, while maintaining the terrorist threat myth the authorities attempted to carry out two scenarios: either the "breakdown of the elections" or "guided voting." Although these scenarios presupposed different results, they both were aimed at turning scared Ukrainians into political zombies.

#### **West versus East Myth (or the Postelection Split of Ukraine)**

Election officials took ten days to announce the first-round results. The final count gave Yushchenko 39.87 percent of the vote, while Yanukovich received 39.32 percent. The results revealed that Yushchenko had received strong support in the western and central regions of Ukraine and Kyiv.

These results became the grounds for propagating a myth about the electorate voting along ethnic lines. (Russians only voted for Yanukovich, and Ukrainians voted only for Yushchenko.) The so-called postelection split the Ukrainian society into west and east, which could have lead to a civil war.

It is worth noting that if Ukrainians had voted along ethnic lines, Yanukovich would not have received more than 50 percent of the vote in east and south Ukraine. According to the All-Ukrainian census, more than half of the inhabitants in the Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya, Odesa, Mykolayiv, and Kherson oblasts are Ukrainians. The number of Ukrainians in the south and east constitute two-thirds of the population (Russians constitute the other third of the population). However, Ukrainians are not the dominant ethnic group in the Crimea Republic. If all Russians who live in south and east Ukraine voted for Yanukovich, their contribution would have been insignificant.

According to this myth, Yushchenko was portrayed as a person who would bring ethnic strife to Ukraine and infringe on the rights of Russian-speaking citizens. While cultivating this myth, the authorities simultaneously tried their best to assure the voters that only Yanukovych could guarantee peace and stability.

The managers of industrial enterprises in the south and east, the so-called “industrial barons,” heightened tensions when they declared at their Constituent Congress that Yushchenko’s coming to power would cause a change of heart in their relationship with their main customer, Russia. They decided to organize a show of support for Yanukovych that was meant to demonstrate the “unity of all workers of the major industrial enterprises of Ukraine in their support of Yanukovych’s social and economic course, to draw public attention to the threat to peace and stability which is a direct consequence of the activities of power-hungry Yushchenko and his team, accompanied by inadmissible external pressure.”<sup>37</sup> To warn Ukrainian citizens of the threat embodied in Yushchenko and his team, all the factories were to blow their whistles at 1 p.m. on November 13, 2004.

However, a limited number of enterprises actually blew their whistles and organized meetings, which made the whole event look ridiculous. Opposition representatives called the show of support absurd. What made the situation even more comical was the recollection that in Soviet times, factories used whistles on sad occasions, such as the death of the Central Committee’s general secretary.

The church also played a role against the splitting of Ukraine. The authorities organized a *Krestny Khid* (religious procession) to Kyiv for the parishioners of the Luhansk and Starobelsk eparchies for the “kindest Christian,” Yanukovych, who would not allow “the split of the Ukrainian land and who would protect from all troubles and misfortunes and against the antichrist Yushchenko.”<sup>38</sup>

It should be noted that several days before the second round of voting this myth was transformed into the myth about “nashism (from the name of the oppositional block of political parties *Nasha Ukraina*)-fascism” attack from the west of Ukraine, about the “orange (the color of Ukrainian opposition in 2004 election campaign)-brown (the color of fascists) threat.” This card was played in the fall of 2003, during Yushchenko’s visit to Donetsk, where he was depicted in a Nazi uniform on billboards. At the Donetsk Unions for Yanukovych meeting claims were made that “Ukraine is waging the war against fascism.”<sup>39</sup> The leader of the Donetsk organization Russian Block, Volodymyr Filatov, spoke about the alleged real threat of fascist dictatorship: “We are here because Ukraine faces a real threat of fascist dictatorship [ . . . ] We are against national and all the more fascist dictatorship.”<sup>40</sup> In leaflets spread in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, Yushchenko was labeled as *banderovets*,<sup>41</sup> fascist, betrayer, American son-in-law, extremist, warmonger, and hater of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Thus, it is apparent that the authorities, cultivating the myth of dividing Ukraine, are to blame for trying to provoke a civil war.

### Conclusion

Analysis of the 2004 presidential campaign in Ukraine shows that different types of electoral myths were used. Thus, in creating a positive or negative image of

the presidential candidates, image myths were used. What is peculiar about the 2004 presidential election is the application of the American dream myth, which is atypical for Ukrainian culture. The real phenomenon of the election was the involvement of “technical” candidates, who served only one goal: to tarnish Yushchenko’s image.

The process of creating myths was largely influenced by the alleged poisoning of Yushchenko and the egg attack on Yanukovych. It was these events that led to the predominance of the compromising and attacking myths. The main feature of this period was the use of the “myth robbery,” a method employed by Yanukovych’s advisers. Its failure, however, resulted in activating the Russian integration vector myths, which emphasized the official status of the Russian language and dual citizenship.

The terrorism threat myth created during the campaign made it possible for the authorities to harass the opposition under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

Finally, the West versus East myth became an instrument for destabilizing the country. The authorities used it for the sake of Yanukovych’s victory.

But against all odds, and despite official propaganda and open interference from Russia, the Ukrainian electorate was mature enough to make a democratic choice by electing Yushchenko.

The study of electoral myths not only traces the way particular social and political views are inculcated into the electorate’s mind, but also makes it possible to work out mechanisms for their neutralization. The knowledge of such mechanisms will prevent the development of “manipulating democracy,” which aims to turn a voter into an “information slave” who has an illusion of being a free and independent person, able to make a conscious choice, while being manipulated without even realizing it.

### NOTES

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4. Ibid.
5. Valentyn Chemerys, *Zagadka Viktora Yanukovycha. Sproba Doslidzhennya* (Kyiv: Atoll, 2004).
6. Vera Nikolayeva, *Prikosnis k Sudbe. Viktor Yanukovych* (Kyiv: Atoll, 2004).
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8. *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Vozvrashchenie Yushchenko. ‘Bandity Budut Sidet v Tyurmakh!’” October 11, 2004.
9. *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Viktor Yushchenko: ‘Ubiitsa – eto Vlast!’” September 21, 2004.
10. *Korrespondent*, “Po Faktu Otravleniya Yushchenko Genprokuratura Vozbudila Ugolovnoe Delo,” September 21, 2004.
11. *Obkom*, “Reyters Soobshchil Nepravdu Ob Otravlenii Yushchenko,” October 4, 2004.

12. *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Kto Zapustil Falshivyi Press-Reliz o Yushchenko?” October 4, 2004.
13. *UNIAN, Novyny z Ukrainy*, “Syvkovych Ne Uzgodyv Vchorashnii Vystup z TSK z Rozsliduvanniy Otruennya Yushchenko,” October 8, 2004.
14. *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Komissiyu po Otravleniyu Yushchenko Konsultiroval Vrach Yanukovycha,” October 8, 2004.
15. *Korrespondent*, “Yushchenko Razreshil Avstriiskim Vracham Privlech Spetsialistov po Biologicheskomu Oruzhiyu,” October 7, 2004.
16. *Ukrainska Pravda*, “Bolezn Yushchenko ot Gerpisa Opredelil Professor, Kotoryi Oshibsya v Dele Gongadze,” October 22, 2004. Heorihy Gongadze was a Ukrainian journalist kidnapped and murdered in 2000. The circumstances of his death became a national scandal and a focus of protests against the government of then-president Leonid Kuchma. Gongadze’s killers have yet to be publicly identified or put on trial, although two men accused of his murder were arrested in March 2005.
17. *Ukrainski Vybir*, “Prezydentski Vybery 2004, Otravlenie Po-Ukrainski,” October 12, 2004.
18. *Ukrainskii Politicheskii Web za Nedelyu*, “Bakteriologicheskie Vybery v Strane Pobedivshogo Banditizma,” October 4–11, 2004, <http://ukraine.doc.iatp.org.ua/news/19.htm>.
19. Roland Bart, *Mifologii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1996), 262.
20. *Ukrainska Pravda* “V Parlamente Vyyasnyayut Kurinyimi ili Strausinyimi Yaitsami Brosili v Yanukovycha,” September 27, 2004.
21. *Korrespondent*, “Brodsky Trebuet Obsledovat Yanukovycha,” September 29, 2004.
22. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, “Trokratnoe Ekho Odongo Skandala,” October 2–8, 2004.
23. It is worth noting that since 1654 (when Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky persuaded the Cossacks to ally with the Russian tsar in the Treaty of Pereyaslav, which eventually led to the incorporation of Left-bank Ukraine into Russia), most of Ukraine’s territory was a part of the Russian empire. Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union in 1922. According to the data of the 2001 All-Ukrainian population census, the biggest ethnic group after Ukrainians is Russians—17.3 percent. Fifty-eight percent of Russians live in the Crimea Republic. Russian is the native language for 29.6 percent of the population. In comparison with previous population census (1989), this parameter has decreased by 3.2 percent.
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28. Court Riss, *Advokat Dyavola* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2000), 445.
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32. *Korrespondent*, “Oblava na Opozitsiyu Vedetsa po Vsei Ukraine,” October 22, 2004.
33. *Materik*, “Mezhdru Intuitsiy i Informatsiy: Silovye Rubikony Vybrov,” October 26, 2004.
34. *Korrespondent*, “Opros: 47 protsentov Ukrainitsev Uvereniy, Chto Obviniya Protiv ‘Pory’—Provokatsiya Vlasti,” October 26, 2004.

