

## *Everyday Ukrainians and the Orange Revolution*

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IN THE FOUR YEARS leading up to Ukraine's 2004 presidential elections, the country suffered from an acute political crisis that had begun in November 2000 when the Kuchmagate crisis began. It culminated exactly four years later with the Orange Revolution. The crisis was revealed in low trust in state institutions, low popularity for President Leonid Kuchma and high support for his impeachment, a growing gulf between the ruling elite and society, heightened opposition activity in the streets and in parliament, and international isolation. Seventy-two percent of Ukrainians wanted Kuchma to leave office early, and 53 percent supported his impeachment.<sup>1</sup>

This was the backdrop to the events that unfurled in the last two months of 2004. Ukraine's ruling elite had been living in a world separate from society. In that world, they were forced to deal with Ukrainian citizens only periodically, in presidential and parliamentary elections. As they had done in the former Soviet Union, they had been reasonably successful in dealing with the elections in 1998 and 1999 by manipulating them. In 2002, however, they had their first shock when the opposition won control of half of the parliamentary seats. Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party created the largest faction after the elections, which was the first time the Communists had been pushed into second place.

Mobilizing the opposition was important but insufficient in a country where the regime was prepared to use every means available to prevent Yushchenko's victory. During most of the 2004 election campaign, from July onward, the popular mood was that Yushchenko was likely to win but that the authorities would nevertheless declare their candidate president. During the elections, the portion of those who believed Yushchenko would win grew from 19 to 45 percent, while the portion of those who thought Yanukovych could win declined by 23 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Following the election violations of 2002, only 20 percent of Ukrainians trusted the authorities to hold free and fair elections in 2004, and 58 percent believed that elections would not be free or fair.<sup>3</sup> This view was reinforced by the April 2004 mayoral elections in Mukachevo when the Our Ukraine candidate won, but the authorities' candidate was declared the duly elected mayor. Yushchenko at the time predicted that the election would be a "repetition of that which could take place in October if the Mukachevo question is left without an adequate reaction from [Ukrainian] society and the world." The authorities had "demonstrated all their technologies that they [were] willing to use in the (presidential) election."<sup>4</sup>

This mood gradually changed during the long election campaign because of three factors. First, Yushchenko himself became a radical after he was poisoned in September. The act of poisoning Yushchenko in itself was a sign that the authorities would not let the opposition win. Second, the authorities were forced to concede a narrow Yushchenko victory in round one. This changed the mood to one of "He can do it!" and led to fence sitting by state officials who previously had been ordered to back Viktor Yanukovych. Third, after round one, many voters saw the halting of the election of Yanukovych as of equal importance as the election of Yushchenko.

Polls conducted before election day showed that Ukrainian society was ready to protest in the streets against election fraud. Eighty-four percent of Ukrainians agreed that they had a right to protest publicly in the event of election fraud. Only 6 percent disagreed.

Experts at the Center for Economic and Political Studies of Ukraine, known as the Razumkov Center, cautioned that not all favorable respondents would automatically hit the streets to protest. At the same time, they warned, "It would be naïve to hope that the authorities could without limit discredit themselves in the eyes of their own population without an outcome that could turn out to be fatal to themselves."<sup>5</sup>

Another poll conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Sotsis Institute found that 18.1 percent of Ukrainians were ready to take part in protests against election fraud, as opposed to believing they had a right to do so, as in the Razumkov Center poll. Some 10.6 percent would strongly protest if their candidate did not win the election.<sup>6</sup>

The Ukrainian authorities warned against such “revolutionary” activities while repeatedly dismissing the notion that Ukrainians would follow Georgia’s 2003 revolution. Statements by the security forces, Yanukovich, and Kuchma all denounced plans for protests. Kuchma badly misjudged the popular mood when he categorically said on state Channel 1 television, on the eve of round two, that there would be no revolution in Ukraine. “The authorities will never allow an aggressive minority to dictate political logic,” Kuchma reiterated, since revolutions are carried out by fanatics and that “it is scoundrels who reap the benefits.”<sup>7</sup> Unless Kuchma was aware of upcoming plans for election fraud, it is unclear how he knew that the opposition would lose the election, thereby becoming the minority, since Yushchenko had, after all, won round one.

The opposition hoped to draw upon one hundred thousand supporters as crowds approaching this size had been mobilized in the campaign, but they knew they needed far more people to be successful in blocking election fraud. Ultimately, both sides miscalculated the popular mood; the authorities’ arrogance and belittling of the *narod*—the people—as passive subjects proved to be as wrong as the opposition’s underestimation of the deep changes that had taken place in Ukrainian society since 1991, coupled with a profound desire to be treated by their rulers as human beings, that is, as European citizens.

In this chapter, I consider society’s views, interactions with, and participation in the Orange Revolution from six perspectives. In the first section I survey the important role of the four-year political crisis as a precursor to and facilitator of the revolution. Next, I discuss how the Orange Revolution differs from those in Serbia and Georgia in that Ukraine had a functioning state and a strong economy. Economic issues in themselves did not play a significant role in the elections. Nevertheless, issues indirectly related to economics, such as popularly perceived unjust privatization, the rise of the oligarchs, and corruption each played a role.

Other factors include the yawning gulf between the ruling elite and the population, with the authorities living in a separate world, and the youth, who constituted most of the participants in the Orange

Revolution, playing a crucial part in the elections. Many young people were politicized and mobilized during the Kuchmagate crisis preceding the 2004 elections. Below I discuss the key personalities in the elections and the mistake the authorities made in choosing Yanukovych as their candidate. Finally, I look at why the Yushchenko camp was far more successful in mobilizing civil society during the Orange Revolution than his opponent, Yanukovych, was.

### Political Crisis as a Prequel

Without a four-year political crisis,<sup>8</sup> it is doubtful that there would have been a Yushchenko victory in either the 2002 or 2004 elections. Kuchmagate began in November 2000 and ended exactly four years later during the Orange Revolution. Yuriy Lutsenko, a “Ukraine without Kuchma” and Orange Revolution activist as well as interior minister explained during the repeat vote of round two that a “Ukraine without Kuchma” was now over.<sup>9</sup>

The crisis generated an internal revolution among Ukrainians, as anti-Kuchma protestor and youth activist Volodymyr Chemerys described the situation that evolved during the Kuchmagate crisis. Kuchma continued to remain in power but in the minds of Ukrainians, psychologically, he had already left office.

The authorities ignored the people, who reciprocated by ignoring the *vlada* (the authorities). This internal revolution was crucial in bringing out the large numbers of Ukrainians in the Orange Revolution who otherwise would have continued to adhere to the proverb “It’s not my business.” During and after round two of the election, many hitherto apolitical Ukrainians joined the Yushchenko camp and the Orange Revolution. The 2004 Eurovision song winner, “Ruslana,” the Klitschko boxer brothers, and rock bands such as Okean Yelzy are evidence of this change in attitude.

The crisis also stirred young people from their traditional political apathy in Ukraine and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Young activists formed the backbone of the activity of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in civil society against corruption (*Chysta ukraina* [Clean Ukraine]), in election monitoring (*Znayu!*), and in radical political activity (Pora) groups. Pora received training and advice from Serbia’s *Otpor* and Georgia’s *Kmara* youth activist groups.<sup>10</sup> The anti-Kuchma protests of 2000–2003 and the 2002 elections were formative for these young activists. Although ostensibly politically neutral the

youth tended to sympathize with Yushchenko. Calls for free and fair elections were in Yushchenko's interest as they would automatically benefit him over Yanukovich.

### **Economy, Corruption, and Oligarchs**

Economic issues as such did not play a major role in the 2004 elections; if they had, Yanukovich may have won. Ukraine was different from both Serbia and Georgia in that it had a strong state and a rapidly growing economy, with the highest growth rate in Europe in 2004. Issues related to economics, such as popular perceptions of unjust privatizations and the rise of Ukraine's oligarch class, did play a role because voters looked at the elections as a referendum on the previous decade, not from the short-term perspective of how good the economy was during the elections.

As Michael McFaul points out in the conclusion, the body of literature on democratization stresses how economic crises inevitably lead to general crisis in a regime and the ouster of the ruling elite. The CIS proved to be different from this norm. Since 1989 all CIS (except in Moldova and Belarus) had suffered an acute economic depression, yet it did not lead to counterrevolutions and a return of Soviet and neo-Soviet groups to power. Ukraine proved to be different because an acute political crisis had dominated Ukrainian politics since the fall of 2000. In addition, economic growth was not being felt by the population but was still being largely squandered through growing levels of corruption. From 1994 to 2002, the largest influence on society had consistently been the mafia and organized crime, up from 34 to 38 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Of Ukrainians, 77–85 percent wanted change and did not back a continuation of the status quo.<sup>12</sup> On the eve of the 2004 elections, 55.7 percent of Ukrainians did not believe that Ukraine was moving in the right direction.<sup>13</sup> In Ukraine at that time, it would have been unrealistic for any incumbent to argue in support of his or her anointed successor continuing the status quo since most Ukrainians looked negatively at the 1990s as a decade of the "primitive accumulation of capital" ("bandit capitalism"). Ukrainians wanted change. The question was, what kind of change? Change in Ukraine had been associated *primarily* with Yushchenko and not with Yanukovich.<sup>14</sup> Yushchenko's campaign was premised on his being in opposition to the "bandit regime," while Prime Minister Yanukovich defended his government's record and called for the continuation of the "successful" policies undertaken to date by him

and Kuchma. Yanukovych attempted to distance himself quietly from Kuchma and to present himself as a change candidate, but the fact that he was Kuchma's chosen successor dogged him throughout rounds one and two. It was only in round three, when Yanukovych felt betrayed by the Kyiv elite for not having followed through on the plan to install him as president, that he attempted to change himself into an opposition candidate. By then, however, it proved to be too late. He could not change his image to that of an oppositionist in the repeat of the second round on December 26. Indeed, as Yushchenko pointed out, how could a prime minister be in opposition?

Kuchma praised the laying of the foundation for a national economy as his achievement, something he reiterated when he was first elected in 1994. Ukraine had been on the verge of disaster and possible disintegration in 1993, which had been a year of hyperinflation. Kuchma also praised the economic growth of the previous four years as laying the basis for Prime Minister Yanukovych's election program.

These claims ignored a vital factor in public perceptions of socioeconomic conditions in Ukraine. Ukraine returned to economic growth under Yushchenko in 2000–2001. Polls showed that, of Ukraine's ten prime ministers since 1991, he was regarded as Ukraine's most successful. Yushchenko was given credit for relaunching economic growth and for repaying wage and pension arrears.

The same was not true of Yanukovych's government. Populist attempts to win votes by increasing pensions and student stipends on the eve of election day largely backfired as polls showed that most Ukrainian voters understood the move to be an election tactic. Communist voters, who are largely pensioners, would have defected to Yanukovych even without any pension hike. The Yanukovych election campaign frequently complained that voters were *not* giving them credit for Ukraine's economic boom. In 2002, 81 percent of Ukrainians *perceived* that their standard of living had declined since 1990.<sup>15</sup> A year later, 86 percent still believed that the economic situation was very bad or bad, with only 9 percent stating it was good. Record economic growth was not denting this decade-long perception of a poor economic situation.<sup>16</sup>

The attempt to attract support for Yanukovych based on credit for high economic growth proved insufficient to attract Ukrainian voters. Although Ukraine's economy had Europe's highest growth rate in 2004, it failed to improve the popularity of the authorities significantly. The majority of Ukrainian voters did not believe that Ukraine was heading along the right path, a result of the large gulf between declared

**Table 3.1. Percentage of Economic Growth Rates in Ukraine, 2000–2004**

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
GDP growth	5.9	9.2	5.2	9.4	12.1

Source: International Centre for Policy Studies, *Economic Statistics*, June 2005.

objectives and reality. Ukrainians did not feel that high economic growth had translated into a higher standard of living. Positive changes, such as economic growth, had occurred despite government policies, not because of them. Ukraine's public mood was one of not being thankful to the authorities while at the same time expecting nothing. Public perception of the authorities as incompetent, corrupt, and uninterested in the plight of the average citizen was widespread, leading to a lack of faith and trust in the government.

In 2002, 73 percent of Ukrainians feared unemployment, 71 percent feared a rise in prices, 65 percent feared the nonpayment of wages, and 51 percent worried about famine.<sup>17</sup> The parliamentary ombudsman for human rights estimated that 5.7 million Ukrainians had been forced to seek work abroad. In addition, the Ukrainian population had shrunk by 5 million, a demographic disaster following 7 million deaths in the 1933 artificial famine (Stalin's campaign of mass starvation) and 6 million in World War II.

The huge social consequences of the past decade's transition were felt by most Ukrainians, most of whom had family members working abroad or who had emigrated. Opinion polls on the eve of the elections showed that a third of young Ukrainians were ready to leave Ukraine, an exodus that would have taken place in the event of a Yanukovich victory. Ukrainians constituted, along with Russians, Indians, and Afghans, one of the four national groups that made up the greatest number of migrants in the world. Between 2002 and 2004, one-third of Ukrainians wanted to emigrate.

Long-term trends associated with the 1990s also proved problematic for the authorities. Two areas that were important in shaping social attitudes in an election year were the growth of oligarchs and widespread, high-level corruption. Privatization was publicly believed to have benefited only a small group of former Soviet *nomenklatura* who were accountable to no one.

Parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn told a congress of his Agrarian Party, which officially backed Yanukovich but in reality sat

on the fence, that “Ukraine is close to becoming a totally corrupt country ruled by oligarchs and party-clan groups.”<sup>18</sup> Most Ukrainians believed that the “mafia and organized crime world” was the most influential group in society.

In Yanukovych’s first speech as a candidate he also, like Lytvyn, denounced the lack of impact of countless decrees and programs to fight corruption in Ukraine. As a candidate, Yanukovych had little choice but to condemn corruption, but that did not mean that most Ukrainians believed he would do anything about the problem were he to be elected.

The ruling elite had already suffered from an identity crisis common to all oligarchs in the CIS who had emerged in the 1990s. Ukrainians perceived the accumulated wealth of oligarchs as illegitimate, taken at the expense of the people and the state. The authorities praised the rise of a “pragmatic and patriotic” “national bourgeoisie” that had allegedly come to realize that the era of “wild capitalism” was over with the end of the Kuchma era.<sup>19</sup> They therefore unsuccessfully attempted to project the view that a Yanukovych victory would *not* mean a return to the 1990s and would instead signal the emergence of a new elite conscious of its duty to the citizens and the state.

This promise would have been readily accepted by society if the authorities’ candidate had been Serhiy Tyhipko, Lytvyn, or even Viktor Pinchuk, who had sought to gentrify himself and divorce politics and business. Yet the promise did not wash with Yanukovych. Despite his criminal background, Yanukovych was chosen because he had proved his loyalty to Kuchma in the 2002 elections when he, as the governor of Donetsk, had ensured the For a United Ukraine bloc came first with 37 percent, the only oblast where it did so. Yanukovych had also become the candidate by default because other centrists (that is, Medvedchuk, Lytvyn, and Tyhipko) and Kuchma himself—whom the constitutional court had permitted to run in the 2004 elections, claiming that his first term did not count because it had begun before the 1996 constitution was adopted—all had very low ratings in opinion polls of less than 5 percent.

Yanukovych could not win using positive arguments about his candidacy. He was hampered by being associated with Kuchma, and he failed to convince most voters that he should be given credit for economic growth. This left the Yanukovych campaign and its Russian political advisors with little option but to rely on a large volume of negative media attacks against Yushchenko as a “Nazi,” a “nationalist,” and an “American puppet.” Much of this anti-American and antinationalist



propaganda resembled Soviet-era denunciations against “bourgeois nationalism” that had targeted Ukrainian diaspora and dissident groups. The vilification of Yushchenko undoubtedly dented his support in eastern Ukraine by making him a negative “other” candidate for “Russophones” and communist voters. Many of Yanukovich’s voters joined him in the last few months of the campaign, convinced by such campaign rhetoric.

Such anti-Yushchenko propaganda undoubtedly affected Communist and Regions of Ukraine voters most, both of whom are heavily concentrated in the Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts) and the Crimea. Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine had failed to cross the 4 percent threshold in the 2002 elections in Donbas and Sevastopol. Most of the 20 percent Communist vote obtained in the 2002 elections went to Yanukovich early in round one of the elections, as seen in Communist leader Petro Symonenko, who came in fourth, with only 4.5 percent. In round two and the repeat vote, the communists had refused to endorse either of the two candidates officially. Nevertheless, all of this traditional 20 percent Communist vote probably went for Yanukovich, accounting for half of the votes for him.

Razumkov Center analysts ruled out the view that oligarchs could support the rule of law, civil society, European values, or democratization. “Oligarchs, by their very nature, are incompatible with democratization and are not influenced by societal interests,” they argued. Their sole purpose was to enrich themselves with the assistance of the state. It would be naïve, policy makers polled by the Razumkov Center concluded, to believe that Ukraine’s oligarchs supported transition to democratic rule after they had arrived at the conclusion that bandit capitalism was now over.

### **The Ruling Elite in Its Separate Reality**

By the 2004 elections, Ukraine’s ruling elite was out of touch with reality. Seventy percent of Ukrainians felt they had no influence on the authorities, and 92 percent felt that their human rights were regularly being infringed. During the elections 10 percent of Yushchenko voters were afraid of revealing their preferences, compared with only 2 percent of Yanukovich voters. In some regions of Ukraine, 70 percent were afraid to answer opinion polls.<sup>20</sup> The majority of Ukrainians lived a life separate from those of their rulers. Kyiv Mohyla political scientist Rostyslav Pawlenko found that “citizens have the role of statistics—[being] either

listening consumers of manipulated programs or being inundated with *kompromat*, or brazen lies.”<sup>21</sup>

After Medvedchuk became the head of the presidential administration, alternative channels of information to Kuchma were blocked. Kuchma’s official statements, interviews, and speeches during the six-month election campaign, where he repeatedly “guaranteed” free elections and condemned attempts at inciting interregional splits, were those of someone who was cut off from the daily reality of the dirty tactics that were being used by *his* side. As the Yushchenko camp argued and Ukrainian voters felt, it was as though the Ukrainian constitution had been suspended during the elections.

Living in a separate reality removed from the lives of ordinary citizens led to erroneous policy decisions. Ukraine’s ruling elite severely misjudged the mood of society. It repeatedly ruled out a Georgian-style revolution, claiming that Ukrainians were not Georgians because they are more passive, less hot-headed, and willing to accept fate. This national character was nicely summed up in the proverb *Moja khata z kraju* (literally “My house is on the side” but really meaning “It’s not my business”). These views of passive Ukrainians by the ruling elite were compounded by three other factors.

The first factor was a Soviet-style disrespect for Ukrainians as subjects who were easily molded to the whims of the authorities. This view may have been held in the Donetsk region, which is dominated by one party (the Regions Party), one oligarch (Rinat Akhmetov), and one television station (TRK Ukraina). It was not true of the remainder of the country. Orange Revolutionary songs repeatedly condemned the authorities’ view of the Ukrainian public as *bydlo* (scum) or *kozly* (bastards), the latter term being from Yanukovich’s depiction of his opponents.<sup>22</sup> The Orange Revolution’s hip-hop anthem by the Ivano-Frankivsk band *Hrandzoly* (Sleigh), which was Ukraine’s entry in the 2005 Eurovision song competition in Kyiv, stated categorically that “We are not *bydlo*! We are not *kozly*! We are Ukraine’s sons and daughters!” The Orange Revolution demanded that the authorities treat Ukrainians as citizens—not as *bydlo* or *kozly*—whereby the state would serve citizens, as in Europe, and not as subjects serving the state (as in the CIS and former USSR).

Second was the arrogance of the elite, which was tied to its contempt for the people. Former President Leonid Kravchuk believed that “the population will believe every line they are being fed.”<sup>23</sup> Presumably, this would also apply to the regime enforcing a falsified result that elected

Yanukovych as president. Ukraine's ruling elite never envisaged that they could ever lose the elections. The shock of facing an Orange Revolution, votes by parliament and Rada denouncing the second round, and a likely Yushchenko victory in the repeat vote on December 26 led to the disintegration of the centrist camp. Parties in power, by their very nature, are not able to become the opposition.

The third factor was contempt for the opposition's ability to put people in the streets. The "Ukraine without Kuchma!" and "Arise, Ukraine!" protests of 2000–2003 attracted twenty to fifty thousand participants. Such numbers were insufficient to remove Kuchma from power and would have been even less sufficient to facilitate a revolution. Kuchma ridiculed the opposition's prediction that they would put two hundred thousand protestors in the streets. His ridicule backfired after round two when the crowds peaked at one million.

Kuchma's contempt for the opposition, the arrogance of the elite, and his disrespect for the people led to the government's biggest blunder: a lack of planning to block the movement of the protestors in the two days immediately following round two of the elections (November 22–23), when the Orange Revolution could have, ostensibly, been nipped in the bud. Instead, Kyiv's residents and hard-core activists took to the streets on Monday (November 22). Beginning on Tuesday, November 23, they were joined by others from the provinces, particularly by western Ukrainians.

Kuchma was also praised by his allies for his role in state building, including the adoption of Ukraine's 1996 constitution. What this praise failed to acknowledge, however, was that Ukraine's semipresidential constitutional system had been parliament's compromise. Kuchma's 1996 draft of the constitution, which he threatened to put to a referendum, would have created a "superpresidential system." It also ignored the disastrous public view of state institutions. After all, what would have been the point of the emergence of such institutions if they had no public support?

By the 2004 elections, trust in state institutions was low. In fact, the public's trust in state institutions was lower than for astrologers, according to a survey by the Academy of Science's Institute of Sociology.<sup>24</sup> Sixteen percent of Ukrainians trusted astrologers, while only 13 percent trusted the president. Fifty-five percent of Ukrainians said they would never vote for Kuchma, and a higher number said they would like to see him impeached. By the eve of the 2004 elections, the authorities were not trusted, not respected, not believed, lacked legitimacy, and lived separate lives from the lives from the people.

### The Energy of Youth

Young Ukrainians born in the 1980s grew up in the 1990s. They are not afraid of the authorities in the same manner as their elders, who experienced Soviet rule. They look westward, not northeast, for culture, music, fashion, and intellectual inspiration. They have traveled as tourists, illegal workers, and with student exchange programs to the West rather than to the CIS. Ideologically, they want Ukraine to be part of Europe.

The Kuchmagate crisis stirred young people to move from political apathy to political activism. The threat of Yanukovich coming to power, which would have undermined their vision of Ukraine's European future, sparked them into putting all their energy into election activity and into the Orange Revolution, where they represented upward of two-thirds of the participants.

The caricaturing of Yanukovich did much to undermine his popularity among young Ukrainians, who were involved in civil society, election projects, and radical youth groups.

The youths were also able to take advantage of modern communication methods to a far greater extent than were other segments of Ukrainian society. The Yanukovich camp failed to appreciate the importance of Western public opinion, publishing only one op-ed piece in *Wall Street Journal Europe*, compared with numerous submissions by Yushchenko.

Large television screens were used on the Maidan to broadcast to large crowds what was being said by speakers on stage, as well as important news from Channel 5. The impact of those broadcasts on Channel 5's popularity was huge. During the Orange Revolution, its ratings increased from very low (owing to its being a cable channel that was not permitted to broadcast in some regions, such as Donetsk) to third place.

In Ukraine young people were experts with cell phones, which were extensively used. Some cell phones also have video cameras, which were used by students to video unsuspecting professors illegally agitating for Yanukovich during class.

Young people were also expert in using the power of the Internet to communicate with one another and as an information source.<sup>25</sup> Internet usage had grown since 2000 in Ukraine and had especially come into its own in the 2002 and 2004 elections.<sup>26</sup> The authorities had never appreciated the power of the Internet and had never been able to compete in Internet publications. The Internet provided an alternative to state and private television stations, which were hostile to the opposition. Sixty-eight percent of Ukrainians believed there was political censorship in

Ukraine, particularly on television, which was trusted by only 21 percent of the people.<sup>27</sup>

The threat to the authorities from young people could be seen on the eve of the first round of elections when they accused NGOs of being terrorists after the authorities clumsily planted explosives in NGO offices. A similar tactic was used in Serbia in the 2000 elections against Otpor. In both cases the accusations backfired. Neither the Serbian nor the Ukrainian public believed the authorities when they accused “young kids” of being terrorists. Security service officers privately communicated to NGO leaders that the operation had nothing to do with them but was one ordered by the executive office and implemented by the interior ministry. These accusations of terrorism simply increased public attention upon the NGOs and led to an influx of new volunteers.<sup>28</sup>

### **Personalities and Humor**

For the success of the Orange Revolution to be achieved, two types of candidates were needed to face each other in the second round. The choice between Yushchenko and Yanukovich in round two was for many Ukrainians a stark choice of good versus evil.<sup>29</sup>

A “clean,” charismatic candidate is an asset for the opposition because he or she can take the high moral ground. Viktor Yushchenko fit that requirement perfectly. He did not have a corrupt background, and he had served as a successful chair of Ukraine’s central bank and as prime minister.

Yushchenko’s opponent ideally should be someone whom the opposition would find it easy to mobilize against. Yanukovich fit the bill perfectly because of his criminal record (of two sentences), his origins in Ukraine’s most criminalized region (Donetsk), and the widespread perception that he was intellectually challenged.<sup>30</sup>

Yanukovich’s criminal record damaged his support in the security forces. Military, interior ministry, and security service officers found it incredible that their next president and commander-in-chief could be an ex-convict. This undermining of support may have been a contributing factor in the security forces either defecting or staying neutral during the 2004 elections and Orange Revolution. The security service disliked Yanukovich as a candidate and illicitly taped his unofficial (dirty tricks) campaign headquarters.<sup>31</sup> The audio tapes were handed to the Yushchenko camp after round two.

Young people were particularly good at turning Yanukovych's flaws into humor. On weekends, Kyiv's main thoroughfare, Khreshchatyk, is closed to traffic, making it an ideal location for election campaigning. Young Pora! and Znayu! activists dressed in prison uniforms and campaigned on behalf of Yanukovych. They became a regular tourist spectacle attracting Kyivites and tourists alike, who were encouraged to believe that prisoners had been let out for the weekend to campaign for one of their own. On occasion, they "campaigned" next to the official Yanukovych election bus.

This humorous image spread. A cartoon printed for the repeat election in the mass-circulation newspaper *Silski visti* (December 23, 2004), a newspaper sympathetic to the Socialist Party, showed two prison guards talking to each other outside an empty prison cell. One asks the other, "Where are the brothers [as in criminal brotherhood]?" The fellow officer replied, "Don't worry. They will soon return. They have just gone out to campaign for their own . . ." (namely, Yanukovych). Another commonly heard anecdote asked why relations in prison had improved recently. The answer: because each prisoner is concerned that his or her neighbor could be the next president.

The idea of Yanukovych being intellectually challenged led to the emergence of an entire subculture in the opposition campaign. With educated Ukrainians, students, and intellectuals tending to favor Yushchenko over Yanukovych, it is not surprising that Yanukovych became the butt of jokes. Mikhail Brodsky and Yulia Tymoshenko have now admitted that they were behind many of those jokes.<sup>32</sup> On the eve of the repeat vote of round two, a book of *Yanukdote* (anecdotes about Yanukovych) was published in Kyiv.<sup>33</sup>

This humorous subculture took off in September 2004 after Yanukovych's visit to Ivano-Frankivsk. During the visit he was hit by an egg thrown by a student. He looked at the egg and then fell over, apparently in agony. The entire episode was broadcast by opposition channels, which undermined the government's claim that Yanukovych had, in fact, been hit by a brick. This attempt to draw publicity away from the poisoning of Yushchenko earlier in the month backfired completely.

Television, and then the Internet, began to ridicule the event: how could the large, tough-looking Yanukovych be knocked over by a small egg? Websites began to appear that included a rapidly growing number of egg jokes. There were series of egg cartoons, including "Merry Eggs" (*Veseli yaytsa*), in which two funny eggs sing songs and joke.

Yanukovych's intellectual ability was also ridiculed because of his frequent use of criminal slang and his illiteracy. Numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes were found in his candidate-registration documents. One particular mistake (signing his name "Proffessor") came to haunt him throughout the elections. A thirteen-episode Internet film ("Operation ProFFessor") was produced. It comprised excerpts of popular Soviet comedies performed by impersonators of well-known politicians dubbing the voices of the characters. The series was a massive hit.<sup>34</sup>

Yanukovych's wife received the same treatment. During the separatist congress held on November 28 after round two, she accused the organizers of the Yushchenko tent city of distributing oranges injected with narcotics to force protestors to stay there. She also claimed that *valenki* (knee-high winter boots) had been sent free of charge from the United States, a hint that the CIA was behind the Orange Revolution. Satirical songs immediately appeared that poured ridicule on these claims by interlacing her comments with other words. The tent city began to hang up *valenki* with the words "Made in USA" scrawled on them.

As a successor candidate, Yanukovych's bid for election carried with it baggage from a decade of Kuchma in office and three years of the Kuchmagate crisis. As Yushchenko pointed out, and as his supporters undoubtedly believed, Yanukovych represented both a continuation and an entrenchment of the status quo as "Kuchma-3."

As parliamentary speaker and head of the People's Agrarian Party Lytvyn pointed out, it might have been better if Yanukovych were a self-declared candidate rather than the government's candidate as Kuchma-3.<sup>35</sup> The authorities had very low popularity ratings, and any association with Kuchma would negatively influence a candidate's ratings.<sup>36</sup>

Great hostility toward the authorities made it impossible for Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko to advise his voters to back Yanukovych in round two. By election day, after months of an incessant media barrage against Yushchenko depicting him as a fascist and American stooge, the majority of Communist voters voted for Yanukovych (which was really a vote against Yushchenko) in round one, putting Symonenko in fourth position. This factor, together with Socialist Party leader Moroz's backing for Yushchenko in round two, provided Yanukovych with no additional left-wing support to draw upon in the second round, placing him at a disadvantage compared with Kuchma in 1994, who drew on left-wing votes.

In that round, voters of the left and the right who did not like the government had an easy choice: to vote for the authorities (Yanukovych) or a candidate opposed to the government (Yushchenko). It is that factor that made the 2004 elections different from those in 1994 (which was a choice between two branches of the party of power, Kravchuk and Kuchma) and 1999 (Kuchma versus the Communists).

Public hostility to the oligarchs was high, and Yushchenko capitalized on that hostility. A Razumkov Center poll found that 67 percent of Ukrainians supported moves against the oligarchs.<sup>37</sup> It is little wonder that Ukraine's oligarchs hid from the limelight. Only Medvedchuk played a prominent public role as the head of the presidential administration, a position that had a detrimental effect upon his own image and upon that of the (United) Social Democratic Party that he leads. Yanukovych was able to conceal some of his oligarch background because he was the "front man" as head of the Regions Party for the real power behind the Donetsk clan, Ukraine's wealthiest oligarch, Rinat Akhmetov.

Some members of the centrist camp understood these social views and acted accordingly. Although their political parties officially backed Yanukovych's candidacy, in reality they sat on the fence and ignored how their members backed Yushchenko. Typical of these fence-sitters was Lytvyn, who warned that tensions were high on this issue: "Sooner or later Ukraine will arrive at the idea of an anti-oligarch coup. Better it was done as soon as possible without revolution [or] tension and in a civilized manner."<sup>38</sup>

The views of Ukraine's leading policy makers were highly negative about Yanukovych. Many of them are based in Kyiv, where Yanukovych failed to win many votes in any of the three rounds of elections. Yanukovych was seen as the candidate least likely to spread European values, according to a Razumkov Center poll.<sup>39</sup> Ukraine's elite policy makers saw Moroz and Yushchenko as being the only two leading candidates who would, if elected, promote European values.

Suspicion was raised by the fact that Yanukovych's project for Ukraine too closely resembled the "managed democracy" model found throughout the CIS. With half of his voters coming from the Communist Party, their support was premised on the need to block the election of the "nationalist" Yushchenko. For them, Yanukovych's criminal record and links to corrupt oligarchs did not override the fact he was the lesser of two evils since any of his faults were outweighed by Yushchenko not being a valid alternative. Such negative voting was magnified by Donbas voters, who both wanted to block (as did Communist voters) a Yushchenko victory and to support their local boy.



This view of Yanukovich's authoritarian instincts was reinforced by Russia's massive intervention in support of Yanukovich and President Putin's two strategically timed visits in rounds one and two of the elections to back Yanukovich publicly. Yanukovich's speeches and election program stressed economic growth and higher standards of living but were conspicuously silent on democratization. His inaugural election speech in Zaporizhzhia completely ignored the issue.<sup>40</sup> Yanukovich's program seemed to confirm the CIS managed democracy model of an economically liberal but politically authoritarian state. A common refrain at the time in Kyiv was, "At least if Yushchenko wins, I know there will be another election."

The managed democracy model was at odds with Ukrainian voters, 75 percent of whom desired greater democratization.<sup>41</sup> Fifty-nine percent did not believe that Ukraine was a democracy, with only 16 percent agreeing to this proposition.<sup>42</sup> These high levels of support for democratization were undoubtedly influenced by the deep political crisis that dominated most of Kuchma's second term.

The Razumkov Center poll asked which candidates were imbued with high morals and standards. One of the issues that this referred to was whether candidates would defend society and Ukraine's national interests above those of their own clans. Moroz, followed by Yushchenko, came at the top of the list in terms of placing society and Ukraine's interests first. When people were asked which candidates were professional and had a good intellect, Yushchenko came first, followed by Moroz. Unlike Yanukovich, Yushchenko was seen as intellectually astute. Yanukovich and Yushchenko were also contrasted by their hobbies, with the former a fan of hunting and the latter interested in more cultured pastimes, such as collecting art, woodcarving, and beekeeping. In the Razumkov Center poll, Yanukovich came at the bottom of both lists of which candidates were imbued with high morals and a good intellect.

If Yanukovich were elected, especially in the manner undertaken in round two, through massive fraud, it would be catastrophic for Ukraine, argued Mikhail Brodsky, the leader of the Yabluko Party. It could lead to "the threat of a criminal-bandit revolt."<sup>43</sup> For many Ukrainian voters it was as important for Yanukovich not to be allowed to win as it was for Yushchenko to win. The popular song "Spovid" (Confession) interlaced Yanukovich's words from different speeches so that he admitted to being crooked. The song began with the words, "I am the most criminal, honest citizen." The song ends with the words of the song's composers advising listeners: "Ukrainians, now make your choice" (that is, after listening to Yanukovich's alleged confession).

What would happen in the event of a victory by Yanukovych? Ukraine's policy makers believed that the status quo would be conserved, that morality would sink lower, and Yanukovych would favor the Donetsk clan. Only the left or right opposition candidates would provide change, which the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians desired.

How was change understood? Although on the whole change was associated with Yushchenko, not all those who desired change voted for him. Some Ukrainian voters for Yanukovych would have preferred the status quo (oligarchs), while others voted against Yushchenko (the communists, who accounted for half of the Yanukovych vote). But a small minority were seemingly convinced that Yanukovych also represented a Putin-style generational change to Kuchma, which would result in policies that would bring order to the country.

### **Civil Society Mobilization**

A final crucial factor in Ukraine was the importance of "Back to Europe!" civic nationalism as a mobilizing force for civil society. Western and Ukrainian scholars had previously suggested that a strong link existed in Ukraine between national identity and civil society.<sup>44</sup> This greater opposition influence in western-central Ukraine was evident in the 2002 elections, where the non-Communist opposition defeated pro-Kuchma parties and blocs.

This close relationship was clearly confirmed in the Orange Revolution by comparing the staying power of Yushchenko supporters who backed the revolution with Yanukovych voters who were dispatched to Kyiv to oppose that revolution. The latter lasted at most two days in the cold in Kyiv and either defected to the Yushchenko tent city or returned to Donetsk, seeing their journey as merely a free two-day holiday in Kyiv. Donetsk protestors sent to Kyiv did not possess a fire in their bellies about the issues, something that strongly differentiated them from participants in the Orange Revolution, where adrenaline and energy were fever-pitched.

Although east Slavic views were quite popular at the mass level, they have proved difficult to use as a rallying point. Ukrainians with a more pro-European national identity have been easier to mobilize than those with an eastern Slavic identity. Russophones have been notoriously impossible to marshal in the former USSR.<sup>45</sup>

Political observer Stephen Shulman believes that Ukraine has two competing national identities: ethnic Ukrainian and eastern Slavic, which closely resemble Yushchenko and Yanukovich, respectively.<sup>46</sup> If Ukraine were to be built around an ethnic Ukrainian core or an east Slavic center, this choice would then influence the country's foreign-policy orientation. Yanukovich's "eastern Slavic" identity promotes economic liberalism, state paternalism, political authoritarianism, and a pro-Russian orientation. The stronger this identity, the less likely there will be support for democratic reform, Shulman believes.

Kuchma balanced both of Ukraine's identities throughout his decade in office and therefore satisfied both camps at different times. The victory of Yanukovich would, however, have meant the coming to power of a more avowedly east Slavic identity, a step too far for many Ukrainian voters and members of the ruling elite. Yushchenko's "ethnic Ukrainian" identity (in Shulman's definition) was associated with democratic reform and a "returning to Europe." This identity was far better at mobilizing the population and giving a fire-in-the-belly energy to create the Orange Revolution.

Yanukovich's background from Donetsk and his views on nationality issues also turned nationally conscious Ukrainians against him. Donetsk has long had an association as Ukraine's "Belarus," where discrimination is rife against nationally conscious Ukrainians and the Ukrainian language. The proportion of education facilities using the Ukrainian language in Donetsk is as low as that in the Crimean Autonomous Republic.

These suspicions of Yanukovich's weak support for issues central to nationally conscious Ukrainians were deepened when he played the Russian language and dual citizenship cards on the eve of election day. It is doubtful whether these two issues added many votes for Yanukovich or simply confirmed the defection of Communist voters to him in round one of the elections and solidified the Donbas vote for him.

The authorities wanted to repeat Kuchma's successful use of the language card in 1994. But even when this tactic was successfully used in 1994, it gave Kuchma only a only 6 percent lead over "nationalist" Kravchuk. What the authorities ignored was that Kuchma's 1994 victory occurred a decade earlier. Since then, nation building had taken place. In addition, there had been the rise of a younger generation no longer negatively disposed to the Ukrainian language. Raising the issue

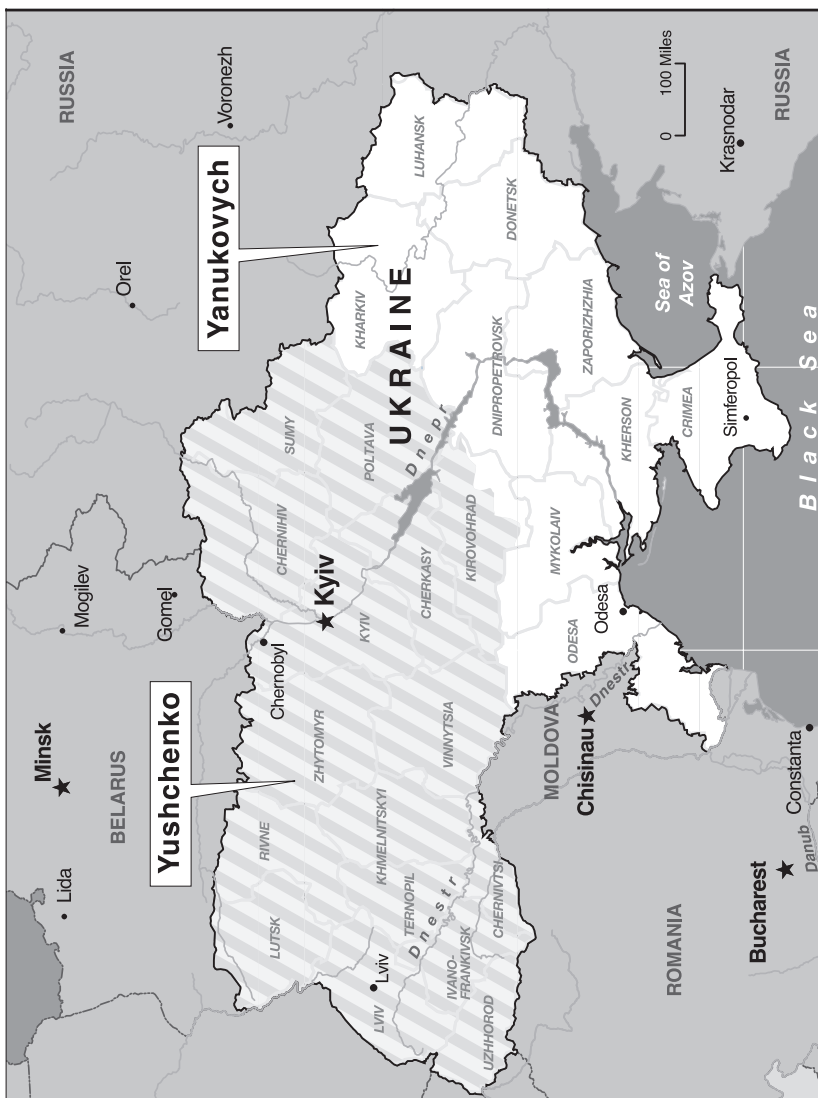
of the Russian language may have brought him more Communist votes, but it also negatively affected Yanukovich's popularity in central Ukraine, an area that decides Ukraine's elections and that Yushchenko won comfortably.

The 2004 elections proved to be very different from those held in 1994 when President Leonid Kravchuk lost to Kuchma in central Ukraine. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, Our Ukraine and the Socialists (who were also Yushchenko's allies in round two of the 2004 elections) won fifteen oblasts in western, central, and northern Ukraine. Our Ukraine, the Socialists, and the Yulia Tymoshenko party, who were allies after round one of the 2004 elections, together polled 38 percent, giving them a solid starting base for winning seventeen oblasts in all the rounds of the 2004 elections. (Anatoliy Kinakh's Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs was a member of the pro-Kuchma For a United Ukraine bloc in 2002 but allied itself to Yushchenko in round two of the 2004 elections.)

In the 2004 elections Yushchenko won a greater share of votes in central and northern Ukraine than did Kravchuk in 1994, which enabled him to defeat Yanukovich. The national democrats had progressively expanded their area of support throughout the post-Soviet era, which was a product of nation building and the emergence of a post-Soviet young generation that was more likely to vote for a candidate representing European values (namely, Yushchenko). The younger generation was also less apathetic than it had been in earlier elections because of its politicization during Kuchmagate and in response to the strategic nature of the 2004 elections in determining Ukraine's medium-term future.

The authorities also miscalculated when they believed that all Russophones would back the upgrading of the Russian language to an official language. What they failed to appreciate was that language issues were low on the list of concerns for voters. They also misjudged the mood of Russophones since not all of them support such moves. The education system in Kyiv has been conducted mainly in Ukrainian since 1992, which sits comfortably since the city is still largely a Russian-speaking city. Although Russophones and Ukrainophones are roughly equal in Ukraine, a sizable portion of the former claim Ukrainian as their native language and therefore have a sentimental attachment to it.<sup>47</sup>

Orange Revolution music, which was continually played in Maidan either by live bands or on compact discs, also touched upon different themes related to the national question. As with the name of Yushchenko's bloc, Our Ukraine, many songs energized Ukrainians to demand the return of what was understood to be their stolen country.



The sentiment expressed was that “this is Our Ukraine, which has been taken over by a small group of usurpers; it is time for it to be returned to its rightful owners: Ukraine’s citizens.” These usurpers were depicted as a de facto foreign occupation army.

Orange Revolution songs also demanded that Ukrainians not contemplate passivity, because the stakes were too high. Some songs openly called for an uprising, such as Okean Yelzy’s “Vstavay!” (Stand up!), which, although written before the elections, became popular during the Orange Revolution.

Songs such as “Ukraina” by the well-known band Mandry called upon Ukrainians to look at their ancestors, who were looking down upon them at this critical time. The option of staying passive was morally wrong because too many Ukrainian intellectuals had already suffered and died. The insinuation was that with the election of Yanukovich, their Ukraine, from a nationally conscious point of view, would be irrevocably lost.

Orange Revolution music called upon Ukrainians to rush to Kyiv to defend this sacred city from a Yanukovich victory. Everyone should travel to Kyiv as soon as they could, by any means possible and, if no other way was available, on foot. The threat of a Donetsk takeover of Kyiv was portrayed in a Pora poster as the equivalent of the Nazis taking over Kyiv in World War II. As Ukrainians had then defeated that attempt, Pora stated that they would also defeat this attempt on this occasion.

Okean Yelzy, one of Ukraine’s most popular bands, was typical of the apolitical Ukrainians who became politicized during the elections and the Orange Revolution. Okean Yelzy singer Sviatoslav Vakarchuk was made an advisor to President Yushchenko. The group played the Maidan throughout the Orange Revolution. One of their new songs gave hope to the protestors that spring was very close at hand. “Spring” was understood to be Yushchenko’s victory.

### Conclusions

The necessary factors for the success of the Orange Revolution included a gestation period before the elections when a political crisis eroded public support for the regime and the ruling elite. The strategic significance of the elections was also crucial. These were not just elections but a strategic turning point that could go toward either a consolidated autocracy or a consolidated democracy. Two other necessary factors were a politically mobilized youth to provide foot soldiers for the revolution

and a pro-European civic nationalism that would be far more capable at mobilizing the population than would east Slavic nationalism.

Contributing factors included the authorities choosing an odious candidate, such as Yanukovich. It would have been more difficult to mobilize against Tyhipko, the head of the Yanukovich campaign, or parliamentary speaker Lytvyn. In both Serbia and Georgia, the economies were in a state of freefall within two failed states. That was not the case in Ukraine, which has a functioning state and had experienced strong economic growth. The problem for the authorities was that the state was disliked by its citizens (as represented by their low trust in institutions), while the Yanukovich government was not credited with having achieved economic growth.

## Notes

1. Poll cited in *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, August 15, 2002.
2. Polls cited in *Ukrainska pravda*, November 9 and 30, 2004.
3. Poll cited in *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, April 27, 2002.
4. [www.razom.org.ua](http://www.razom.org.ua), April 20, 2004.
5. Poll cited in *Ukrainska pravda*, August 5, 2004.
6. Poll cited in *Unian*, July 23, 2004.
7. The speech was reprinted in *Ukrainska pravda*, November 20, 2004.
8. The only lengthy study of the Kuchmagate crisis prequel to the Orange Revolution is Myroslava Gongadze and Serhiy Kudelia, *Rozirvaniy Herb. Khronolohiya Hromadskoho Protestu* [Chronology of civic protest] (Kyiv: Open Society Foundation, 2004).
9. Television station 1+1, December 26, 2004.
10. Pora went public in March 2004 and had a black banner, similar to Otpor. A copycat Pora, with a yellow banner, emerged a month later and was an outgrowth of the Freedom Coalition bloc of NGOs. See [www.kuchmizm.info](http://www.kuchmizm.info) (Black Pora) and [www.pora.org.ua](http://www.pora.org.ua) (Yellow Pora).
11. Academy of Sciences poll cited in *Suchasnist*, April 2004, 82.
12. A Razumkov Center poll cited by *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, July 3, 2004, and Rakesh Sharma and Nathan van Dusen, *Attitudes and Expectations: Public Opinion in Ukraine in 2003* (Washington: IFES, 2004).
13. Rostyslav Pawlenko in *Ukrainska pravda*, May 25, 2004.
14. Poll cited in *Ukrainska pravda*, November 15, 2004.
15. *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, August 15, 2002.
16. Sharma and van Dusen, *Attitudes and Expectations*.
17. *Suchasnist*, April 2004.
18. *Kyiv Post*, July 1, 2004.
19. [www.temnik.com.ua](http://www.temnik.com.ua), July 12, 2004.
20. Poll cited in *Unian*, October 27, 2004.
21. Polls cited in *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, August 15, 2002, and *Ukrainska pravda*, May 25, 2004.
22. During the second television debate between Yushchenko and Yanukovich on December 20, Yushchenko asked how his opponent could depict millions of Ukrainians as "bastards."
23. Interviewed in *Den*, September 17, 2002.

24. *Suchasnist*, April 2004.
25. Black Pora discussed tactics and strategy on a server located outside Ukraine that required coded access. This was to prevent infiltration by the security service.
26. See Taras Kuzio, "The Internet: Ukraine's New Samizdat," *RFE/RL Media Matters*, January 4, 2002; and "The Internet and Media Freedom in Ukraine," *Russia and Eurasia Review*, 2 (14) (July 8, 2003).
27. Polls cited by *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, August 15, 2002; and *Interfax*, October 23, 2002.
28. See Taras Kuzio, "Ukrainian Authorities Target Student and Youth Election-Monitoring Groups," *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 1 (104) (October 13, 2004); and "Ukrainian Leaders Crack down on Youth Groups ahead of Election," *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 1 (109) (October 20, 2004).
29. See the Pora! election poster at <http://vybir.yarema.info/displayimage.php?album=10&pos=13>.
30. See Taras Kuzio, "Yanukovych Tries to Clean up His Image," *Jamestown Foundation Eurasian Daily Monitor*, 1 (21) (June 1, 2004).
31. See the large exposé in the *New York Times*, January 17, 2005, about the role of the security service in the Orange Revolution and the poor relations between them and Yanukovych.
32. *Ukrainska pravda*, March 18, 2005.
33. [www.yanukovich.nm.ru](http://www.yanukovich.nm.ru).
34. See websites <http://eggs.net.ua> and [www.ham.com.ua](http://www.ham.com.ua).
35. See the cartoon at <http://mignews.com.ua/mult/4.htm>.
36. *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, June 26–July 2, 2004.
37. *Ukrainska pravda*, June 25, 2004.
38. *Ibid.*, July 2, 2004.
39. *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, July 3–9, 2004.
40. *Ukrainska pravda*, July 3, 2004.
41. *Zerkalo tyzhnia*, July 3, 2004.
42. Poll cited in *Den*, November 3, 2000.
43. *Ukrainska pravda*, July 12, 2004.
44. See, for example, Mykola Riabchouk, "Civil Society and Nation Building in Ukraine," in Taras Kuzio, ed., *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 81–98.
45. See Taras Kuzio, "Russians and Russophones in the Former USSR and Serbs in Yugoslavia: A Comparative Study of Passivity and Mobilisation," *East European Perspectives*, 5 (13–15) (June 25, July 9, and July 23, 2003).
46. See Stephen Shulman, "National Identity and Public Support for Political and Economic Reform in Ukraine," *Slavic Review*, 64 (1) (spring 2005), 59–87.
47. See Anna Fournier, "Mapping Identities: Russian Resistance to Linguistic Ukrainianisation in Central and Eastern Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 54 (3) (May 2002), 415–33.