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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Formatting assistance: Olena Sivuda

Cover picture: The CD *Orange Jazz* was given to contributor Adriana Helbig in Kyiv during the Orange Revolution. Its cover art designed by Olga Dombrovska with photos by Yefrem Lukatsky features the orange campaign colors of Viktor Yushchenko's *Our Ukraine* party. The words across the bottom reference the revolution's slogans such as "Yes!", "We won't be defeated," "Ukraine is not a [prison] zone," and "Freedom can't be stopped." Reprinted with permission from the producers of the CD *Orange Jazz* © Olexiy Kogan and Victor Ovchinnykov, 2004.

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"The Cyberpolitics of Music in Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution," by Adriana Helbig was first published in *Current Musicology*, no. 82 (Fall 2006). Reprinted with kind permission by the editors. An earlier version of "Foreign Intervention in the 2004 Elections: 'Political Technology' versus NGOs" by Andrew Wilson was published in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, no. 19, no. 1 (March 2006) Reprinted with kind permission by the editors.

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Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier
Printed on acid-free paper

ISSN: 1614-3515

ISBN-10: 3-89821-803-1

ISBN-13: 978-3-89821-803-0

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Stuttgart 2007

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Printed in Germany

Contents

Introduction

Approaches to a 'Watershed' in Ukrainian Politics
Ingmar Bredies, Andreas Umland and Valentin Yakushik 7

1 Prelude to a Mass Rebellion

Fraud before the 'Revolution': Special Precincts
in Ukraine's 2002 Parliamentary Election
Erik S. Herron and Paul E. Johnson 13

2 Why and How It Happened

Orange Ukraine Chooses the West, but Without the East
Dominique Arel 35

Regional Political Cleavages, Electoral Behavior, and
Historical Legacies in Post-Communist Ukraine
Ivan Katchanovski 54

Shades of Orange: The Electoral Geography of
Ukraine's 2004 Presidential Elections
Ralph S. Clem and Peter R. Craumer 78

3 The Context of a Mass Uprising

The Legal Evolution behind the Orange Revolution
Hartmut Rank and Stephan Heidenhain 111

The Cyberpolitics of Music in Ukraine's 2004
Orange Revolution
Adriana Helbig 176

Foreign Intervention in the 2004 Elections:
'Political Technology' versus NGOs
Andrew Wilson 200

Introduction

Approaches to a ‘Watershed’ in Ukrainian Politics

Ingmar Bredies, National University of Kyiv – Mohyla Academy

Andreas Umland, National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv

Valentin Yakushik, National University of Kyiv – Mohyla Academy

A considerable number of investigations devoted to various aspects of the Orange Revolution has been published by now.¹ The Ukrainian events of 2004 raised tremendous expectations as well as sympathy from citizens of Ukraine and external observers likewise. The outcome, impact and achievements of this event have become matters of dispute. Many informed authors see the Orange Revolution as a turning point in Ukrainian politics that marked an irreversible commitment towards democracy.

The third volume of *Aspects of the Orange Revolution* widens the variety of approaches towards explaining the emergence, course and results

1 See, for example, the following collected volumes and monographs, in chronological order: ‘Spetsvypusk: Pomarancheva revoliutsiia,’ *Moloda natsiia*, 10, 1(34) (2005): 8-298; Helmut Kurth and Iris Kempe, eds., *Presidential Election and Orange Revolution: Implications for Ukraine’s Transition* (Kyiv: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005); Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Ingmar Bredies, ed., *Zur Anatomie der Orange Revolution in der Ukraine: Wechsel des Elitenregimes oder Triumph des Parlamentarismus?* Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 13 (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2005); Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul, eds., *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine’s Democratic Breakthrough* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2006); Florian Strasser, *Zivilgesellschaftliche Einflüsse auf die Orange Revolution: Die gewaltlose Massenbewegung und die ukrainische Wahlkrise 2004*. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 29 (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2006); Taras Kuzio, ed., ‘Democratic Revolution in Ukraine: From Kuchmagate to Orange Revolution,’ *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 23, 1(Special Issue) (2007): 1-179; Iurii Shapoval, ed., *U kol’orakh ‘pomaranchevoï revoliutsii’* (Kyiv: EksOb, 2007); Ingmar Bredies, *Institutionenwandel ohne Elitenwechsel? Das ukrainische Parlament im Kontext des politischen Systemwechsels 1990-2006*. Osteuropa: Geschichte, Wirtschaft, Politik 41 (Münster: LIT, 2007).

of the Orange Revolution. As Erik Herron and Paul Johnson point out in the first chapter, fraud and manipulation in elections at any level occurred in Ukraine much earlier than in 2004.² A wide spectrum of ‘imaginative’ technologies had been developed which is illustrated here, by the authors, using the example of the parliamentary election campaign in 2002. The shady success of the pro-presidential election megabloc ‘For a United Ukraine’ was due to the mobilization of voter contingents in special precincts dependent on the state authorities. Despite several protests, the regime held its ground. Why was the mass protest triggered by the second round of the presidential elections on 21 November 2004 successful while civic unrest before had been ineffective? Why had election manipulation proven to be a stabilizing factor for the political regime earlier, but led to its disintegration in 2004?

Part two goes some way towards answering these question and makes assessments on the basis of electoral analysis, yet from different perspectives. In his contribution, Dominique Arel explains the Orange Revolution with the emergence of a viable civil society in Ukraine. The author accentuates the interdependence between civil society and national consciousness as an indispensable prerequisite for social inclusion and mobility.³ He argues that the ‘Orange’ agenda was not policy-centered and that the movement should, instead, be characterized as the ‘birth of the

2 Dominique Arel and Andrew Wilson, ‘Ukraine under Kuchma: Back to “Eurasia”?,’ *RFE/RL Research Report*, 3, 32 (1994); Sarah Birch, *Elections and Democratiation in Ukraine* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Eberhard Schneider, ‘Die ukrainische Parlamentswahlen und die neue Werchowna Rada,’ *SWP-Aktuell*, 18 (2002): 1-8; Bohdan Harasymiw, ‘Elections in Post-Communist Ukraine, 1994-2004: An Overview,’ *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 47, 3-4 (2005): 191-239; Kimitaka Matsuzato, ‘All Kuchma’s Men: The Reshuffling of Ukrainian Governors and the Presidential Election of 1999,’ *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 42, 6 (2001): 416-439; Mikhail Myagkov and Peter C. Ordeshook, ‘The Trail of Votes in Ukraine’s 1998, 1999, and 2002 Elections,’ *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 21, 1 (2005): 56-71; Andrew Wilson, ‘Ukraine’s 2002 Elections: Less Fraud, More Virtuality,’ *East European Constitutional Review*, 11, 3 (2002): 91-98; Kerstin Zimmer, ‘The Comparative Failure of Machine Politics, Administrative Resources and Fraud,’ *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 47, 3-4 (2005): 361-384.

3 See also John O’Loughlin and James E. Bell, ‘The Political Geography of Civic Engagement in Ukraine,’ *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 40, 4 (1999): 233-266; Martin Åberg, ‘Putnam’s Social Capital Theory Goes East: A Case Study of Western Ukraine and L’viv,’ *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 1 (2000): 295-317; Nadia Diuk, ‘The Triumph of Civil Society,’ in: Aslund and McFaul, *Revolution in Orange*, 69-84; Taras Kuzio, ‘Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions,’ *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 39, 3 (2006): 365-386.

Ukrainian political nation'. At the same time, due to Ukraine's inherited regional distinction with its divergent historical, socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic imprints, the Orange Revolution may have also aggravated geographic, polarizing element within the political conflict.⁴ As this event is usually viewed as a 'joint success' of Central and Western Ukraine, the article analyzes the struggle for a legitimacy of the political outcomes of the Orange Revolution which remain contested in other parts of the country.

Following a similar approach, Ivan Katchanovski relates political cleavages and electoral behavior to historical legacies.⁵ To back up the relevance of this interrelation, the author focuses, primarily, on historical events and attitudes towards their valuation. By attributing these orientations and general preferences to the voter basis of Ukrainian political parties on presidential and parliamentary elections since 1991, Katchanovski detects drastic political cleavages between Ukrainian regions. According to his argument, political cleavages congruent to historically distinct landscapes are unlikely to disappear in contemporary Ukraine, and thus will not only determine future election outcomes, but may also pose a threat to Ukrainian statehood.⁶

In terms of electoral geography, the Orange Revolution stands for a remarkable shift in voters' preferences.⁷ Ralph Clem and Peter Craumer

4 Valentin Yakushik, 'Politicheskie i tsivilizatsionnye aspekty ukrainiskoi revoliutsii 2004-2005 gg.', *Politicheskaia ekspertiza*, 2, 2 (2006): 289-298, <http://politex.info/content/view/196/40/>. For information on public support for the Orange Revolution see *IFES: Public Opinion in Ukraine – November 2005*: 12, http://www.ifes.org/publication/4c771cbbcd8da236235ecd38bd1bbe7a/Ukraine-Survey_3-14-06_Full.pdf. See also Dominique Arel, 'The Hidden Face of the Orange Revolution: Ukraine in Denial Towards its Regional Problem,' Paper presented at the Conference 'Nezalezhna Ukraïna: dosvyd, uroky,perspektyvy,' Institut istorii Ukraïny NANU, 26-28 October 2006.

5 Lyudmyla Pavlyuk, 'Extreme Rhetoric in the 2004 Presidential Campaign: Images of Geopolitical and Regional Division,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 47, 3-4 (2005): 293-316; Steven D. Roper and Florin Fesnic, 'Historical Legacies and Their Impact on Post-Communist Voting Behaviour,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55, 1 (2003): 119-131; Paul Kubicek, 'Regional Polarisation in Ukraine: Public Opinion, Voting and Legislative Behaviour,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 2 (2000): 273-294; Stephen Shulman, 'National Identity and Public Support for Political and Economic Reform in Ukraine,' *Slavic Review*, 64, 1 (2005): 59-87.

6 Ivan Katchanovski, *Cleft Countries: Regional Political Divisions and Cultures in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Moldova*. Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society 33 (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

7 For surveys on the electoral geography of previous elections see: Sarah Birch, 'Electoral Behaviour in Western Ukraine in National Elections and Referendum's,

scrutinize in their contribution peculiarities of the electoral geography based on the election results of the 2004 three rounds. The authors emphasize that the regional cleft with its specific demographic and socio-economic factors is more complex than implied by a simplified East-West dualism. Nonetheless, they acknowledge the relevance of this pattern in terms of an 'overarching descriptor'. Taking into consideration previous election campaigns, 2004 turned out to be a 'battle for the center of the political spectrum and the central part of the country'. Drawing upon empirical data on voters' socio-economic, ethnic, economic and educational background derived from four Ukrainian macroregions, the authors give a profound and comprehensive explanation of the election outcome.

Part three goes further in explaining the causes, course and results of the Orange Revolution, but focuses on the circumstances in which the elections and uprising happened. The contribution of Hartmut Rank and Stephan Heidenhain is a deep investigation into the Ukrainian court system and electoral legislation since 1990. This analysis and the Appendices with relevant key decisions and legal provisions provide the authors with a solid basis for answering the question how to assess the role the Ukrainian Supreme and Constitutional Courts as well as the completion of the electoral legislation during the Orange Revolution. The authors conclude that, considering the incompleteness of Ukrainian electoral legislation and time pressure under which they had to make decisions, the courts behaved, in general, adequately, yet missed the chance to use their rulings for a detailed general interpretation of certain ambivalent constitutional and other norms.

Referring to the success of the 'coloured revolutions' in Eastern Europe, many authors allude to new media and information sources as factors in the breakdown of super-presidential political regimes. Adriana Helbig introduces in her contribution the term of 'cybermusicality' to stress the liaison of music and the Internet which played a prominent role in the course of the Orange

1989-1991,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, 7 (1995): 1145-1176; Peter R. Craumer and James Clem, 'Ukraine's Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections,' *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 40, 1 (1999): 1-26; Taras Kuzio, 'Kravchuk to Kuchma: The 1994 Presidential Elections in Ukraine 1994,' *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 12, 2 (1996): 117-144; John O'Loughlin, 'The Regional Factor in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics: Scale, Place, or Bogus Effect?' *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 42, 1 (2001): 1-33.

Revolution.⁸ Thanks to this new protest technology and the talent of many of the involved protagonists absorbing impressions in a 'catchy', but nonetheless sophisticated way, 'musical activism' unleashed considerable energy for social mobilization. Before the Orange Revolution, the Internet had only a small impact on shaping public opinion in Ukraine. As newspapers and broadcast media were functioning only under considerable constraints, the Internet proved to be the only way to massively express anti-government dissent.

Critics of the 'coloured revolutions' in Eastern Europe allege that these events do not at all mirror a home-grown political situation, and accentuate their contrived character. In this respect, the Orange Revolution is sometimes referred to as the result of a veiled import of Western values and lifestyle.⁹ These allegations also concern the role of external actors in democratization processes, in general, and Western support of Ukrainian civil society actors, in particular.¹⁰ On the other side, there are those who emphasize the role of non-Western foreign actors, first of all of Russia.¹¹

In his contribution, Andrew Wilson illustrates the scope and tools of political technology in the countries of the CIS, especially with regard to Russia's political process and Ukraine's Orange Revolution. Assessing the involvement of external actors in the election campaign 2004, Wilson is aware of the fact that technologists' methods have been applied by both sides of the electoral process. In general, Russian interference tended to be more obvious and rampant. Western aid and assistance was predominantly targeted on implementing public projects and transparent in financial terms. Nonetheless, the line between political technology concentrating on the election outcome, on the one hand, and promotion of democracy and civil society, on the other,

8 See also Bohdan Klid, 'Rock, Pop and Politics in Ukraine's 2004 Presidential Campaign,' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 23, 1 (March 2007): 139-158; Myroslaw J. Kyi, 'Internet use in Ukraine's Orange Revolution,' *Business Horizons*, 1 (2006): 71-80; Olena Prytula, 'The Ukrainian Media Rebellion,' in: Aslund and McFaul, eds., *Revolution in Orange*, 103-124.

9 Jonathan Steele, 'Ukraine's postmodern coup d'etat,' *The Guardian*, 24 November 2004. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1359969,00.html>.

10 Andreas Umland, 'Westliche Förderprogramme in der Ukraine: Einblicke in die europäisch-nordamerikanische Unterstützung ukrainischer Reformbestrebungen seit 1991. Mit einem Nachwort von Astrid Sahn,' *Forschungstelle Osteuropa Bremen: Arbeitspapiere und Materialien*, 63 (2004): 43 pp., <http://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de/images/stories/pdf/ap/fsoAP63.pdf>.

11 Taras Kuzio, 'Russian Policy toward Ukraine during the Elections,' *Demokratizatsiya*, 13, 4 (2005): 491-517.

is thin. For instance, Wilson does not exclude that protagonists of the Orange camp might have ‘disguised’ their real interests by way of posing as a pro-Western, democratic opposition. That, at least, would explain why leaders of the Orange Revolution in its aftermath did, sometimes, not pursue their declared political agenda. Wilson even thinks that the fusion of Western-style democracy promotion, creating a democratic façade, as well as old-established patterns of manipulating and ‘guiding’ political processes and election results is a distinctive feature of democratic transitions in the post-Soviet area.¹² This curious combination surely complicates reliable prediction of the further course of Ukraine’s political transition.¹³

12 Andrew Wilson, ‘Ukraine’s New Virtual Politics,’ *East European Constitutional Review*, 10, 2-3 (2001): 60-66; Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2005).

13 Valentin Yakushik, ‘Prognoz razvitiia politicheskoi situatsii v Ukraine,’ *Evrasiiskii dom*, n. D., <http://www.eurasianhome.org/xml/t/expert.xml?lang=ru&nic=expert&pid=22>; Ingmar Bredies, ‘“Staatszerfall” in der Ukraine? Ursachen und Konsequenzen der gegenwärtigen Krise,’ *Ukraine-Analysen*, 22 (2007): 2-3, <http://www.ukraine-analysen.de/pdf/2007/UkraineAnalysen22.pdf>; Andreas Umland, ‘Im Zickzack gen Europa: Zur Rolle der jüngsten Wahlen für die Nationalstaatsbildung und Demokratisierung der Ukraine,’ *Ukraine-Analysen*, 29 (2007): 6-7, <http://www.ukraine-analysen.de/pdf/2007/UkraineAnalysen29.pdf>.