



# *Introduction: Perspectives on the Orange Revolution*

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ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2004, the second round of the highly contested presidential elections in Ukraine took place. The next day, it became clear that President Leonid Kuchma's incumbent regime had crudely rigged the elections to the advantage of its candidate, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. Without hesitation, the challenger, Viktor Yushchenko, a former prime minister, declared the victory had been stolen from him and urged citizens to gather at "Maidan," Kyiv's Independence Square in the center of the city. Yushchenko's call was heard through much of the country thanks to TV Channel 5, which was owned by Petro Poroshenko, a wealthy businessman in Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party. Others stayed connected via the Internet, notably the Web newspaper *Ukrainska pravda*, and also kept in touch on mobile phones. In the freezing morning hours of November 22, thousands gathered at Maidan. Their numbers grew and grew until they finally reached roughly one million. Each presidential candidate declared himself president—a classic situation of dual sovereignty. The Orange Revolution had begun.

The immediate cause of the revolution is abundantly clear: the old regime had brazenly stolen the elections. The opposition—the rightful winners—demanded that the law of the land be obeyed, while the incumbent regime only pretended to do so.

After the first round of the presidential election on October 31, the Central Election Commission, which was effectively controlled by the government, delayed the announcement of the final vote counts for many days, arousing wide-spread suspicion of vote rigging. In the end, however, it announced that Yushchenko had won over Yanukovych by the tiniest of margins. But since neither candidate won an absolute majority, a run-off election was scheduled for November 21. Meanwhile, the failed candidates from the first round of elections threw their support behind Yushchenko, rendering him the obvious favorite in the upcoming run-off. Public opinion polls also pointed to a Yushchenko victory. But, it was also widely expected that the incumbent regime would rig the run-off elections.

Four processes comprise the Orange Revolution. The first and most significant event was the popular protest, which occurred in several major cities throughout Ukraine but was concentrated in Maidan in downtown Kyiv. After the second election, a city of 1,500 tents was swiftly set up on the Khreshchatyk, Kyiv's main thoroughfare adjacent to Maidan. Masses of people roamed the streets at all times, their numbers ballooning to hundreds of thousands every evening when Yushchenko and other revolutionary leaders spoke from a major stage on the square—their demands for democracy and freedom simultaneously televised on Channel 5. The dilemma for the protestors was that they lacked a clear strategy for taking power. Although some protestors called for the seizure of government buildings (similar to what the Georgian protestors did in the Rose Revolution the year before), Yushchenko and most of his close circle of advisors categorically rejected any action that might provoke violence. At the same time, they also worried that the government might outlast the protest and considered a speedy conclusion vital. To this end, protestors blockaded the main government buildings, effectively shutting down the government, and ensuring a prolonged stand off.

The second process at work was the negotiation between the regime and the opposition mediated by Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, the EU's High Representative Javier Solana, and Russian State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov. Both Yanukovych and Yushchenko participated in these negotiations, which aimed at compromise and a peaceful solution. The mediators succeeded in helping to structure a dialogue between opposing forces and deterred both sides from taking radical or violent action, but they did not resolve the stand off.

The third process played out in parliament and an array of courts, which handled various complaints about the elections. After the Rada, Ukraine's parliament, refused to ratify the official results released by the Central Election Committee, the matter was handed over to the Supreme Court for adjudication. On December 3, the Supreme Court issued a critical decision when it ruled the second round of the presidential elections null and void. The court decided that a rerun would take place on December 26. While this decision satisfied the Yushchenko camp's desire to reach early closure, the incumbent regime did not benefit in any way. Although this decision was widely welcomed by the opposition, mass demonstrations continued. Something more was needed to bring active protests to an end.

The fourth and final event came in the form of a pact between the incumbents and the opposition that amended the constitution. On December 8, the Ukrainian parliament approved amendments substantially reducing the powers of the president, something of great interest to the current President Kuchma and his colleagues in view of a likely win by the opposition. In return, the parliament also approved changes in electoral law championed by the opposition and intended to reduce opportunities for fraud. With this pact in place, both sides agreed to rerun the second round of elections in December.

This rerun did take place on December 26, 2004. The voting occurred in good order with an extraordinary number of foreign observers on hand. Yushchenko defeated Yanukovych with 52 percent of the votes cast, against 44 percent, which was probably close to the real results of November 21. Yanukovych contested the results in the courts with great vigor, but with weak evidence. Nonetheless, his multiple protests delayed the conclusion of the elections and the inauguration of the new president.

Finally, on January 23, 2005, the Supreme Court certified the results and Yushchenko took the oath of office, inaugurated both in Parliament and at Maidan. The active phase of the Orange Revolution was over. Its most intense period lasted from November 22 until December 8, and Yushchenko's inauguration marked its end.

The name of the "Orange" Revolution comes from the campaign color chosen by the Yushchenko campaign in the summer of 2004. Orange did not have any prior ideological connotation. The alternative would have been the traditional Ukrainian blue and yellow colors, but the greatest threat to Yushchenko's candidacy was to be labeled a radical Western Ukrainian nationalist, when the crucial swing

electorate lived in central Ukraine. So the neutral orange was chosen. The Yushchenko campaign's most visible slogan read simply "*Tak!* (Yes!) Yushchenko." The emphasis lay single-mindedly on democracy and freedom.

Well before the second round, people on both sides of the metaphorical barricades anticipated that they would be compelled to assume physical positions on opposite sides of real barricades. The Rose Revolution in Georgia, which occurred almost exactly one year earlier in November 2003, provided inspiration and a historical model. With the election date set well in advance, there was much speculation about how events would unfold and both sides carefully mapped their strategy. As early as July 2004, conventional wisdom in Kyiv suggested that Yushchenko would win the real election in the second round, but Yanukovich would steal the elections and Yushchenko supporters would take to the streets.<sup>1</sup> The only question was whether the opposition could rally enough protestors to effectively challenge the corrupt election results. Anticipating a similar scenario, the Yanukovich camp pursued its own public relations campaign, essentially arguing that Ukrainians were too docile to pursue a revolution of their own.

Both sides seemed to act in accordance with their long-prepared scripts, but who would prevail was far from certain. Understanding why and how the Yushchenko camp did win—why the Orange Revolution succeeded—is the central purpose of this book. We have focused on eight broad factors that influenced the outcome of the Orange Revolution: the nature of the old regime; the strength, strategy, and tactics of the political opposition; societal attitudes; the role of civil society; the student movement, *Pora* (It's Time); the media; Russia; and the West.

To establish context, in chapter one Anders Åslund discusses the oligarchic nature of Ukraine's old regime. President Kuchma pitted the oligarchs against one another and state power was never fully consolidated. As the economy grew rapidly, the number of successful businessmen grew and they became more assertive and aggressive toward each other. Expanding economic pluralism laid the ground for political pluralism, but competition within the old regime was so severe that there was no coherent response to growing political opposition. Privatization, separation of properties, and consolidation of enterprises gave big businessmen greater security, but did little to mitigate their activism. Thus, great entrepreneurial aspirations and uncertain property rights generated outlandish campaign financing. Ultimately, the economy and society had evolved beyond the old regime.

In chapter two, Adrian Karatnycky discusses the emergence of a broad-based reformist, democratic opposition in Ukraine. Throughout the 1990s, the only consistent opposition came from the communists and socialists. A handful of democratic reformers were present in the various administrations, but they were few and their participation in government kept them out of consistent opposition. The first significant non-socialist opposition emerged under Pavlo Lazarenko after he was ousted as prime minister in 1997. In late 2000, the murder of journalist Heorhiy Gongadze and revelations of President Kuchma's involvement led to three months of street demonstrations in Kyiv under the banner "Ukraine without Kuchma." Yet the only viable political reform leader at the time, then-prime minister Viktor Yushchenko, did not join these protests. Only with the sacking of Yushchenko in April 2001 did the base for a broad reformist opposition emerge, and Yushchenko successfully led his Our Ukraine bloc in the parliamentary elections in March 2002. The democratic opposition had been formed and the stage was set for presidential elections in October 2004, with Yushchenko as the dominant opposition candidate.

But what did Ukrainians actually think? Taras Kuzio examines societal attitudes in chapter three. "Kuchmagate," the political crisis resulting from Kuchma's alleged involvement in the murder of Gongadze, set the stage emotionally. The incumbent regime was perceived as corrupt and criminal, and as time passed these attitudes became more deeply ingrained. While Ukraine enjoyed high economic growth, people did not perceive a positive change in their own lives. They believed the money was flowing to oligarchs and organized crime; therefore Yanukovich's words about economic success fell on deaf ears. And attempts by the regime and its Russian consultants to use anti-American propaganda against Yushchenko were equally fruitless. The stark choice between Yushchenko, who was widely perceived as "clean," and Yanukovich, who was an ex-convict, made it easy for the opposition to present the election as a choice between good and evil. Finally, the slogan "Back to Europe!" served to mobilize the West-oriented part of society, while the East did not seem to have much fighting spirit.

Ukraine possessed the most mature civil society of any post-Soviet state and Nadia Diuk explores this history in detail in chapter four. In the mid-1980s when it became politically possible, a large number of civic organizations and initiatives emerged, including broad civil organizations, think tanks, monitoring groups, and media. Civic groups used the Internet extensively for information and communication. Nongov-

ernmental organizations conducted opinion polls and monitored elections. The one shortcoming was that this strong civil society could not communicate with the regime. Instead, from 2000 a variety of nongovernmental organizations spearheaded the protest movement against the regime by innovative means. By the fall of 2004, they succeeded in getting several hundred thousand people into the street throughout Ukraine. The nongovernmental organizations excelled in peacefulness and they played a decisive role in the Orange Revolution.

In chapter five, Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig explore Pora, the group that spearheaded civil action in Ukraine. The authors present a picture of an amazingly capable and timely organization. Founded in March 2004 as a national council of nongovernmental organizations, Pora quickly grew into a countrywide network inspired by similar movements in Georgia, Serbia, and Slovakia. Its campaign consisted of six elements: development of an organizational structure, formation of a campaign strategy, training activists, an information campaign, a response to repression, and mobilization for free and fair elections. Although Pora received a very small amount of foreign funding, the driving force behind Pora was the energy of its own activists.

Olena Prytula, editor-in-chief of the Internet newspaper *Ukrainska pravda*, dissects the role of the media in the Orange Revolution in chapter six. On the one hand, she depicts a media that was rigorously controlled by pro-regime oligarchs. On the other hand, she describes a Ukraine that did maintain independent and opposition media. The opposition had several big newspapers, and *Zerkalo tyzhnia* was an outstanding independent intellectual weekly. Rather surprisingly, the regime allowed the opposition to buy a significant cable channel, Channel 5, which became the voice of the Orange Revolution. Because of the poor quality of most newspapers, the Internet came to play a surprisingly significant role in Ukraine. That was particularly true of the online publication *Ukrainska pravda*, which served as the main news medium of the Orange Revolution. Tragically, this website played an additional role in ending the old regime when the murder of its first editor-in-chief, Heorhiy Gongadze, sparked protest.

In chapter seven, Oleksandr Sushko and Olena Prystayko consider the role of the West in the Orange Revolution. Worried by the role the West played in ousting Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia a year earlier, the old regime demonized Western involvement. The West did have an interest in the Ukrainian election, namely to promote democratic values, but it was hardly nefarious. The EU was ambivalent and hesitant to

begin with because although the new EU member states favored promoting democracy in Ukraine, the old EU members began from a Russia-first position. However, as violations of democratic practice became rampant, the EU united around a pro-democracy position. The United States had taken greater interest in Ukraine all along, and it adopted a clear pro-democracy stand, to which it devoted significant resources. Some Western support went to the NGO sector, but it was quite small. The main Western activity was to mobilize an unprecedented number of international election observers. Their role in exposing large-scale electoral fraud cannot be underestimated. After the second-round election, individual Western politicians participated in negotiations with the two leading contenders. In the end, the Ukrainian election drama served to unite the West around democratic values.

Russian scholars Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov consider Russia's role in the Ukrainian presidential elections in chapter eight. In Moscow, the Russian presidential administration defended Russian interests in the Ukrainian elections, allowing neither the security services nor the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to play any role. The authors argue that the Kremlin served Kuchma, having decided early on to back his candidate, rather than pursuing any political agenda of its own in Ukraine. The Russian state provided the Ukrainian state with ample monetary benefits before the elections and channeled Russian business funds to the Yanukovich campaign. In addition, several Russian political consultants worked in Ukraine for Yanukovich (as did a few, less visible ones for Yushchenko) In the second round of the elections, President Putin himself became personally involved in Yanukovich's campaign.

In singling out these key factors, we have deliberately focused on the proximate causes of the Orange Revolution. To varying degrees, all of the chapters discuss the deeper, structural processes at work. But the book's overall contribution is to provide one of the first comprehensive accounts of the short-term variables that combined to produce the Orange Revolution.

In the final chapter, Michael McFaul places the Orange Revolution in comparative perspective. In the first part of the chapter, McFaul compares the Orange Revolution to other recent electoral breakthroughs in the region—Serbia 2000, Georgia 2003, and Kyrgyzstan 2005—seeking to distinguish what factors were similar and necessary in all of these cases and theorizing about the conditions under which other countries might undergo color revolutions of their own. In the second part of the chapter, McFaul compares the Ukrainian drama of the fall of 2004 to

other revolutions more generally, seeking to answer the question: was the Orange Revolution really a revolution?

As all the authors are discussing different aspects of the same events, much of the history is inevitably repeated in the various chapters. As editors, rather than delete this repetition we have let the authors illuminate the same facts from different angles, inspired by Lawrence Durrell in his *Alexandria Quartet*. We have not tried to tone down differences of opinion, while we have endeavored to verify the facts. Finally, we have established January 23, 2005, as a firm cut-off date, so as not to allow the story of the revolution to be flavored by later events. On that date, the victory of the Orange Revolution was legally concluded and the regime change consummated. In this book, we refrain from discussing the formulation of the new government of the Orange revolutionaries and its dramas.

#### Notes

1. The observation of one of the authors during a visit to Kyiv in July 2004.